

EXPLORING THE SUNDAY GOSPEL

HAPPY FACES

EXPLORING NEXT SUNDAY'S THEME

Introducing the Gospel

The Beatitudes (Luke 6: 17-26)

Luke presents a collection of Jesus' teaching in a 'sermon' delivered not on the mountain (as in Matthew), but on a level place. Like Matthew's Sermon on the Mount, Luke's Sermon on the Plain begins with a set of beatitudes, statements beginning, 'Blessed are you'. Another translation of these beatitudes reads, 'Happy are you'. In Luke's sermon these beatitudes are accompanied by a set of calamities, statements beginning 'Woe to you'. The beatitudes and calamities are well shaped easy to remember sentences. The three calamities are the opposites of the three beatitudes.

The image to stimulate reflection is on the beatitudes in Luke's Sermon on the Plain is *happy faces*.

Core extract from the Gospel (Luke 6: 20-21; for reflection throughout the week)

Then Jesus looked up at his disciples and said:

'Blessed are you who are poor,
for yours is the kingdom of God.
Blessed are you who are hungry now,
for you will be filled.
Blessed are you who weep now,
for you will laugh.'

Gospel prayer (for use throughout the week)

Lord Jesus Christ,
you showed your people the way of happiness.
Open our hearts to the truth of your teaching,
so we may find happiness in you;
now and always.
Amen.

READING NEXT SUNDAY'S GOSPEL

Luke 6: 17-26

Jesus teaches and heals

He came down with them and stood on a level place, with a great crowd of his disciples and a great multitude of people from all Judea, Jerusalem, and the coast of Tyre and Sidon. They had come to hear him and to be healed of their diseases; and those who were troubled with unclean spirits were cured. And all in the crowd were trying to touch him, for power came out from him and healed all of them.

Blessings and woes

Then he looked up at his disciples and said:

‘Blessed are you who are poor,
for yours is the kingdom of God.

‘Blessed are you who are hungry now,
for you will be filled.

‘Blessed are you who weep now,
for you will laugh.

‘Blessed are you when people hate you, and when they exclude you, revile you, and defame you on account of the Son of Man. Rejoice on that day and leap for joy, for surely your reward is great in heaven; for that is what their ancestors did to the prophets.

‘But woe to you who are rich,
for you have received your consolation.

‘Woe to you who are full now,
for you will be hungry.

‘Woe to you who are laughing now,
for you will mourn and weep.

‘Woe to you when all speak well of you,
for that is what their ancestors did to the false prophets.

ENGAGING WITH THE THEME

Dwelling with the text (Luke 6: 17-26)

Begin to explore Luke's account of Jesus' Sermon on the Plain by employing the SIFT approach of Sensing, Intuition, Feeling, and Thinking. You may find that one of these approaches comes easier to you than the others. But it is worth trying all four.

- What details in the passage catch your attention (Sensing)?
- What big ideas in the passage spark in your mind (Intuition)?
- What most touches your heart in the passage (Feeling)?
- What most stretches your mind and makes you think in the passage (Thinking)?

Thinking and talking

Identify topics within the passage that can get you thinking and talking. Here are some ideas to get you started.

- How do you understand the three beatitudes?
- How do you understand the three calamities?
- The *Jerusalem Bible* translated 'Blessed' as 'How happy'; what do you feel about that?
- Do the calamities reflect your understanding of Jesus' teaching?
- What does this narrative say for us today?

Using your Bible

Compare Luke's beatitudes with those in Matthew.

- Matthew 5: 3-11

Explore Luke's balancing of beatitude and calamity in the Magnificat.

- Luke 1: 51-53

Explore beatitudes in the Old Testament and Apocrypha.

- Psalm 32: 1
- Psalm 106: 3
- Proverbs 3: 13
- Ecclesiasticus 25: 7-11

THIRD SUNDAY BEFORE LENT (YEAR C) Sunday 16 February 2025

Exploring online

Widen your exploration of Luke's account of Jesus' Sermon on the Plain by looking up some of the following themes and others of your own choosing.

- Sermon on the Plain
- Makarios (the Greek word translated 'blessed')
- Happy faces

Drawing on experience

The image to stimulate reflection on Luke's account of Jesus' Sermon on the Plain is *happy faces*. Draw on your own experience of happy faces. For example:

- When have the beatitudes been important to you?
- When have you experienced *real* happiness?
- What do you think brings people real happiness?

What have you learned about the beatitudes and happy faces?

Creating and making

This section offers pointers to some creative activities that may be inspired by Luke's account of Jesus' Sermon on the Plain or the image of happy faces.

- Illuminate a manuscript of Luke's three beatitudes and three calamities.
- Create a poster of happy faces.
- Make a mural with the theme 'Happiness is ...'.
- Create a reflection, poem, or prayer on the theme of the Luke's account of Jesus' Sermon on the Plain or on the image of happy faces.



EXPLORING THE SUNDAY GOSPEL

Each week we are inviting people in their homes to look forward to those Sunday services that follow the Revised Common Lectionary Gospel readings. We employ the SIFT approach (Sensing, Intuition, Feeling, and Thinking) to encourage reflection on the Sunday Gospel. We are suggesting a variety of ways in which people of all ages, and households working together, may engage with the Gospel reading and celebrate that engagement with shared activities.

These materials have been developed by the Canon Theologian of Liverpool Cathedral working in collaboration with the staff team here at the Cathedral, and with sponsorship and support from the St Mary's Centre in Wales.



The scripture quotations contained in these materials are taken from the New Revised Standard Version of the Bible, Anglicised Edition, copyright 1989 by the Division of Christian Education of the National Council of the Churches of Christ in the United States of America, and is used with permission. All rights reserved.

Copyright © Leslie J. Francis, 2024
Canon Theologian Liverpool Cathedral
with sponsorship and support from
St Mary's Centre, Wales