

Christian Blessings (3)

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Scripture for Study: Luke 6:20-23 [NKJV]

20 Looking at his disciples, he said: Blessed are you who are poor, for yours is the kingdom of God. 21 Blessed are you who hunger now, for you will be satisfied. Blessed are you who weep now, for you will laugh.

22 Blessed are you when people hate you, when they exclude you and insult you, and reject your name as evil, because of the Son of Man. 23 Rejoice in that day and leap for joy, because great is your reward in heaven. For that is how their ancestors treated the prophets.

2) Sufficiency and Joy

The second set of blessings Lord Jesus promised in the above sermon are sufficiency and joy instead of hunger and sadness now. This is a promise linked to the first promised blessing in verse 21 of ownership of the kingdom of God. The current state of affairs in South Korea and the U.S. indicate perils to the kingdom of God in those countries. South Korea's Moon regime has been oppressing the Christians by prohibiting them from having church assemblies under the pretext of COVID-19 risk control. They are currently legislating a law to disband all churches. When this law comes into effect, the religious freedom in the country will disappear. Since the National Assembly of this country is in the hands of the communist Moon, passing of this law is certain.

America also is in a perilous state where the far-left socialist alliance of communist ideologues, wronged media, radical activists, and corrupt politicians are trying to steal the 2020 presidential election from President Trump and his party. If Joe Biden wins the election, this country, which was founded on the Christian principles, will rapidly swing to a de-facto communist country where the people's liberties will be severely restricted and the big Democratic government will remove all principles and semblance of God's truth from the entire nation so that America that we have known as a free, democratic country as the envy of all peoples of the earth will disappear. Christians will lose their freedom to worship God, to preach the gospel freely and to express their faith in any social or public setting whatsoever. Personal profession of their Christian faith will not be allowed and all national and state-level policies will swing to godlessness in all respects. Truly America is in a great peril of falling into Satan's hands. And when the kingdom of God loses its vitality in our nation, the promise of God's blessings will be far removed from the people.

This promise of sufficiency and joy is God's anticipation to Christians as we endeavor to establish the spiritual kingdom of God in our communities and nation. Of course, when this life is over, all true believers will no longer face hunger and deprivation but enjoy amazing affluence and great joy in heaven. However, this promise of Jesus is for God's people here on earth. It is not a promise of winning a Lotto or reaping a huge profit from the stock market. In a kingdom of God His people will not suffer hunger and deprivation. One of God's important principles that He wanted the people of Israel to implement in their kingdom was to take care of the poor and needy including widows and orphans, as expressed in the following command:

[Deuteronomy 15: 7-11] 7 If anyone is poor among your fellow Israelites in any of the towns of the land the Lord your God is giving you, do not be hardhearted or tightfisted toward them. 8 Rather, be openhanded and freely lend them whatever they need. 9 Be careful not to harbor this wicked thought: "The seventh year, the year for canceling debts, is near," so that you do not show ill will toward the needy among your fellow Israelites and give them nothing. They may then appeal to the Lord against you, and you will be found guilty of sin. 10 Give generously to them and do so without a grudging heart; then because of this the Lord your God will bless you in all your work and in everything you put your hand to. 11 There will always be poor people in the land. Therefore, I command you to be openhanded toward your fellow Israelites who are poor and needy in your land.

Where this principle of economic kindness is honored in a kingdom of God, His people will enjoy material sufficiency that lacks poverty as well as joy that accompanies material security. Therefore, God's command of economic kindness for the poor and needy group in our society is still an effective command for all Christians to fulfill so as to build a kingdom of God in wherever community and nation we live.

Lord Jesus fed the multitude of more than five thousand using five loaves of bread and two fishes [Matt 14:13-18] and another multitude of more than four thousand using seven loaves and a few fishes [Matt 15:32-35]. The disciples had compassion on the people in their hungry state and presented this need to their Master. But Lord Jesus told them it was their role to feed the multitude:

[Matt 14:15-16] As evening approached, the disciples came to him and said, "This is a remote place, and it's already getting late. Send the crowds away, so they can go to the villages and buy themselves some food." Jesus replied, "They do not need to go away. You give them something to eat."

Through these two miracles Lord Jesus proved that He is the Jehovah God who fed the Israelites in the wilderness thousands of years ago. On the other hand, He was teaching His disciples that it was their calling to feed the poor and hungry in the kingdom of God here on earth. So, one of the missions of all Christian churches is to take good care of the poor and needy in their congregation so that the principle of sufficiency is satisfied in the kingdom of God.

In the kingdom of God His people enjoy great joy. This joy is something the people of this world do not comprehend because it comes from these secret sources:

- God's people experience unspeakable joy in their hearts because they know they have been brought into God's great salvation thanks to the redemptive sacrifice of Jesus Christ for them.
- God's people live in full confidence and full joy in spite of the troubles in this life because they serve the Creator God who sits on this throne in heaven and is ruling the entire universe and whole earth.
- God's people live in great comfort and joy because they share fellowship of faith with their spiritual brethren and the pastors who care for them.
- God's people live in great joy because they triumph over their sinful nature, world's temptations and Satan's deceits through the help of the Holy Spirit in their daily spiritual battles.
- God's people live in great joy because they see the promised blessings fulfilled in heaven above together with the saved holy people in God's presence after the simple step of death from this life to eternity.

The disciples came to have sudden joy upon seeing the risen Christ, who rose up from the grave. And this joy has been with all true Christians since then. When Adam and Eve were chased out of Garden of Eden, uncertainty and fear of death were imbedded into the human DNA even in our bodies today. We were all born with such fear and uncertainty. However, when Holy Spirit entered into our hearts and we were sealed as children of God, this fear of death and uncertainty about our future left and instead came in conviction about our salvation and unspeakable joy. While we live on the earth, we are privileged to live with this joy from God along with sure conviction of our eternal fate in heaven.

[John 16:22] So with you: Now is your time of grief, but I will see you again and you will rejoice, and no one will take away your joy.

[John 17:13] I am coming to you now, but I say these things while I am still in the world, so that they may have the full measure of my joy within them.

This promise of sufficiency and joy is not just for our eternity in heaven but very much for our enjoyment while we live on the earth. When a kingdom of God is established in our community, we get to enjoy more

than sufficiency and great joy in serving God as the king of our community and of our nation. We need to pray and to take actions so that this promise of the Lord is fulfilled in our time here on earth.

3) Our Rewards in Heaven

Lord Jesus promised the third blessing as follows:

22 Blessed are you when people hate you, when they exclude you and insult you, and reject your name as evil, because of the Son of Man. 23 Rejoice in that day and leap for joy, because great is your reward in heaven. For that is how their ancestors treated the prophets.

In verse 22 Lord Jesus warns that the disciples will be subject to social discrimination, insults and rejection because of their profession as Christians. The Book of Acts records the severe persecutions the religious leaders and the ruling class laid on the Christians after the Lord's ascension and the descent of Holy Spirit, starting with martyrdoms of Stephen and James, so that the believers were scattered to all parts of the Roman Empire to avoid the Jewish persecution. Lord Jesus forewarned the disciples that this persecution would come to them. However, He promises there will be rewards for them just as there were for the prophets of OT years. Lord Jesus was encouraging the disciples to bear the suffering well because their rewards were waiting for them in heaven.

The words of encouragement and promise of blessings and rewards by Lord Jesus to His disciples in the first century are still relevant to today's Christians because many of them are subject to the same evil treatments by unjust governments and unbelievers in numerous countries. When Lord Jesus spoke these words, there was not many believers in the land of Israel. Therefore, the small band of believers faced many hardships. However, there are many Christians in the U.S. and in South Korea and numerous other nations. Through this sermon of our study Lord Jesus is still encouraging His followers of the 21st century to encourage, strengthen and share precious fellowship among themselves regardless of denominations so that the promise of blessings is fulfilled while they are living here on earth, even before entering the eternal Kingdom of Heaven.

Lord Jesus had in mind the rewards appointed to be given to the OT prophets who had to endure various hardships and sufferings because of their ministries. In fact, when He spoke these words of reward in heaven, He was equating His disciples to the OT prophets. Since the OT prophets were revered by the people of Israel, this statement of the Lord must have given a special elevating impact on the disciples' spirits. The scripture tells us that there will be rewards for all who fear the Lord's name when He comes back the second time. On that day our joy will be very great so that we will "leap for joy," according to the Lord, much greater than the joy of children upon opening their Christmas gift boxes.

[Revelation 11:18] The nations were angry, and your wrath has come. The time has come for judging the dead, and for rewarding your servants the prophets and your people who revere your name, both great and small— and for destroying those who destroy the earth."

[Revelation 19:7] Let us rejoice and be glad and give him glory! For the wedding of the Lamb has come, and his bride has made herself ready.

[Revelation 22:12] Look, I am coming soon! My reward is with me, and I will give to each person according to what they have done. I am the Alpha and the Omega, the First and the Last, the Beginning and the End.

On the Lord's judgment day both the evildoers and the chosen children of God will have their rewards. Friends, children of God have the privilege of joyfully taking part in the kingdom of God, working for its furtherance and sharing in the ownership of this glorious kingdom, with the help of the Holy Spirit. And we do so with the joyful anticipation and conviction that there will be marvelous rewards waiting for us in heaven. These words of promised blessings should encourage and strengthen our spirit. Let us share our hope and conviction with others. Amen.