

Blessings from a Blogger
A Sermon for Sardis Baptist Church
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Luke 6: 17-26

Did you know the author of Luke moonlighted as a ghost-blogger for BuzzFeed? It's true! Just the other day, I received some click-bait. It read: *Top Six Signs You Know You Are Blessed*. And being naturally curious, I clicked on that bait. And here's what it said:

In the past seven days, have you been hungry? Like really hungry, mal-nourished even? Have you been distraught to the point of tears? Do people hate you so much that they cyber-bully or troll you? Have you been excluded from your group of friends, or ignored at the office water cooler? Has a non-Christian, or a non-believer spit in your face, or sought to discredit you, even defame you in some way, because of your belief in the Christ?

If the answer to any of these questions is yes, then congratulations, you are blessed! And if you can say yes to all of these things, you are especially blessed!!!

And I have to admit, I was a little worried, because as I read that article, I was stuffed to the gills on casseroles brought to me by Sardis members, and I was holding two little girls who were hugging me tight, and I had just received a Valentine's Day card from my wife, and several people had just liked my blogpost in the [Sardis Experiment](#), and just that very night I had received invitations in the mail to be part of all sorts of special things: shopping clubs, and exclusive offers for insurance policies from three companies who specialize in things other than insurance, and there were people who wanted to clean my windows, and treat my lawn, and give me a free pizza if I'd just pay for the first one.

And I was terrified because I wasn't hungry, or grieving, nor was I feeling hated, or excluded, or reviled, or defamed. In fact, I felt the opposite of all these things. Am I not blessed? I want to be blessed, too!!! What have I done wrong?!?

And I started to have this sinking feeling – the same one I feel when I read those other posts, and realize what an underachiever I am because I haven't saved 9 ½ times my salary by age 28, or that I haven't been to Antarctica, or that I haven't perfected the twelve essential practices of a successful entrepreneur, or that I can only think of six practical uses for lemon juice and olive oil, or that I am paying five times too much for my cable and airfare, or that my three favorite burger joints didn't crack the top twenty list of Charlotte's best burgers. ([Charlotte Agenda](#), you should be ashamed of yourselves!)

Blessed are those who act and think like bloggers, for they shall find affirmation now.

Okay, so I fibbed. Luke has never moonlighted as a blogger on BuzzFeed. But just Google "signs you are blessed," and you'll find enough results to make that fib believable.

I think we live in a world that wants tangible checklists, and verbal affirmations in order that we might prove, or quantify, or demonstrate our righteousness. In fact, this very passage, though not as famous as Matthew's version, is often referred to as a set of beatitudes. And for as long as these words have floated through space and time, and now cyber-space, we've sought to make them, just like the Ten

Commandments, attitudes, or practices, or lifestyles for properly-defined living. Be these things, but not those. Do these things, but not those.

But I want you to think about the nonsense of such an approach. Seriously, think about it. God is loving. God is generous. God is thoughtful. God is forgiving. God is a parent, and a creator, and sustainer, and a source of life, and a host. God is good.

Does such a God require you to be starving, to be destitute, to be hated, to be reviled, to be sad, to be lonely, to be excluded, to be diminished, to be marginalized – does such a God require you to be all of these things in order to prove your righteousness? Of course not!!! That kind of logic doesn't reconcile with the love and grace of the One we proclaim every Sunday.

But our God, and the One who came in God's name, do promise to be present with all those who are hungry now, and who are crying now, and who are hated, and reviled, and defamed, and excluded now.

Think about the context of this speech. Jesus comes down from the mountain and onto the plains. And he's got all kinds of people in the audience: they are from Judea, Jerusalem, Tyre and Sidon. If you didn't catch that, he's got rich and poor, friend and stranger, Jew and Gentile, and Samaritan, too, coastal and inland, farmer and fisherman, young and old, privileged and marginalized.

Jesus does not take the high ground when he speaks. And he does not limit his message to an exclusive group. And he doesn't pretend that every audience member has the same life experience.

"If you are marginalized," he says "Especially if it's right now, the time's coming, when things will be set right. The time is coming when God's people and God's lands will be in accordance with God's intentions. And in that day, you're gonna be full."

"If you aren't marginalized," he says, "You need to understand that all those things which you think you have earned, or that give you unlimited security, are fleeting. Manna eventually spoils, and pride is temporary, and material things do not make you impenetrable to vulnerabilities. And the things that puff you up in Caesar's world, don't carry value in God's world."

Remember a few weeks ago? Jesus told his peers in Nazareth, "The Jubilee is coming, y'all." And they were pumped until they found out, it wasn't gonna necessarily start in their own back yards.

And so it is with God's inbreaking realm. If we who are full, and laughing, and loved, and included, and lauded, and praised – that is to say, if we who are full right now – if we believe that such a fullness is independent of God and neighbor, then that fullness is gonna get really empty, really soon.

Jesus doesn't thunder down God's decrees like Moses' earth-quaky, rigid, exclusive law on Sinai. Jesus isn't here to smite enemies, and topple riches, and dole out judgement like a warden. Jesus is here to stand on level ground with all of God's children. And Jesus is here to acknowledge that every human being experiences the spectrum of life. And Jesus is here to tell us that us that God is present on every point of that spectrum.

Blessed are you who feel empty right now, because the time's coming when God's gonna fill you up. And blessed have been you who are full right now – but you need to know that some of your fullness is gonna be closer to enougness.

Caesar wants you to believe that when resources are re-distributed, it's a zero-sum gain. If the grain, or the wine, or the things you hoard, can't be hoarded to excess; if some of it's given away, it's got to be to someone's detriment. That's because Caesar's world is finite.

But Jesus tells us, there is more than enough. And the reconciliation or re-accounting for all those who are empty, it's not retribution for the haves of this world. It's just an acknowledgement that none of us can be full, until all of us are full.

Jesus meets us on level ground. And he doesn't offer us an either or proposition. He simply says, I'm offering you an opportunity for fullness, real fullness, and no matter how full your or how empty your cup is in Caesar's world, you are invited.

So you know what, BuzzFeed, you can keep your checklists. I'm gonna stick to the one who offers fulfillment on level ground.

Amen.