

Sermon Note: Rejoice in the Vision

Sixth Sunday After the Epiphany

Introduction

This week, we continue our sermon series, *Foundations & Futures*, where we explore how God's presence shapes us now and calls us into the future. So far, we've looked at how faith is formed through habits, challenges, and trust. Now, we turn to Jesus' words in Luke 6, where he describes blessings and woes in ways that challenge conventional thinking. The world often defines success in terms of wealth, comfort, and status, but Jesus offers a different perspective—one that reorients our vision toward God's kingdom.

Illustration Video

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=vb6cGmMTAdM>

In *The Greatest Showman* (2017), P.T. Barnum realizes that his pursuit of fame and fortune has led him away from what matters most, so he chooses to return to the people who have always been his source of joy and belonging.

Why This Video?

In *The Greatest Showman* (2017), P.T. Barnum (Hugh Jackman) rises from nothing to create a dazzling spectacle, gaining wealth and fame along the way. But in chasing success, he loses sight of what matters most—his family, his friends, and the community that supported him from the beginning. The song “From Now On” marks his realization that he has been looking for fulfillment in the wrong places. He chooses to return to the people who truly cared for him, embracing a different vision of what success means. It's a turning point, shifting his focus from seeking applause to valuing relationships.

Video Discussion Questions

1. What does P.T. Barnum realize in this scene? How does his perspective on success change?
2. Have you ever pursued something, believing it would bring happiness, only to realize later that your priorities needed to shift?
3. What are some ways our culture defines success or fulfillment? How do those definitions shape the way people live?
4. In your own life, have there been moments when you had to let go of an old way of thinking in order to embrace something deeper or more meaningful?
5. If you had to define a “vision for a meaningful life,” what would that look like for you?

Luke 6:17-26 (NRSVue)

¹⁷He 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. ¹⁸They had come to hear him and to be

healed of their diseases, and those who were troubled with unclean spirits were cured. ¹⁹And everyone in the crowd was trying to touch him, for power came out from him and healed all of them.

²⁰Then he looked up at his disciples and said:

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

²¹“Blessed are you who are hungry now,
for you will be filled.

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

²²“Blessed are you when people hate you and when they exclude you, revile you, and defame you on account of the Son of Man. ²³Rejoice on that day and leap for joy, for surely your reward is great in heaven, for that is how their ancestors treated the prophets.

²⁴“But woe to you who are rich,
for you have received your consolation.

²⁵“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.

²⁶“Woe to you when all speak well of you, for that is how their ancestors treated the false prophets.

Study Questions

1. What kinds of people made up the crowd that gathered with Jesus on the level place?
2. What were some different reasons people in the crowd might have come to see Jesus?
3. To whom in the crowd did Jesus direct this teaching?
4. If Jesus preached these blessings and woes from the pulpit of LJUMC, how do you think you would respond? How do you think others in the congregation would respond? Why?
5. How does the suggestion that God’s kingdom is a present reality give you strength to endure hardship in your own faith journey?

Additional (Optional) Questions

1. What do you think it means to be ‘wealthy?’ What do you think it means to be ‘successful?’
2. Do we often see wealth and success as signs of God’s favor? How does Jesus’ teaching challenge or reshape that belief?
3. What do you believe it means to feel ‘satisfied’ in the Kingdom of God? Is it the same as being happy with physical things, or is it something else entirely?
4. Do you know anyone who struggles with feeling ‘satisfied?’ In other words, do you know a person who always seems to want more?

5. If Jesus were sharing blessings and warnings with us today, what do you think he would say? What modern-day 'blessings' or 'troubles' might he bring up?
6. What in your life do you see as a blessing? What in your life troubles you (or brings you woe)?

Weekly Action

Spend time this week listening for God's guidance on a vision for growth in your personal life or in our community. When something resonates, write it down and pray over it throughout the week. Then, identify one practical step you can take to begin making that vision a reality.

Prayer

Ever present God, help us to trust you and abide in your kingdom. Lead us and guide us to open our love, our hearts, our resources to those who have not, those who hunger, those who hurt. We pray in the name of Jesus, the Healer. Amen.

Disclosure: This Sermon Note was created by LJUMC staff with the support of AI tools.