

17 And He descended with them, and stood on a level place; and there was a great multitude of His disciples, and a great throng of people from all Judea and Jerusalem and the coastal region of Tyre and Sidon, 18 who had come to hear Him, and to be healed of their diseases; and those who were troubled with unclean spirits were being cured. 19 And all the multitude were trying to touch Him, for power was coming from Him and healing them all.

20 And turning His gaze on His disciples, He began to say, "Blessed are you who are poor, for yours is the kingdom of God. 21 "Blessed are you who hunger now, for you shall be satisfied. Blessed are you who weep now, for you shall laugh. 22 "Blessed are you when men hate you, and ostracize you, and cast insults at you, and spurn your name as evil, for the sake of the Son of Man. 23 "Be glad in that day, and leap for joy, for behold, your reward is great in heaven; for in the same way their fathers used to treat the prophets. 24 "But woe to you who are rich, for you are receiving your comfort in full. 25 "Woe to you who are well-fed now, for you shall be hungry. Woe to you who laugh now, for you shall mourn and weep. 26 "Woe to you when all men speak well of you, for in the same way their fathers used to treat the false prophets.

Luke is like a National Geographics photographer recording a great event. He includes all kinds of photographs taken with all kinds of lenses in order to give us a complete picture of what happened. Wide angles that take in the big picture, and close ups of important details.

We can't be there first hand, but we will need to read the report and gaze at the photographs so we can get a full picture, a full idea, complete in our minds, the next best thing to actually being there.

Our passage this morning, beginning in vs. 17 - 19 is a photograph taken with a wide angle lens that gives us a grand vista, a full view of the entire situation at that point in time. It's a grand over-all view of the total event, stopped for us at a particular milepost.

Jesus has chosen the 12. The world is re-acting to Jesus at a point in His three year ministry where we could say He is in full stride. All the preparations are finished, the race has begun, and at the time this big vista, this wide angle view was taken, the race is on, and Jesus is in full stride.

That's our milepost in vss. 17 - 19. The jews, the leaders of Israel have made up their minds. They hate Him. He's a threat and must be eliminated.

The disciples, the learners, perhaps in the 10's or 100's are in the phase where they're gathering information. They haven't yet come to a final conclusion, although many, even of this group, will not hear what they want to hear and will turn away. We see that in John 6 where John says;

66 As a result of this many of His disciples withdrew, and were not walking with Him anymore.

We could categorize all the possible groups just as Luke does. There are the scribes and pharisees, the rulers of Israel who have made up their minds and decided the only thing to do with Jesus is eliminate Him. Kill Jesus.

Then there is this group Luke calls disciples. Learners. They at least are tuned in, trying to arrive at a conclusion if this man who can heal everyone in an entire region is in fact, as He claims, their Messiah.

The miracles add up on the pro side. But He isn't fulfilling other expectations. They want a political Messiah who will crush Rome and make Israel the center of the world. This man, Jesus, doesn't seem to have any interest in that, and he's hostile to the people in Jerusalem who do hold those views.

Then there is this group in the big wide angle view that Luke simply calls the "people". That's actually an identifying term for Luke. These are the masses who are non-committal, but who have come to view the Jesus show. You don't get to see someone do creative miracles every day. And His oratory is mesmerizing. No man ever spoke like this man.

He's magnetic in the sense of a showman like no other showman before. He's a rock star. Huge groups at this point are following Him wherever He goes to watch the Jesus show.

Then there is the final group that we met last week. The 12 who are committed to be with Jesus day and night in order to carry on the ministry He has begun. These men believe and are convinced that Jesus is the Messiah of Israel, that He can forgive sins, that He is the Son of God, and even though they don't know where this adventure is going to take them, exactly, they're committed to follow this road to it's end.

And yet even in that group, heartbreakingly enough, there is one who is a pretender, who will become a traitor and get dis-illusioned that this isn't ending with a throne and a kingship, and then he will bow out, selling the creator of everything for 30 pieces of silver.

That's all in Lukes grand view this morning in vss. 17 - 19. Let's briefly work through this scene together.

17 And He descended with them, OK, who is the them in this verse. He descended with them. Well, in our last view we were up on a mountain where Jesus had prayed all night and then gathering his learners, had chosen 12 who would officially be Apostles. Special sent out ones, with authority to carry on what Jesus is doing in the world.

This "them" are the apostles and also by extension from the previous story, the other learners who had gone with Him up into this mountain where that choosing of Apostles would take place. Serious learners.

Disciples and now the 12 Apostles.

17 And He descended with them, and stood on a level place;

There are many places near Capernaum that could be this place, but one in particular has captured the imaginations of generations of Christians who visit that land and this particular place is sort of a natural amphitheater, a perfect place to address a large group.

How big is this group, we don't know, but if the groups of numbered men who were present for the feeding of the 5000 and then again, the 4000 is an indicator, if you add in women and children, we might guess 20 to 25,000 people.

Luke is setting the scene for the delivering of the Manifesto of the Kingdom, the Sermon on the Mount. That's our wide angle view. That's our grand scenic picture Luke is painting. Jesus, in full stride, Apostles chosen, Jews working to accomplish His demise, scholars and learners are present, and then a mob. A huge group of people, present to watch the show. This is the speaking part of the event.

and there was a great multitude of His disciples, and a great throng of people from all Judea and Jerusalem and the coastal region of Tyre and Sidon, 18 who had come to hear Him,

That span that Luke just flew us over, Judea and Jerusalem all the way up to Tyre and Sidon, that span is about 165 miles. Luke wants us to know; Word is out, something is happening, a great prophet, He does miracles, He's healing everyone, yes, of every possible malady, and He speaks like no man ever spoke.

How far would you walk to get in on that? Apparently the word was on the ground a hundred miles in all directions. A great mass of people, a throng, has come to experience Jesus.

and to be healed of their diseases; and those who were troubled with unclean spirits were being cured. 19 And all the multitude were trying to touch Him, for power was coming from Him and healing them all.

They have come not just to hear Jesus, but to experience the power. The miracles are too many to be written. That lady that touched the hem of His garment and was healed, apparently wasn't an exception, it was the rule. Power is just flowing out of Him.

Imagine a region that encompasses almost 200 miles in circle and disease is completely eradicated for that region. Disease is gone.

Not just disease, but demons, evil spirits which this culture was much better attuned to and aware of than we are, the emissaries of Satan must bow in obedience to this man. They obey no one. But now someone has come who has more rank, more power than they do, and they bow in obedience to Jesus.

That's our picture. Our grand view of Jesus in full stride, the ministry is full on, the jews are plotting His death, the throngs have come to experience Him and be healed of their diseases, the demons are silenced and sent away, the Apostles are chosen, and we have descended to this place where Jesus is going to speak.

This is the occasion of the most famous sermon that we have recorded for us. And we need to preface this just a bit. This is the Sermon on the Mount. The manifesto of the Kingdom of God.

And if Luke was all we had, we would be completely satisfied. Everything is here. Everything we need is presented by Luke. But; we also have Matthew's version and it is simply put, exceedingly magnificent.

Hey, I'm a pretty good photographer. If I install a show people go Ooh and ah. But if you put me in a giant hall with Ansel Adams and Edward Weston, the people in the room are going to move over where that stuff is.

God has given us a banquet feast. Matthew and Luke are both part of the banquet. Matthew's version of the Sermon on the Mount may be the best picture of this Manifesto of Jesus, but Luke's is also magnificent. And we're in Luke.

Since we are 20 centuries removed and we live in this culture we call America, let me set up the situation that Jesus is speaking to. If I can do that successfully these words that seem so foreign to us as to almost be bizarre, will flow perfectly. We can read it and be in the frame of mind that it makes perfect sense.

So I'll ask you to put your thinking caps on and stay with me for a few moments.

What if Satan *is* the prince of this world. What if when Adam and Eve sinned in the garden, it resulted in a world spiritual situation where men are born into sin and death that blocks a love relationship with the Creator God.

What if every human is born condemned. Removed from God by sin they are born into. What if the rule of that world fell by default after Adams sin to Satan. Satan is the prince of this world and every man is born condemned in sin.

We have want-to-be theologians these days telling us Jesus doesn't condemn people. They'll quote John 3:17; *For God sent not his Son into the world to condemn the world; but that the world through him might be saved.* See, Jesus doesn't condemn anybody.

But what they have completely missed is that Jesus didn't come to condemn because that already happened in the garden at the fall. We're all condemned. Every person is condemned. Jesus didn't come to do that, we did that, He came to rescue us out of the condemnation we were born into.

So, Satan is the prince of this world by default. God is removed from sinful men. His eyes are too pure to allow evil in His presence. That's the world Jesus walks into. Sinless, pure, the Son of God.

How does the world react? The world is ruled by the prince of this world, Satan. Men are sinners and love it that way. How does the world react to Jesus. We're talking ultimately now.

Sure, people have come from everywhere to hear Him and be healed. But what does it look like, if the Son of God rescues a group of men, out of this world, He purchases them with His blood, He solves the sin problem that separated them from their Creator by His death.

He purchases them out of this condemned world. They're owned by Him. Satan has lost his purchase on them. But one problem. That group of redeemed people has to live here in this world that is still ruled by Satan.

What does that look like. What comes into your mind if a group of SEALs parachutes into the middle of enemy territory? Are you beginning to see the picture?

If Satan owns this world, OK, he doesn't technically own it, he usurped authority that wasn't his, he is an occupier currently in command. God owns it, but for the purposes of His glory, He has allowed Satan to occupy this world and terrorize it with sin, but even that is regulated by God.

Satan is the prince of this world and men are born into it condemned. A group of people purchased out of that situation lands right in the middle of that hostile environment. What does that make us in the seal team image where we've parachuted into enemy territory. We are enemy combatants in a world that is our natural enemy and which is hostile to us.

The prince of this world doesn't own us any more. We've crossed over into the ownership of the person who is ultimately going to crush Satan under His feet, and depose him of being ruler, and rule over this world in his place. That's who we are folks. That's reality. We are enemy combatants against the ruler of this world and by default then, we are enemies of his subjects, his dupes.

Now, if you approach the sermon on the mount from that point of view, it begins to make perfect sense. And the opposite of that is also true. The farther you are removed from that picture, seal team warriors that parachuted into Satan's territory to wage war against him and gain new recruits for our Master, rescue people away from sin and Satan and his world, the farther away we're removed from that reality, the more the sermon on the mount seems . . . weird. It doesn't make sense.

Listen to the words as they fall from the lips of Jesus from the point of view that I just described for you, and see if it doesn't make perfect sense.

And if it does make sense, then we need to take an accounting. These words will reflect off us like a mirror. They become the red liquid in a thermometer. We listen to Jesus words, and we can take our spiritual temperature. Where are we in this picture of spiritual warfare that He is about to paint?

We can listen to His words and self assess. Am I an enemy combatant in this world, or do I fit right in?

20 And turning His gaze on His disciples, He began to say, "Blessed are you who are poor, for yours is the kingdom of God. 21 "Blessed are you who hunger now, for you shall be satisfied. Blessed are you who weep now, for you shall laugh. 22 "Blessed are you when men hate you, and ostracize you, and cast insults at you, and spurn your name as evil, for the sake of the Son of Man. 23 "Be glad in that day, and leap for joy, for behold, your reward is great in heaven; for in the same way their fathers used to treat the prophets. 24 "But woe to you who are rich, for you are receiving your comfort in full. 25 "Woe to you who are well-fed now, for you shall be hungry. Woe to you who laugh now, for you shall mourn and weep. 26 "Woe to you when all men speak well of you, for in the same way their fathers used to treat the false prophets.

Let's zoom in for a closer look then.

20 And turning His gaze on His disciples,

Luke is careful here to tell us who the expected recipients of these words are. On a descending scale of commitment, we could say there are four groups identified in Luke's introductory panorama.

Apostles. Chosen men who will be trained to carry this ministry to its conclusion. They will build the church on the foundation that is Jesus, the rock, and they will have authority to write down revealed truth, the very words of God.

That privilege and position will be acknowledged by miracles that affirm their position as God's emissaries to build His church. Very special men.

The next group in descending order is the group Luke identifies for us as the ones that Jesus gazes at as He begins the Sermon on the mount. His learners, including the chosen Apostles. His disciples. Those who have committed to accompany Him and sit at His feet in the place of learning.

The third group present are the uncommitted masses. They have come to experience the phenomenon that is Jesus. They are watching the miracles and hearing the manifesto of the Kingdom. They are mesmerized by His power both of speaking and miracles. They are there to see the show.

The final group, although not mentioned since the conflict that has directly brought about this occasion, are the religious rulers of the false apostate religion that is in the drivers seat, the control of their culture. The folks who want Jesus dead.

In our scenario about the prince of this world, where would we draw the line of seperation where we would say, these are soldiers for the king of this world, and these, clearly, are soldiers of the King of kings, the ultimate Ruler of this world when He comes again in His kingdom.

Clearly; the pharisees and scribes who hate Jesus have defined who their master is. There's no problem identifying them. And likewise the Apostles are clearly defined as soldiers for the King of kings, and combatants fighting spiritually against this world system.

That leaves a bunch of people there that day that we don't know enough information about to identify. The masses, the huge group of people who have come to witness Jesus, they can swing either way.

Even the learners, the disciples who Jesus gazes at and speaks directly to, we don't know yet if they ultimately will stay with Jesus and His soldiers, or perhaps they'll hear things that they just can't get on board with, like the disciples in John 6, and walk away.

It turns out, it's the finishers that have stayed with Jesus, no matter what this world throws at them who will be with Him in His coming Kingdom. John the Apostle later writes of the others, "*they went out*

from us" . . . why? . . . "because they were not of us."

Jesus gazes intently at the ones who are in line to sign up for spiritual warfare. And how would we approach that situation? Anyone here live during the period when the draft was in force?

You go down to the recruiting office with the sandwich board outside that has the picture of Uncle Sam pointing his finger at you and it says, Uncle Sam wants YOU.

You go inside, and does the recruiter tell you how much the military service sucks? Oh no! They are trained liars who tell you you're going to be having the time of your life! See the world! Excitement. Purpose. This will be great! And then you find out, those guys were lying.

Jesus does just the opposite, and the evangelical church in America in 2019 should pay attention. Jesus tells his learners, his disciples, come on over to my side, and expect two things;

Glory . . . later. Much later. Trouble now. If you sign up with Jesus, the world is going to treat you like an enemy combatant in a massively outnumbered battle. Be a christian. It'll suck . . . now. But in the next world, the next life, when Jesus returns triumphant and deposes Satan and judges this world, it's going to be awesome!

That's His message. That's the recruiters message. Bank on it. But what He undersells at first, is the fact that when enemy combatants are in that battle, the other team members are worth more to you than anything this world could have ever offered. And the fellowship with the King of kings, you would trade anything this world could have ever offered to have one minute being owned by Him.

Jesus doesn't recruit that way though. Instead, He clearly tells his disciples what it will cost, in order to have Him. You have to leave this

hostile world behind in order to be under His authority. His rule.

He began to say, "Blessed are you who are poor, for yours is the kingdom of God.

He's talking about this world, versus the next one. If you have come out of this world and belong to Him (ppn.3:20 *But our citizenship is in heaven, and we eagerly await a Savior from there, the Lord Jesus Christ*) . . . expect to be poor in this worlds treasures.

This world is five minutes long once you know Jesus and being rich here and now is more problematic for christians than it is helpful. Our treasure, our wealth, our riches are deferred to the next world, when we return with Jesus and reign with Him.

It doesn't mean that poor people go to heaven and rich people go to hell. It means in most cases, the more you engage this world as an enemy combatant, the heavier you get into that battle, the poorer in this worlds false rewards you're going to be.

It means you're under new ownership and your new King has other agendas for you, most often, than being rich in this world. It means all the value indicators have changed. What used to be considered riches, what this world considers riches; no longer ranks with you as riches.

It's a very black and white picture Jesus gives us. Someday we must congratulate the devil on thinking up America. It's the best thing he ever thought up to blur this black and white picture.

In America we're neither rich nor poor, we're neither hot nor cold, we're comfortable. And Jesus never said comfortable is a sin. Or did He?

How much will we encroach on the world and it's systems if it was going to cost us our comfort? Ever think about that? I do all the time. Right

now it costs me nothing to be a christian in Americaland.

It's easy to be a christian. Nobody minds. Much. Nobody cares. America is an eight lane freeway. Be a christian if you want, stay in your lane on the freeway, and it's all good. We're just fine with you being in your own lane on the freeway.

What happens after the next election, or the next one after that, when someone says, we've had about enough of you christians and your discriminatory views. No more. You're no longer allowed on the Americaland freeway. What then?

What if Jesus words actually come true for us, and to be a christian is to be poor in this world. Or worse. Maybe it's to get your head cut off in this world. How many who claim they identify with Americaland Evanjelly-ism will pay to keep the King of kings? *“Blessed are you who are poor, for yours is the kingdom of God.*

21 “Blessed are you who hunger now, for you shall be satisfied.

Same thing. Same scenario. I've never been hungry a day in my life. But there is another kind of hunger. What if we hunger and thirst for righteousness in Americaland. What if we're starved for a love relationship with the Saviour but we're living in a spiritual desert?

What would you pay so that you could come out of this world and walk with Jesus and the saints in glory. That's mostly for later. There is little to be satisfied about in the nasty now and now.

Jesus says, how blessed you really are when the things of this world don't satisfy you and you live for the things of the next world. He's looking for those folks as he gazes at His learners.

Blessed are you who weep now, for you shall laugh.

Same idea. If it costs you sorrow now in order to have Jesus, it will be worth every tear. We will rejoice forever with Him in the next life. Don't sell Jesus for laughter now.

This life the apostles just signed up for, and the disciples are learning about, will not be one where laughter is common. Those Jews who are plotting Jesus' destruction, they don't laugh much. It's warfare, not laughter.

The price we're asked to pay is this; Weep now, if necessary to follow Jesus, because we'll be laughing at His table with Him in eternity. If weeping is the price in order to have Jesus . . . then weep. He promises; the laughter will come.

22 "Blessed are you when men hate you, and ostracize you, and cast insults at you, and spurn your name as evil, for the sake of the Son of Man.

Blessed means happy. None of this makes sense . . . to this world. People are always looking for contradictions in the Bible. Hello. What Jesus says is totally a contradiction.

Happy are you when men hate you. Happy are you when they throw you out of the Americaland club. Happy are you when they hurl insults at you. Happy are you when they put your name at the top of the world's hate list.

That's all crazy talk. Who signs up for that? Oh, there's more to it than that. Happy are you when you make the world's top ten most despised people list because you belong to Jesus.

Happy are you when you become this world's public enemy number one because you have aligned yourself with Jesus.

What will you give up now in order to have Jesus forever? What cost is too much? Will you, if it becomes necessary, give up happiness, comfort, reputation, friendship with this world, acceptance and position in this world, laughter in this world, in order to have Jesus, forever.

That's the recruiter's message. It isn't easy believism, it's costs you everything in this world, believism. Jesus says; happy are you when you're at war with this world because of me. happy are you when you're an enemy combatant in this world always looking over your shoulder for danger, because you chose to have me instead.

23 "Be glad in that day, and leap for joy, for behold, your reward is great in heaven; for in the same way their fathers used to treat the prophets.

Belonging to Jesus is a giant contradiction in this world. He says if they come and throw you in prison and burn your house down and take your stuff, because of me, leap for joy.

It would be a good study to research how all of the different prophets died. Like getting sawn in half. Gruesome deaths inflicted by this world. Jesus says, if you're about to get sawn in half because of your relationship to Him, because you're an enemy combatant in this world, speaking the words of God to this world, you're in really good company. That would be reason for rejoicing. That's what they did to the prophets.

In less than two years from when Jesus spoke these words, I think, the world will nail Him to a cross. Good company, if you can get it.

24 "But woe to you who are rich, for you are receiving your comfort in full. 25 "Woe to you who are well-fed now, for you shall be hungry. Woe to you who laugh now, for you shall mourn and weep. 26 "Woe to you when all men speak well of you, for in the same way their fathers used to

treat the false prophets.

These are just the opposites of the points He has just made. If the world is in love with you . . . woe.

If you're on the wrong side of this battle between God and Satan, and the world loves you because, well, you're leading this worlds charge for the prince of this world. Woe.

If you are the friend of this world, what does that make you?

There was at least one person who fully understood what Jesus was talking about in this opening portion of the sermon on the mount. And he wrote the book of James. Here's his take on Jesus teaching;

Jas. 4:4 You adulteresses, (you whores) do you not know that friendship with the world is hostility toward God? Therefore whoever wishes to be a friend of the world makes himself an enemy of God.

Jesus gives His disciples, His learners a picture of a sharp dichotomy between belonging to Him and or belonging to this world. His image is of enemy combatants at war with this world, engaging in spiritual warfare, in harms way, to call others out of this world to belong to the King of kings instead of the prince of this world, Satan.

The separation is stark. But we have woken up this morning to find ourselves in a world where all of those sharp contrasts have been dulled. Because of the long history of how our nation was begun and settled and organized in law by biblically minded christians, there was for 200+ years a safe haven here for christians.

Christians and non-christians thrived together here because this country was purposely designed by christians to be user friendly for christians. But that is all changing at breakneck speed.

This nation was the exception, not the rule. The rule is stated by Paul when he says to Timothy (2Tim3:11b - 13 *what persecutions I endured, and out of them all the Lord delivered me! 12And indeed, all who desire to live godly in Christ Jesus will be persecuted. 13But evil men and impostors will proceed from bad to worse, deceiving and being deceived.*

all who desire to live godly in Christ Jesus will be persecuted.

There has never been a time, even here, when this wasn't true. Christians who are distinctively holy and set apart from this world will suffer loss in this world.

The world hates those who don't run with them. If you don't laugh at the joke with clear sexual overtones, the world can actually become hostile because that non-laughter becomes a judgement.

Ever wonder why the world has always hated the jews? God gave them a culture, distinct from the rest of the world, and those who are analyzing anti-semitism these days will tell you, the hatred stems from the fact that their distinct culture makes them stand separated from this world.

How much more so for christians who are seperated from this world unto godly lives. More and more that separation by living under the authority of this ancient book, and teaching others what this book says is right and wrong is a direct affront to our current world.

The black and white lines Jesus gives us on the Sermon on the Mount have always been the norm for christians. This morning we need to do a self assessment. Is there enough evidence in my walk in this world that those who may be watching me would know I'm different, set apart from this world.

If you are a perfect fit in this world, causing no one to note that you are set apart from it by the holiness of this book, Jesus has one word for you;

Woe!

That's because this world is condemned. This world is perishing. Don't perish with it. Come out of it and give your life to the King of kings.