

Luke Chapter 6 - John Karmelich

1. Let me start with my lesson title: Is Jesus in charge of our lives or not? As I studied this chapter, that line hit me over and over again. In the last lesson, I focused on how one can know for sure that Jesus is God. That chapter laid out a good number of proofs that Jesus is whom He claims to be and more of that proof comes up later in this book. That leads me to ponder if Jesus is who He claims to be, what are we supposed to do about it?
2. Let me pose this question another way: Most of us who are Christians accept the idea that Jesus is God. The issue to ask regularly is do we trust Him with every aspect of our lives? The classic line is, "Jesus, I believe you're in charge of my life, but I don't need your help at the moment". In times like that when we stumble, as we struggle in situations we think of as our strong suit to let Jesus be in charge of that part of our life. The Christian life can be described as a constant battle of letting go of the control over different aspects of our lives so that He can rule over them.
3. I state all of this to start this lesson, as that's what the chapter covers. It is Jesus teaching different groups about why He's in charge, and we have to accept it. With that said, let me briefly describe the stories in this chapter and hopefully that point will become obvious:
 - a) The first story is about Jesus and his disciples eating grain in a field on the Jewish Sabbath day. Some Pharisee's complained that it's against their interpretation of the bible for Jesus to be gathering that food to eat it. He responds by stating in effect that having compassion for those in need is a more important principal than resting on the Sabbath day. The point being that Jesus gets to decide what is and is not a violation of doing work on the Sabbath, which is one of the Ten Commandments. I'll explain that in more detail in this lesson.
 - b) The second story involves a man with a permanent disability to where he can't stretch out his hand. Jesus and that man were both in synagogue one Sabbath. The religious leaders were curious whether or not Jesus would heal that man there in the synagogue. The men who were experts in the Jewish law claimed that Jesus shouldn't heal that man then as for example they would have a problem with a doctor scheduling a surgery on that day. The response Jesus gave in was effectively, "Is it better to let someone suffer on the Sabbath, or if we can, should we help bring suffering to an end?" The point again is that Jesus gets to decide what are the proper interpretations of God's laws. Those religious leaders weren't crazy about the fact that Jesus healed the man then and there and the animosity between the religious leaders and Jesus grew on that day.
 - c) Then we get the story of Jesus picking His 12 disciples. The short version is that Jesus is in charge of who will be his official representatives. The key thing for us to notice is that He didn't pick any religious leaders but ordinary common people. It leads to the classic question of does God pick us or do we choose to follow Him? My response is it depends upon the perspective of that question: From God's perspective, He is in charge and that's why He chose us before the world began, faults and all. From our perspective, we made that choice to commit our lives to serving God. Either way, we need to acknowledge that Jesus is in charge of every aspect of our lives, including who are His disciples.
 - d) The second half of this chapter is what is nicknamed "The Sermon on the Plain". A classic scholar debate is whether or not this is from of the same speech as the famous "Sermon on the Mount". This sermon is shorter, but the text is very similar: This mini sermon can be summed up again with the question, "Is God in charge of our lives or not?" Jesus makes a good number of points to explain how one can be pleasing to God and then a number of points how one can suffer from turning from Him. Again, the whole sermon comes down to whether we desire Jesus to be in charge of every aspect of our lives or not. As I've now beaten that point over all our heads for a whole page now, let me break down and start to go over the text itself and see if it changes our views of Jesus and how we live our lives.

4. Chapter 6, Verse 1: One Sabbath Jesus was going through the grainfields, and his disciples began to pick some heads of grain, rub them in their hands and eat the kernels. ² Some of the Pharisees asked, "Why are you doing what is unlawful on the Sabbath?"
- a) Before we begin, it would be helpful to quote a couple of Old Testament laws: The first being the fourth of the 10 Commandments: "Remember the Sabbath day by keeping it holy. Six days you shall labor and do all your work, but the seventh day is a Sabbath to the Lord your God. On it you shall not do any work". That's taken from Exodus 20:8-10a.
 - i) At the time Jesus walked the earth, the religious leaders had taken the idea that we should rest from doing work and making it into a very complicated set of rules to be followed in order to avoid "working" on the 7th day. If one studies some of the rules and regulations they had to comply with, one gets the impression that it is almost impossible to keep that day "work free" as the religious leaders desired. To make it simple, understand they had a very detailed set of rules to describe what is and what is not "work" on the 7th day of the week.
 - ii) The second Old Testament command I would like to quote is Deuteronomy 23:25: "If you enter your neighbor's grainfield, you may pick kernels with your hands, but you must not put a sickle to their standing grain." John's loose translation: "If you are too poor to buy food, you eat some grain growing in a field, but you can't take more than what you can carry home without chopping down the stalk."
 - iii) I state those two laws to start this lesson to show that Jesus was not violating any biblical laws by what He was doing. What Jesus was violating was the Pharisee's official interpretation of that law. That's because to eat the grain that the disciples were eating, they rubbed them in their hands to separate the worthless parts of the grain from the edible part. That alone gives us an idea of just how complicated the set of laws were that had to be observed to be a Pharisee.
 - b) With that said, let me back up for a moment and discuss where we left off in Luke. Most of us know, the chapter numbers were not added until over a millennium after this book was written, so therefore, let's backtrack a little to see where we left off.
 - i) In the last part of Chapter 5 was Jesus gave two illustrations of not mixing an old way of doing things with a new way of doing things. He mentioned not putting a piece of cloth on an old garment as since the new piece of clothing will stretch as it is washed, it would tear the old garment. The second illustration was about skins of animals used to carry wine. The point being that when those skins get old, they get dry and can't handle expansion. Fresh grape juice expands as it becomes wine. The point in both cases is about not mixing the old way of doing things with a new way of doing things.
 - ii) Jesus' point was that one can't trust in that Jewish religious system's complicated set of rules and regulations and trust in God at the same time. Let me explain that concept this way: The way to please God is to fully trust in His complete payment for our sins and not try to show God how good we are based on keeping His laws. To put it another way, to follow God's laws is the best way for us to live our lives, but we don't earn points with Him by keeping them. We can't get more saved by following God's laws but we can live how He wants us to live by keeping them.
 - a) Therefore, the purpose of God's laws is to live a life pleasing to Him. As a simple example, we shouldn't steal or murder as then we are caring about the lives of other people. However, we are not "more saved" if we go our whole lives and never steal anything. In other words, God does not grade us on a curve of our good deeds outweighing our bad deeds. If that were the case, we would never know how good, good enough is, and we would never know how hard we have to work. Then we'd end up making a very complicated set of rules to follow like the Pharisee's did at that time.

- c) That little speech about God and "works", leads me back to these verses. The Pharisee's who saw Jesus and His followers eat this way, thought that He was violating God's laws by eating that way. The reason I quoted God's laws is to show us that there wasn't any violation of God's laws, just the Pharisee's interpretation of those laws. That's why Jesus gave the speech at the end of the last chapter about not trying to mix the "old and new". The new is our trust in Jesus complete payment for our sins and the old is about us trying to please God based on our efforts. Again, one can never know how much "good enough" is for God, which is why we can't please Him based on our efforts.
- d) With that stated, it's time to read Jesus actual response to those accusations:
 - 5. Verse 3: Jesus answered them, "Have you never read what David did when he and his companions were hungry? ⁴ He entered the house of God, and taking the consecrated bread, he ate what is lawful only for priests to eat. And he also gave some to his companions.'
 - a) One thing to understand about most religious Jewish people is that they know their Old Testament very well. I've met a few rabbis and all of them have memorized the first five books of the bible. The issue of studying one's bible is not just to read it, but to understand what it means. This is why all of us are encouraged to study our bibles and pray for His guidance as we do study it.
 - b) With that said, let me state Jesus point about what he is quoting: Jesus is referring to First Samuel Chapter 21. There is a story there of King David (before he was king) being on the run for his life, and desperate for food. He went to where the portable tabernacle stood as the official temple was not built yet and asked for food. The priest in charge gave David and his men what is called the "showbread". That is 12 loaves of bread (think flat bread) changed every week to show God's loyalty to the 12 tribes of Israel. When the new loaves were baked, only the priests were allowed to eat the old bread. However in that case, as David was hungry, the priests gave it to David.
 - i) OK, what's the point? The point is sometimes one of God's laws is more important than another of His laws: The important one is to show kindness and compassion for others and that takes priority over the law that only the priests were allowed to eat that bread. (Based on Leviticus 19:18 and 24:9).
 - c) Coming back to Jesus, he is trying to get the Pharisee's to consider the idea of compassion for the fact that Jesus had no food to eat being a more important fact to consider than the idea of Jesus "rubbing the grain" in order to separate the edible from the inedible. I guess the Pharisee's got the point as the text doesn't say they accused Him of that, after that.
 - d) Then Jesus makes an interesting comment:
 - 6. Verse 5: Then Jesus said to them, "The Son of Man is Lord of the Sabbath."
 - a) If you want an example of why I picked the lesson title of "Is Jesus in charge of our lives or not", this verse hits it on the head. Let me explain:
 - i) First, one needs to understand a technical term translated "Son of Man". Since the Pharisee's knew God's word, they would know that this term comes from the book of Daniel (7:13). It's an official title of the Messiah. Notice that Jesus is stating that whoever the Messiah is, He and He alone decides what is and is not a violation of the Sabbath. Jesus is also subtly implying that He is that man!
 - ii) While I don't think the Pharisee's there on the scene believed in Jesus as that point, I would guess they did accept the idea that "THE" Messiah does decide what is a violation of the Sabbath laws and the fact that showing compassion for those who are hungry is a greater issue than what is "working" on the Sabbath day.
 - b) As I said, this verse ties to my lesson title as it shows that Jesus is in charge of every aspect of our lives including what we should and should not do on the Sabbath. Christians have debated for 2,000 years about what we should do and not do on the Sabbath: As to what is a "Sabbath rest", I'll get to that later in this lesson. In the meantime, time to move on.

7. Verse 6: On another Sabbath he went into the synagogue and was teaching, and a man was there whose right hand was shriveled. ⁷ The Pharisees and the teachers of the law were looking for a reason to accuse Jesus, so they watched him closely to see if he would heal on the Sabbath. ⁸ But Jesus knew what they were thinking and said to the man with the shriveled hand, "Get up and stand in front of everyone." So he got up and stood there.
- a) Let me start with a bit of trivia. This story is also told in Matthew's Gospel (Chapter 12) and Mark's Gospel (Chapter 3). Only Luke's gospel mentions the fact that it was the right hand that was shriveled. That shows how Luke as a physician would care about that type of detail and he interviewed someone who knew that detail.
 - b) Let me explain the term "shriveled hand": The idea is one has limited use of it. Imagine if one could not stretch out one's arm and it wouldn't do what we want it to do. That's what this term means.
 - c) Some have suggested that the Pharisee's even brought this man to the synagogue to see if Jesus would heal that man. Don't know, but it's a possibility. The main point here is that the Pharisee's and the "teachers of the law" (the experts among the experts) were looking for some reason to accuse Jesus of violating God's laws. One can see just by these verses of the growing hatred of Jesus.
 - d) Understand that one of the hardest things for people to give up is power. The Pharisee's and the "teachers of the law" believed that the way to please God was to never violate any of God's laws or their interpretation of His laws. They thought that if Jesus violated any aspect of God's law, He can't be the Messiah. Their interpretation of the law was that one can't do any work on the Sabbath and Jesus healing someone constituted "work".
 - i) For what it is worth, such issues among the Orthodox Jews are still debated today. There are Orthodox Jewish people in the medical profession who will work to save a life on the Sabbath, but they'll also question what is and is not necessary to do on that day. I know that some of their interpretations of what they can and cannot do on the Sabbath have changed since the time of Jesus and I also know many of them are very strict on what can and cannot be done on that day of the week.
 - e) One thing you will notice as we go through the Gospels is that Jesus appears to go out of His way to do things on the Sabbath. It's almost as if Jesus wants to "rub it in their face" about what is and what is not a Sabbath violation. Again, it comes down to the idea of whether or not we accept Jesus as Lord (in charge) of the Sabbath or not.
 - i) With that said, let me personalize this for a second: I'm not going to get into the classical debate about whether or not the Sabbath is Saturday or Sunday. People have been arguing about this for thousands of years and I'm not going to solve it here. My simple view is to take off one day a week from work. I remember when someone asked me, "Can I mow the lawn on Sunday?" I responded, it depends on whether or not you make your living as a gardener. Do I believe in a day of rest? Yes I do, not to earn points with God, but because it's the best way to live out my life. My old joke is I nap on Sunday afternoons as I take my rest seriously!
 - f) Coming back to the text, notice Verse 8 says "Jesus knew what they were thinking". That could be God's power working through Him, or it could just be obvious by how they sat in the synagogue staring at Jesus. With that said Jesus is about to heal this man. Like the first story in this chapter, Jesus is about to show it's more important to show compassion than it is to worry about what is a violation of "resting" on the Sabbath.
 - i) Have there been times in my life where I have violated "resting on Sunday"? Lots of them, as necessity takes priority over resting. I keep that in mind as what I'm going to do with my day of the week off from work. I also like the idea of going to church on that day, as the idea of rest includes the concept of "resting in God" and not just say, sleeping.
 - ii) Meanwhile, it's time to see what Jesus says on this topic:

8. Verse 9: Then Jesus said to them, "I ask you, which is lawful on the Sabbath: to do good or to do evil, to save life or to destroy it?"
- a) While I was thinking about literally resting, Jesus is focusing on whether or not it is better to do something good on the Sabbath or let somebody suffer? This comes back to the idea for example of doctors or say fireman working on Sunday's. In summary, yes we should take time to rest, but we shouldn't be so rigid about it that we ignore what is important.
 - b) In layman's terms, we can be so rigid in thinking "I have to do this or that in order to be pleasing to God, that we forget to show compassion to people." There are times when we all need to remember that Christianity can be summed up with two key words: Love and truth. Sometimes we get too carried away in what God requires of us and that's when we tend to overemphasize God's truth. Other times we get so carried away with showing say compassion for others, we forget that God desires we live by a certain set of standards. I say all of that as I see Jesus here trying to get us to balance those two factors as we live to make a difference for Him in our lives.
 - c) With that said, it's time for Jesus to heal the man with the bad hand:
9. Verse 10: He looked around at them all, and then said to the man, "Stretch out your hand." He did so, and his hand was completely restored. ¹¹ But they were furious and began to discuss with one another what they might do to Jesus.
- a) As I read this verse I kept thinking about the word "they" in Verse 11. It's hard for me to imagine someone so set on keeping rules and regulations that they don't care a miracle is just performed right in front of them. It comes back to having balance between "love and truth". Some people can get so rigid in "this is the way we are supposed to do things" that they can't imagine anyone violating their interpretation even to help someone in need.
 - b) As I love to point out, the man who had his hand restored, did not live forever, and died one day for most likely some unrelated reason. My point is such miracles do not mean we get to live forever on earth. Still, God wants us to show His love to others and that means helping those who are hurting in some way. All of this comes leads back to the idea that we can't please God based on how good we are. We should to state the obvious, not steal or murder as that is the best way to live out our lives. We don't earn points with God by living that way, but it is the best way to live. In summary, it's about learning to live with that balance of love (compassion for others) and understanding God's desire that we do live a certain way. Getting out of that balance is when we lack compassion for others or we ignore God's will for our lives.
 - c) Also consider that when Jesus told this man to "stretch out his hand", that was something he could not do. It took some faith in the man to even trust Jesus to stretch it out as best he could in the first place. I sort of picture him thinking, "I can't do this, but if Jesus tells me to stretch, I'm stretching. I'm sure he was as shocked as anyone that it worked. What is to be learned from this is about "stretching our faith" to trust in what God calls us to do.
10. Verse 12: One of those days Jesus went out to a mountainside to pray, and spent the night praying to God. ¹³ When morning came, he called his disciples to him and chose twelve of them, whom he also designated apostles: ¹⁴ Simon (whom he named Peter), his brother Andrew, James, John, Philip, Bartholomew, ¹⁵ Matthew, Thomas, James son of Alphaeus, Simon who was called the Zealot, ¹⁶ Judas son of James, and Judas Iscariot, who became a traitor.
- a) The first thing I thought of as I read this was, "If Jesus is God, why did He have or want to spend all night in prayer over these men?" If God is God, couldn't He just say, "All of you over there, you've now been chosen by Me, deal with it and change your lives." I also was thinking, why pray all night praying over them? Wouldn't it just be a matter of thinking here are the men that God the Father wants, so let me go tell them now.
 - b) What I suspect is we're seeing the "human aspect" of Jesus. He always has full knowledge as God, but He wanted to humble Himself before God the Father to discuss these twelve as being a disciple will mean that each of them will suffer and die for the Gospel message.

- c) Let me put it this way: I assume Jesus cares about you and me as much as He does about the original twelve. There's nothing special about me that God picked me to follow Him. In effect I was going through life and on His timing, I was chosen by Him to follow Him with my life. From my perspective, I made the decision to commit my life to Him. From God's all knowing perspective, He knew who will and will not commit our lives to Him. We witness to all people as we don't have His knowledge of who will and will not make that commitment. That leads me back to the prayer for these disciples. I believe Jesus did spend all night in prayer not to learn who was chosen, but to ask God the Father to give them the strength and courage to be His witnesses through all of their lives.
- i) In other words, do I mess up? All the time. Still, the only reason I can be a witness for God is that I assume Jesus in effect prayed for Me all night as He has called me and hopefully you as well to use our time to make that difference for Him.
- d) With that bit of theology out of my system, let me talk a little about the 12 disciples. Let's start with the classic question of "why 12?" I'd say it's because that's a Jewish concept of what is a complete group. Historically there were twelve tribes of Israel so the idea of 12 disciples fits their way of thinking of a complete group.
- e) Next, let me define what is an apostle. The Greek word refers to a "sent one". Think of it as an official representative of someone else. An ambassador to a country is probably the closest idea to an apostle. So if they all died horrible deaths as either the bible or history records, what's the motivation for doing this? Fame? None of them has fame in their life and most of their lives they had to live on the run in fear of being killed. The answer is the classic idea that our rewards in heaven far outweigh whatever suffering we have to deal with in this lifetime. One of the reasons Christians emphasize the necessity of believing that Jesus is God is because of the painful life we can suffer as Christians in order to have that belief in the first place. In other words, it's worth it. It's worth all the suffering in our relatively short life span for the eternal benefits.
- i) As to the apostles themselves, the book of Revelation describes a "New Jerusalem" coming out of heaven with 12 entrances to this city. On the names of the 12 gates are the names of the 12 tribes and the names of the 12 apostles on the foundations. (See Revelation 21:14). My point is when we see this new Jerusalem, we need to get the idea it was built on the testimony of the apostles first, and then all others who are willing to be witnesses for Jesus in this world no matter the cost.
- f) This leads me to the classic question of why did Jesus pick Judas if God knew that Judas would betray Jesus one day? To quote one theologian, "I don't worry about why Jesus picked Judas, I'm much more surprised that Jesus picked me." With that said, I don't hold the view that Judas is one of the "12" in heaven. That leads to the classic debate over who did replace Judas, the man named Matthias in Acts Chapter 1 or Paul. I'll save that debate for another day and for now just say that Jesus had his reasons for picking Judas here.
- i) Speaking of which, let me discuss why Jesus was betrayed by one of His own. To answer, remember the idea that "What man does for evil, God is aware of, and can use it for His own good." For example the good that came out of the Holocaust is that Israel was allowed to have its homeland back again. I can't explain why all evil exists in this world. I just understand and accept the principal that what men and women can devise as evil, God can use for His own good.
- ii) That leads me back to why Jesus picked Judas. The short version is that Jesus is in control of what day He wanted to be crucified, which was on the Jewish holiday of Passover. With an "insider" being the traitor, and Jesus telling him so, on the night of the "last supper", in effect "The jig is up" and Judas had to betray Jesus when he did in order to prevent the other disciples from killing Him.
- iii) In summary, Judas' motivation for the betrayal was that he wanted the Messiah to rule now. He thought, "rule now or die" and the crucifixion event went from there.

- g) With that "bad news" of Judas out of my system, let me talk about the other disciples and why Jesus picked them. The first thing to consider is that Jesus didn't pick anyone with a "seminary" background like a Pharisee or a teacher of the law. He picked ordinary men who were mostly fishermen. That comes back to you and me. Most of the people that are chosen to make a difference for Jesus come from ordinary backgrounds. It's as if God is saying to us, want your life to count for something and make an eternal difference? Then drop everything and follow Me". Of course we still have to provide for ourselves and all of that, but the important point is that we use what limited time we have in whatever way we can to make a difference for God in our lives.
- h) As to the names themselves, whenever they are listed in the bible Peter (or Simon, same guy) is always listed first. He became the spokesman and was the natural leader. One of the many things a good teacher may do for a student is give them a nickname to live up to in life. The name Peter means "rock". If you study the bible carefully, whenever Jesus is speaking to Peter, He uses the name Peter when he is doing God's will. When Peter is not doing God's will, Jesus will usually say "Simon" to remind Peter that he's relying upon his desire and not God's will at the present moment.
- i) As to the others, I could give you a little lecture about each one. In summary some names were more famous in church history than others. History records that they almost all died violent deaths as they were tortured to deny Jesus as God. Some of their contributions are more famous than others. For example, John wrote one of the gospels and a few epistles. Others we know little about. If you read this list in other places in the bible, some of the people have aliases, as it's common then and now for people to have more than one name.
- i) In summary, Jesus picked nonreligious professionals. They probably wouldn't get along with other to work as a team to make a difference for Him. If that isn't a good summary of what God calls us to do as Christians, I don't know what is. With Jesus deciding who is going start the process of who will make a difference for Him, it's time for Jesus to discuss about what it takes for others (like us) to follow Him.
11. Verse 17: He went down with them and stood on a level place. A large crowd of his disciples was there and a great number of people from all over Judea, from Jerusalem, and from the coast of Tyre and Sidon,¹⁸ who had come to hear him and to be healed of their diseases. Those troubled by evil spirits were cured,¹⁹ and the people all tried to touch him, because power was coming from him and healing them all.
- a) Beginning in Verse 20 and running to the end of the chapter, we're going to get a sermon by Jesus that in essence talks about what it requires to be saved and who is, and who isn't saved for eternity. Much of what Jesus says here is almost identical (but much shorter) to what Jesus said on the "Sermon on the Mount" in Matthew Chapters 5-7. Therefore, some scholars argue this is the same sermon, while others argue it is a different one with Jesus making the same points. I find that debate boring. Whether it's the same speech or not, the point is the arguments are made here so that we understand what it really means to have Jesus be in charge of our lives.
- b) Before I get to that speech itself, it's time to go over these three verses first. The first thing it says is that Jesus stood on a level place. That's why some argue this is a different speech than the "Sermon on the Mount" as it was a level plain. The view that it's the same speech is based on from where Jesus was standing the horizon looks level. There now you know the key debate point about where this speech took place, so I can move on.
- c) As to who was there, Jesus is at a point in His ministry where He is now drawing a large crowd from all over the greater area, including people from outside of Israel itself. Some came to hear him speak and others came to see the "miracle show" and be healed. Notice Jesus didn't let down the miracle crowd and He healed whoever desired it. After all the healing was probably done, I picture Jesus saying, "OK, enough healing, let me talk".

12. Verse 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 men 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 fathers treated the prophets.
- a) These verses are referred to as the "blessings". Before I begin to describe them, I want you to consider two things:
 - i) First is that Jesus looked at his disciples when He said this, and not the crowd. It's as if to say, "If you really want to be my disciples, here is how you should consider your life." That's the point for you and me: If we really want Jesus to be in charge of every aspect of our lives, we need to develop the type of attitude Jesus spoke of here in these verses. As to the specific's I'll get to that in a moment.
 - ii) Second, understand what is a "blessing". The issue is not happiness, but joy. Let me explain what I mean by that: Happiness is based on circumstances. If I won a big prize I might be happy for that moment. If someone laughs at my joke, I'd be happy for the moment as it feeds my ego. Joy on the other hand, is an attitude that we can have no matter the circumstances. My point is life can be going horrible at the moment, but one can still have joy if one considers the attitude Jesus wants us to have about life based on these verses. As to the specific's of these verses, let me break down and discuss them now.
 - b) To begin, understand that the attitude Jesus wants us to develop is the opposite of what most people think it takes to enjoy life. Jesus is saying, be poor (truly poor), be hungry, weep (cry) and appreciate the fact that people hate us for the Gospel sake. I admit that the first time I heard all of this, my thought is, "what?" I'm supposed to be joyful by doing all of this? One has to admit it goes against human nature. My point is it requires some practice to appreciate the type of things Jesus is talking about. However, I'm convinced that we do learn to think this way, our internal "joy clock" does appreciate life more.
 - c) Let's start with the idea of being "poor" to go to heaven. This is not about how much stuff we own. It's about realizing we have nothing to offer God based on how we live. Think of a beggar who has to daily depend on others' generosity to survive. That's the idea of "spiritual poorness" Jesus is talking about. Think of religious people who think they are superior to others because of their religious acts. Jesus is saying to them in effect, "Stop that. Approach God as if we have nothing to offer, and then we get into heaven."
 - i) But John, haven't you said in the past that God gives each of us gifts and passions and the great joy in life is learning to use what we enjoy doing for His glory? Yes but that's a separate issue. We can't say, "I'm saved because I enjoy doing this and at times I do it for God's glory." It is to realize those gifts and passions came from God in the first place and we are truly poor even with whatever talents we have. The point is the way to truly appreciate life is to realize we are nothing without God's help and then we can appreciate any and all benefits that life offers us.
 - d) With that said, let's now look at Verse 21: "Blessed are you who hunger now, for you will be satisfied. Blessed are you who weep now, for you will laugh." Jesus is not just talking about food, as much as our attitude. The point is not to go through life always starving ourselves or always crying over every situation. The issue is, what are we hungering for?
 - i) Food is temporary. One can eat a huge meal and eventually we need to eat again so I know that isn't the issue. The hunger is about the desire to have our life right with God. One of my kids asked me the other day how do I know when I do some thing that isn't right. Do I get a felling in my stomach? I responded with, if it says in the bible stealing is wrong and you steal, and it bothers you, then that feeling of not being pleasing to God at that moment is what is controlling you right there.

- ii) That leads me back to the idea of "hunger". It is the idea that we desire to please God with our lives, but we know we can't satisfy that hunger based on our efforts. Therefore we hunger for His guidance and our desire to live as He desires we live based on what His word teaches us. Again, we don't live a good life to get points with God. We live a biblical based life as that's the best way for us to live. That's why we hunger, because we know we can't please God based on our efforts.
 - iii) That leads me to the second part of this verse: The weeping. The idea is to realize just how impossible it is to please God based on our efforts. Weeping is a natural human reaction to wanting to change a certain situation but not able to. To weep here is again about realizing we can't please God based on our efforts. Once we do make that realization we can have joy knowing that our salvation fully depends on our trust in God and we can't earn it based on trying harder. With that said, let me now move on to Verse 22.
 - e) Verses 22 focuses on being hated for being a Christian. Through most of history, through most of the world it's a death sentence or a hard punishment to be a devout Christian. It can mean exclusion from a society or certain events. More Christians around the world are persecuted today for the Gospel's sake than any time in history. What Jesus is saying here is despite that persecution, be joyful, knowing that one's rewards in heaven are far greater than any punishment one receives in this lifetime. It's the concept of putting up with bad things in hope of better things in the future. That's why it is so necessary to trust in the idea that Jesus truly is God or else as Paul put it, "Christians are to be pitied for the way they live out their lives". (Based on 1st Corinthians 15:19.) Remember that Jesus was talking to His disciples to say in effect, "Yes it's tough now and it will be tough as long as you live on this planet to follow Me, because your eternal joy is greater than all suffering that you'll receive in this lifetime."
 - i) So if life is going well for the moment, am I doing something wrong? No. What this verse means is that if we're making a difference for Jesus, we can expect some sort of suffering and we shouldn't lose our internal joy over it.
 - f) All of that leads perfectly to Verse 23. It says we should leap for joy when we do suffer for the sake of the Gospel. Notice the verse does not refer to any type of persecution, only the kind that comes from living as God desires we live. Unfortunately there are way too many martyrs in the world for the wrong reasons. A few Muslims are willing to die by blowing themselves up thinking they get eternal rewards for dying that way. That's not what Jesus is teaching here. The point is that the world doesn't like the message that to be a good person does not have eternal benefits. They think getting into heaven is all about one's good deeds being greater than one's sins. The point is because Christians preach a message that is the opposite of how most of the world thinks, one has to accept the idea that suffering for the Gospel's sake unfortunately is as much a promise from God as is the idea that we will be eternally rewarded for trusting in His full payment for our sins.
 - g) Jesus final point is about Old Testament prophets. History records that they were mostly killed in violent ways as a majority of people rejected their messages as well. It's kind of like the old song "My Way". Most people want to live their lives their way and not submit to God in the sense of realizing their bankruptcy before Him. That's why those prophets were killed and that's why Christians do suffer when we do preach God's truth to others.
13. Verse 24: "But woe to you who are rich, for you have already received your comfort. ²⁵Woe to you who are well fed now, for you will go hungry. Woe to you who laugh now, for you will mourn and weep. ²⁶Woe to you when all men speak well of you, for that is how their fathers treated the false prophets.
- a) If you thought the blessings of the past few verses are tough to accept, wait until you read the "woe's" of Verses 24 to 26. In essence, they make the same points as the last few verses except they focus on the price to be paid if we only live for this life and not eternity.

- b) With that said, I'm convinced this verse is not teaching us to sell everything we own and go be "dirt poor" in order to be saved. The issue is not how much money we have, but our attitude about wealth in comparison to our attitude about God.
 - c) I have to admit, when I read Verse 24, I think about something my father said at one point in his life. He wrongly thought at one time he can solve many of his problems financially. As he got financially successful late in life, we talked about this issue. In effect, I brought up Verse 24 although not quoting it, to talk about our relationship with God and money. The epilogue of that story is my now deceased father I'm convinced had to learn the hard way that money can make one happy at times, but not joy. Joy with God is to realize that no matter how successful or unsuccessful we are financially, nothing we do can earn our salvation with Him. My father and I had long talks in his later years about such issues. I believe it sank in at one point in his life about that issue.
 - d) Coming back to this verse, is it saying that if one is rich, one can't be saved. There was a queen of England who said she was saved by the letter "m" in many. That's based on the King James Version of 1st Corinthians 1:26 that says, "not many noble are called". The key point here is that one's wealth is not the issue. The issue is our attitude about that wealth and what causes us true joy in life.
 - e) In summary these verses are not saying you can't enjoy a good meal or laugh at times. It is to realize our spiritual bankruptcy before God and any and all benefits that we do get in this lifetime need to be put in that perspective. Jesus point isn't that we go through life to try be as miserable as possible. It's simply to realize all of the good things we do get in life by wealth, don't matter eternally. They may benefit it us now, but we aren't more saved if we do have wealth than if we don't. That's the point.
14. Verse 27: "But I tell you who hear me: Love your enemies, do good to those who hate you, ²⁸bless those who curse you, pray for those who mistreat you. ²⁹If someone strikes you on one cheek, turn to him the other also. If someone takes your cloak, do not stop him from taking your tunic. ³⁰Give to everyone who asks you, and if anyone takes what belongs to you, do not demand it back. ³¹Do to others as you would have them do to you.
- a) John MacArthur summarized this well as he said, "treat other people as you want them to treat you". That means if someone is mean to you, trust them as you want to be treated even if they don't treat us based on having the attitude of wanting to be treated well.
 - b) By the way these verses do not mean we are to "take it" when being hurt. If someone is hitting us on one side of the face, we don't let them hit us some more on the other side of the face. Jesus Himself gave a wonderful example of this attitude when He was on trial for his life. Let's look at John 18:22-23: When Jesus said this, one of the officials nearby slapped him in the face. "Is this the way you answer the high priest?" he demanded. "If I said something wrong," Jesus replied, "testify as to what is wrong. But if I spoke the truth, why did you strike me?" (NIV Version).
 - i) My point is when someone slapped Jesus in the face, He didn't say, "hit me again" but said, "tell me what I said wrong". Jesus didn't retaliate or strike the man dead but just asked nicely to explain what He said wrong. That is the attitude that Jesus is talking about here in these verses.
 - c) Then do the other verses mean we should give away whatever we own to whoever asks it of us? Through much of history, Christians have been taken advantage of by these verses as many have given away what they own in order to comply with these verses. The issue is not to live "dirt poor" as I said earlier. The issue is our attitude about "stuff". Like most people I have to deal with beggars as they are common in most cities. I let God guide me as to when to give and not give. I admit other Christians are better at this than me as I've seen some who prepare bags of food to hand out to whoever asks of them.
 - i) I admit I try to use Proverbs 30:8-9 as my guideline to money. It says we should never try to be too rich or too poor as either way we can get our focus off of God.

- ii) In summary here, Jesus point is that the life of the Christian is to be focused on making a difference for God, and not say, just consumed with trying to make a living for ourselves. These verses are not about allowing ourselves to be taken advantage of. It's about our attitude about "stuff" to begin with. If we are so consumed with stuff, it becomes a priority over God Himself. Jesus point is that if we want to be His disciple our focus should be on Him and not "stuff".
 - iii) With that difficult point stated, it's time to come back to Jesus' sermon here.
- 15. Verse 32: "If you love those who love you, what credit is that to you? Even `sinners" love those who love them.³³ And if you do good to those who are good to you, what credit is that to you? Even `sinners" do that.³⁴ And if you lend to those from whom you expect repayment, what credit is that to you? Even `sinners" lend to `sinners," expecting to be repaid in full.
 - a) Jesus is making an obvious point to show the contrast of how He expects His followers to act versus how nonbelievers act. The point is nonbelievers help their families and friends and may even lend to strangers in hope of a profit. In contrast, Jesus expects us who trust in Him to show kindness to people who we don't expect anything in return.
 - b) This leads me back to John MacArthur's quote about "Treat others as you'd want them to treat us." In other words, it's not about expecting others to treat us with kindness, but just to act that way as that is how God wants us to act. I'll be the first to admit, this is a tough thing to do and takes practice. This is why the Christian has to rely upon the Holy Spirit to work in our lives so that we can have the power to be kind to those who are not kind to us in the first place.
- 16. Verse 35: But love your enemies, do good to them, and lend to them without expecting to get anything back. Then your reward will be great, and you will be sons of the Most High, because he is kind to the ungrateful and wicked.
 - a) Stop and consider why we have enemies in the first place: It's usually because we want things done one way and the other person or group wants things done another way. It can be as simple as the other person not liking our attitude about life or thinking that we have hurt them in some way, but whether we like it or not, some people simply develop a hatred of who we are. It can be based on our background, our looks or our beliefs. The problem of course is we can't fix them or change them. All we can do is treat them as we want to be treated even if they don't change.
 - b) An expression I use every now and then is, "It's not my job to fix people. My job is to be a good witness for Jesus and it's His job to deal with people." I can think of situations in my life where someone has been really mad at me for some reason. I've had to learn over and over again, to give my anger to God and say something like, this is now Your problem as I don't know what to do about it. It's usually when I let go of that anger that God works it out for His glory and the problem goes away.
 - c) There is a good proverb to keep in mind when someone is dealing with someone we'd consider an enemy at the moment: "When the Lord takes pleasure in anyone's way, he causes their enemies to make peace with them." (Proverbs 16:7, NIV) That means when we focus on being pleasing to God (that is, avoiding sin), He deals with our enemies and gives us peace through that situation. I've seen that come true time and time again.
 - d) This leads to the second part of this verse. The short version is "delayed gratification". I simply mean that as Christians we often have to suffer for trusting in Jesus in this lifetime but we have to have faith not only that God will see us through difficult times, but also there are great rewards waiting for us in exchange for putting up with those who hurt us.
- 17. Verse 36: Be merciful, just as your Father is merciful.
 - a) Let's be honest, when we are angry at someone, we focus on their faults and usually don't focus on the fact that God loves them as much as He loves us. As I said, it takes practice to get used to the idea of showing kindness to someone who is not kind to us. The idea is to see the big picture how God is forgiving to us and we need to have the same attitude.

- b) I like to point out that in the "Lord's Prayer" (coming up later in Luke), the only thing that God asks us to do in that prayer is forgive others. Every other line in that prayer is about things we ask God to do for us. The reason God wants us to forgive and be merciful to others, including others who are angry at us, is that's the type of attitude Jesus has for us. It's like, we expect God to forgive us of our faults, but we don't for the moment hold that same type of attitude toward others, even and especially when they are mean to us. In other words, the only way to get past the anger is to rise above it, which is what Jesus is asking us to do here in this verse.
18. Verse 37: "Do not judge, and you will not be judged. Do not condemn, and you will not be condemned. Forgive, and you will be forgiven." ³⁸ Give, and it will be given to you. A good measure, pressed down, shaken together and running over, will be poured into your lap. For with the measure you use, it will be measured to you.'
- a) When we get to heaven, will God judge us based on our trust in Jesus? Of course.
- b) When we encounter people, do we make judgments based on their actions and do they make judgments based on our actions? All the time.
- c) Therefore it is not the idea of judgment itself that Jesus is condemning. The idea is about rising above the judgment seeing others as needing God and not condemning others.
- d) Let me give some quick examples of when we break this commandment:
- i) We break this command when we think the worst of others.
- ii) We break this command when we only speak to others of their faults.
- iii) We break this command when we judge others without considering ourselves in their same circumstances.
- iv) All these examples come from David Guzik's commentary on this verse.
- e) The point is the way we rise above the anger is to see it from God's perspective.
19. Verse 39: He also told them this parable: "Can a blind man lead a blind man? Will they not both fall into a pit?" ⁴⁰ A student is not above his teacher, but everyone who is fully trained will be like his teacher.
- a) Stop and consider, can a blind man lead another blind man through heavy traffic? Of course not. The point is nonbelievers will expect you to act in hatred as they are acting in hatred in those situations. They can't handle when we rise above it. Again, the only way to even act this way is not based on willpower, but by trusting in God's power to be able to work through us. That's why Jesus states in Verse 40 that we can only be like one who is training us in the first place.
- b) In most occupations, the way one learns the most about a job isn't classroom education, but simply following and observing what one's boss tells them to do. The point is after one is trained for a while one acts like the boss. We each have our own way of processing information, but still the purpose of training is for the student to act the way the boss is acting. That is Jesus point about forgiveness. It's not about using our willpower to tough it out in difficult situations, but trusting in God's power to rise above say, the anger.
- c) In the meantime, Jesus isn't finished about comparing our lives to others:
20. Verse 41: "Why do you look at the speck of sawdust in your brother's eye and pay no attention to the plank in your own eye?" ⁴² How can you say to your brother, "Brother, let me take the speck out of your eye," when you yourself fail to see the plank in your own eye? You hypocrite, first take the plank out of your eye, and then you will see clearly to remove the speck from your brother's eye.
- a) I always found this parable comical. He's saying we can't see other's faults because in effect we have a big log stuck in our eyes. This doesn't mean we have to be perfect if we are to judge others. It means to consider our own shortcomings say before God before we pronounce judgment on others. It's about perspective in seeing faults. Jesus is saying, if we take a moment to consider our own faults, we won't be so harsh in judging others in whatever ways they have hurt us at that moment.

21. Verse 43: "No good tree bears bad fruit, nor does a bad tree bear good fruit." ⁴⁴ Each tree is recognized by its own fruit. People do not pick figs from thornbushes, or grapes from briars. ⁴⁵The good man brings good things out of the good stored up in his heart, and the evil man brings evil things out of the evil stored up in his heart. For out of the overflow of his heart his mouth speaks.
- a) I admit I love how Jesus can take simple illustrations that anyone can relate to in order to make His point. What is obvious is we can't pick fruit from a non-fruit bearing tree.
 - b) Along the same line of thought, how a person acts fits in based on what they are thinking. In other words, just as we can't pick a fruit from a non-fruit tree, we can judge easily how a person is acting based on the words they say or the tone of their voice as they say them. Notice Jesus is teaching us to judge here. The issue is not whether or not we judge, but how we judge and our attitude while we are judging others.
 - c) In summary, when we are in a tough situation where we are suffering due to the actions of another person, it helps to pause and think about the situation from God's perspective: That is, just as He has forgiven us of all our sins, we need to see others as needing to be forgiven as well. Again it comes back to treating others, as we want to be treated, not as we are actually being treated at that moment.
22. Verse 46: "Why do you call me, "Lord, Lord," and do not do what I say?" ⁴⁷ I will show you what he is like who comes to me and hears my words and puts them into practice. ⁴⁸ He is like a man building a house, who dug down deep and laid the foundation on rock. When a flood came, the torrent struck that house but could not shake it, because it was well built. ⁴⁹ But the one who hears my words and does not put them into practice is like a man who built a house on the ground without a foundation. The moment the torrent struck that house, it collapsed and its destruction was complete.'
- a) Jesus point about a student acting like his teacher leads back to what He was specifically teaching in the last few verses. If we trust in who Jesus is and what He'll do for us on the cross, no matter how bad of a mess we are in, He will be there to guide us through it, no matter what. That's why we don't have to worry about the storms of life or people who try to hurt us. Yes we still have to deal with that reality, but God promises to be there to guide us through it and we don't have to worry about the loss of things.
 - i) That is why I refer to this whole chapter as teaching us the concept of "Is Jesus in charge of our lives or not?" This last section explained what it really means for us for Jesus to be in charge and how we are to live.
 - b) Let me end by coming back to the idea of salvation by "works" versus faith. Are we saved just by believing Jesus died for all our sins? Of course. Then what's the purpose of acting the way Jesus wants us to act based on this chapter? As I love to state, it's because that is the best way for us to live. In other words, we can be like the world around us, and hate others as others hate us, or we can rise above it, using God's power to see others as God sees them and sees us. In other words we can't get more saved by acting this way, but it is a better way to go through life and makes us a better witness for Jesus to live that way.
 - c) I admit, I went pretty fast through the last dozen or so verses of this chapter. My view on Jesus speaking is in effect, who am I to comment on what God says? It comes back to the idea of do I accept Jesus as being in charge of my life or not? If He is in charge, then I let His words sink in and not say a lot about it as His words speak for Himself.
23. That's why Jesus says others will know we are Christians by our love for one another. It's having that good balance of God's truth and God's love in our lives. Thanks for putting up with me as I run long. Time to close in prayer: Heavenly Father, help us to know that Your Spirit is always there to guide us through whatever we have to face at this moment. Give us the courage to rise above our issues and see others as You see them. Help us to be forgiving as You have forgiven us. Help us to use our lives to make a difference for You no matter what the situation we're dealing with at the moment. In Jesus name, Amen.