

# EXPOSITORY THOUGHTS. ON THE GOSPELS.

FOR FAMILY AND PRIVATE USE.

WITH THE TEXT COMPLETE,

*And Many Explanatory Notes.*

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LUKE VI. 20–26.

<p>20. And he lifted up his eyes on his disciples, and said, Blessed <i>be ye</i> poor: for yours is the kingdom of God.</p> <p>21. Blessed <i>are ye</i> that hunger now: for ye shall be filled. Blessed <i>are ye</i> that weep now: for ye shall laugh.</p> <p>22. Blessed are ye when men shall hate you, and when they shall separate you <i>from their company</i>, and shall reproach <i>you</i>, and cast out your name as evil, for the Son of man's sake.</p> <p>23. Rejoice ye in that day, and leap for</p>	<p>joy: for, behold, your reward <i>is</i> great in heaven: for in the like manner did their fathers unto the prophets.</p> <p>24. But woe unto you that are rich! for ye have received your consolation.</p> <p>25. Woe unto you that are full! for ye shall hunger. Woe unto you that laugh now! for ye shall mourn and weep.</p> <p>26. Woe unto you, when all men shall speak well of you! for so did their fathers to the false prophets</p>
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THE discourse of our Lord, which we have now begun, resembles, in many respects, His well-known Sermon on the Mount. The resemblance, in fact, is so striking, that many have concluded that St. Luke and St. Matthew are reporting one and the same discourse, and that St. Luke is giving us, in an abridged form, what St. Matthew reports at length. There seems no sufficient ground for this conclusion. The occasions on which the two discourses were delivered, were entirely different. Our Lord's repetition of the same great lesson, in almost the same words, on two different occasions, is nothing extraordinary. It is unreasonable to suppose that none of His mighty teachings were ever delivered more than once. In the present case, the repetition is very significant. It shows us the great and deep importance of the lessons which the two discourses contain.

Let us first notice in these verses, *who are those whom the Lord Jesus pronounces blessed*. The list is a remarkable and startling one. It singles out those who are "poor," and those who "hunger,"—those who "weep," and those who are "hated" by man. These are the persons to whom the great Head of the Church says, "Blessed are ye!"

We must take good heed that we do not misunderstand our Lord's meaning, when we read these expressions. We must not for a moment suppose that the mere fact of being poor, and hungry, and sorrowful, and hated by man, will entitle any one to lay claim to an interest in Christ's blessing. The poverty here spoken of, is a poverty accompanied by grace. The want is a want entailed by faithful adherence to Jesus. The afflictions are the afflictions of the Gospel. The persecution is persecution for the Son of Man's sake. Such want, and poverty, and affliction, and persecution, were the inevitable consequences of faith in Christ, at the beginning of Christianity. Thousands had to give up everything in this world, because of their religion. It was their case which Jesus had specially in view in this passage. He desired to supply them, and all who suffer like them for the Gospel's sake, with special comfort and consolation.

Let us notice, secondly, in these verses, *who are those to whom our Lord*

*addresses the solemn words, "Woe unto you."* Once more we read expressions which at first sight seem most extraordinary. "Woe unto you that are rich!—Woe unto you that are full!—Woe unto you that laugh!—Woe unto you when all men shall speak well of you!"—Stronger and more cutting sayings than these cannot be found in the New Testament.

Here, however, no less than in the preceding verses, we must take care that we do not misapprehend our Lord's meaning. We are not to suppose that the possession of riches, and a rejoicing spirit, and the good word of man, are necessarily proofs that people are not Christ's disciples. Abraham and Job were rich. David and St. Paul had their seasons of rejoicing. Timothy was one who "had a good report from those that were without." All these, we know, were true servants of God. All these were blessed in this life, and shall receive the blessing of the Lord in the day of His appearing.

Who are the persons to whom our Lord says, "Woe unto you?" They are the men who refuse to seek treasure in heaven, because they love the good things of this world better, and will not give up their money, if need requires, for Christ's sake.—They are the men who prefer the joys and so-called happiness of this world, to joy and peace in believing, and will not risk the loss of the one in order to gain the other.—They are those who love the praise of man more than the praise of God, and will turn their backs on Christ, rather than not keep in with the world.—These are the kind of men whom our Lord had in view when He pronounced the solemn words, "Woe, woe unto you." He knew well that there were thousands of such persons among the Jews,—thousands who, notwithstanding His miracles and sermons, would love the world better than Him. He knew well that there would always be thousands of such in His professing Church,—thousands who, though convinced of the truth of the Gospel, would never give up anything for its sake.—To all such He delivers an awful warning.—"Woe, woe unto you!"

One mighty lesson stands out plainly on the face of these verses. May we all lay it to heart, and learn wisdom! That lesson is the utter contrariety between the mind of Christ, and the common opinions of mankind,—the entire variance between the thoughts of Jesus, and the prevailing thoughts of the world. The conditions of life which the world reckons desirable, are the very conditions upon which the Lord pronounces "woes." Poverty, and hunger, and sorrow, and persecution, are the very things which man labours to avoid. Riches, and fulness, and merriment, and popularity, are precisely the things which men are always struggling to attain. When we have said all, in the way of qualifying, explaining, and limiting our Lord's words, there still remain two sweeping assertions, which flatly contradict the current doctrine of mankind. The state of life which our Lord blesses, the world cordially dislikes. The people to whom our Lord says, "woe unto you," are the very

people whom the world admires, praises, and imitates. This is an awful fact. It ought to raise within us great searchings of heart.

Let us leave the whole passage with honest self-inquiry and self-examination. Let us ask ourselves what we think of the wonderful declarations that it contains. Can we subscribe to what our Lord says? Are we of one mind with Him? Do we really believe that poverty and persecution, endured for Christ's sake, are positive blessings? Do we really believe that riches and worldly enjoyments, and popularity among men, when sought for more than salvation, or preferred in the least to the praise of God, are a positive curse? Do we really think that the favour of Christ, with trouble and the world's ill word, is better worth having than money, and merriment, and a good name among men, without Christ?—These are most serious questions, and deserve a most serious answer. The passage before us is eminently one which tests the reality of our Christianity. The truths it contains, are truths which no unconverted man can love and receive. Happy are they who have found them truths by experience, and can say "amen" to all our Lord's declarations. Whatever men may please to think, those whom Jesus blesses are blessed, and those whom Jesus does not bless will be cast out for evermore.

#### NOTES. LUKE VI. 20–26.

20.—[*And he lifted up his eyes.*] It is a disputed point, whether the discourse which begins with this verse is the same as that recorded in St. Matthew, (chapters v. vi. vii.) and commonly called the Sermon on the mount. The majority of commentators do questionably regard the two discourses as the same. To this opinion, after much consideration, I feel unable to subscribe. I regard the two discourses as distinct and different, and consider them as delivered at different times.

For one thing, the occasion of the discourse recorded by St. Luke, is not the same as the occasion of that recorded by St. Matthew. The discourse, reported by St. Matthew, was one delivered on "a mountain," and previous to the appointment of the twelve apostles. The discourse reported by St. Luke was delivered "in the plain," and after the twelve apostles had been ordained. To me it seems impossible to get over this discrepancy.

For another thing, there is a wide difference between the persons called "blessed" in the discourse in St. Matthew, and the persons called "blessed" in the discourse in St. Luke. In St. Matthew the point brought forward in each case is the spiritual character of the person, in St. Luke his temporal circumstances and condition. There is a wide difference, for instance, between "Blessed are the poor *in spirit*," and "Blessed be ye poor."

For another thing, the variance between the two discourses in length is very notable. St. Luke's report can in no sense be called an abridgment of St. Matthew. Many things that St. Matthew reports, he omits altogether. Some things that he inserts, on the other hand, are not to be found in St. Matthew at all.

In the last place, it seems unreasonable to suppose that our Lord never repeated the same lessons on different occasions. All public teachers find it necessary to do so. We cannot doubt that He did also. In the present instance He repeats to a different audience some of the truths which He had before preached at greater length in the Sermon on the Mount. And the repetition was meant to show their importance.

For the above reasons, I believe that St. Luke and St. Matthew are recording two different discourses. In saying this, I consider it only fair to myself to remark that the view I maintain is held by Pool, Cartwright, Doddridge, Whitby, Scott, and Watson.

[*Blessed be ye poor.*] The poverty spoken of here, as well as the hunger, weeping, and being hated, of the rest of the passage, must be taken in a literal sense, remembering only that it is poverty and sorrow for the Gospel's sake to which our Lord refers. The expressions, "rich," and "full," and "laugh," in the latter part of the passage, must evidently be taken in a literal sense. It seems unreasonable to interpret the one set of words spiritually and the other literally.

The promises, of course, in one case, as well as the threatenings in the other, admit of a much wider interpretation. "Ye shall be filled," and "ye shall laugh," are promises which to many of God's saints are never fulfilled in this world. In like manner, "ye shall hunger," and "ye shall mourn and weep," are words of which the wicked, in many cases, will not know the full bitterness till hereafter.

22.—[*Separate you from their company.*] The Greek word so rendered, according to Suicer, is specially applied to ecclesiastical excommunication.

24.—[*Ye have received.*] The Greek word so rendered should rather have a present sense, "ye are receiving or having your consolation."

25.—[*Woe unto you...all...speak well of you.*] Let that expression be carefully noted. Few of our Lord's sayings are more flatly contradictory to the common opinion both of the Church and the world, than this. What is more common in the world than the love of every one's praise? What more frequent in the Church than to hear it said in commendation of a minister, that "everybody likes him!" It seems entirely forgotten, that to be liked and approved by everybody, is to be of the number of those to whom Jesus says, "Woe unto you." To be universally popular is a most unsatisfactory symptom, and one of which a minister of Christ should always be afraid. It may well make him doubt whether he is faithfully doing his duty, and honestly declaring all the counsel of God.