

The title for today's message is: **Luke gives us a down to earth sermon.**

Let us pray: Dear Heavenly Father, you poured out your saving grace upon us through your Son, Jesus the Christ, who entered into death to destroy the power of death, and rose victoriously from the grave to bring immortality to light. Through the power of your Holy Spirit, strengthen our faith in the hope of the life to come, and empower us to live our lives in this present world, as you would have us live. This we ask in Christ's holy name. Amen.

There are some striking differences between our Gospel lesson from Luke, and its counterpart in Matthew's Gospel.

Thus, I would like to begin with a brief comparison of these two accounts, which I believe will help us better grasp the significance of our lesson for this morning.

In Matthew's Gospel, when Jesus saw the crowds, we are told that he went up a mountain, where he was alone with his disciples, to teach them.

The implication is that Matthew's "Sermon on the Mount," as it is affectionately known, had a limited audience, intended for his closest disciples.

But according to Luke's Gospel, Jesus went up the mountain where he spent the night in prayer.

When he had finished, he called those who had been following him together, and chose twelve of them to become his disciples.

Now the implication in Luke, is that Jesus spent this time on the mountain in private meditation and prayer.

He did this in order to be led by God's Spirit to choose those who would become his closest students.

Then, following his selection of "the twelve," he came down from the mountain, to the plain, or level place.

Where he was surrounded by a huge multitude of people from all over the region.

These were people who had come to hear him preach, and to be healed of various diseases.

Now, there is more involved here than simply the location in which Jesus preached.

At that time, the mountain was understood to be the place where one could enter into the Spiritual presence of God.

For example, it was on the mountain where Moses received God's call from the burning bush, to return to Egypt to free Israel from bondage.

And it was on the mountain where Moses received the Ten Commandments.

So the mountain became associated with the place of spiritual discernment.

Whereas the level place was where common, everyday work was done. Therefore, it's not surprising that Jesus went up the mount to pray for God's guidance in choosing his apostles.

But the location in which this sermon of Jesus took place, can also help us understand the difference between the two accounts in Luke and Matthew.

In Matthew, where this sermon takes place on the mount, it is very spiritual in nature.

Compared to the down to earth concerns that Luke records Jesus addressing. For example, in Matthew, Jesus says:

“Blessed are the poor in spirit, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven.” Now to be clear when Jesus said “Blessed are the poor in spirit.

He was saying blessed are those who are lacking in their belief or weak in their faith in Jesus Christ.

But in Luke, Jesus says; “Blessed are you who are poor”, here Jesus is saying, blessed are those who lack money.

Or we can consider what Matthew says Jesus said; “Blessed are those who hunger and thirst for righteousness, for they will be filled.”

And here in our text Luke says that Jesus said; “Blessed are you who are hungry now, for you will be filled.”

Here again, Matthew’s account of what Jesus was saying when he said; “Blessed are you who are hungry now, for you will be filled,” Is very different than what Luke’s account is.

Matthew’s account is spiritual in nature, asking us to explore our relationship with God, yet Luke’s account challenges us to honestly.

Look at our relationship and values that we place on living in relationship with one another, here on earth.

I believe that Luke’s Gospel wants us to realize that when we come into God’s presence, and experience God’s gift of grace, we receive in our relationship with Jesus Christ.

That it's not simply a restoration of our relationship with Jesus, no, here Luke wants us to realize something very important.

Which is that through our baptism into Christ's death and resurrection, we have already become members of God's kingdom, here on earth.

As a result, Jesus comes down from the mountain, to the plain, the level place, where the everyday concerns of people living in our world might be addressed.

And he not only preaches the grace of God, he also expresses it in ways that lets them know that God cares for them, now.

Jesus does what he can, to bring the kingdom of God into their midst, with loving compassion for those who are poor and who are hungry, in this life.

I'm sure most of us have heard the adage, "You are so heavenly minded, that you are of no earthly good."

It is a description of a person who dedicates their life to pursuing spirituality in concern for their own well being with God.

All the while ignoring the needs of those in this world who live around them.

Well, Luke wants us to realize that Jesus not only wants us to be concerned about our spiritual relationship with Him.

But also to know that through Christ's death and resurrection we have the assurance of God's promise of life eternal in his kingdom.

He also wants us to realize that in God's kingdom, the things that we value as we live in the various societies on earth.

May not be the values that will govern God's kingdom. In fact, Jesus indicates in this sermon on the plain.

That in God's kingdom, the things that we value on earth may be the opposite of what God would have us aspire to.

Jesus is saying, God cares for the poor, for the hungry, for those who are sad and mourning.

And for all those persons whom society, especially a capitalistic society, tends to neglect and forget, in pursuit of success.

Jesus says that in God's kingdom, what we value in society will be turned upside down.

For God has concern for each and every one whom he has created, especially those in need.

There is no mistake my friends, that in this passage from Luke, we are being called to live today, as members of God's kingdom.

We are being called to pattern our life after Jesus, who not only spent time discerning his relationship with God, and following his Father's will.

But also cared and ministered to people in need, especially those whom we often ignore.

Finally, it is my belief that in this passage from Luke, the list of woes that Jesus proclaims, is not meant to be a list of things that Christians need to avoid in order to gain access to God's kingdom.

Jesus is not asking us to become poor and hungry in order to merit a life in God's kingdom.

Rather, I believe that Jesus is saying that those whom our society regards as being successful.

Those who have made the grade, and have achieved success according to our society, may have a hard time realizing that in God's kingdom, their earthly status is of no avail.

They will no longer enjoy the prestige of their earthly wealth or position, for they will be on an even basis with the poor, the hungry, and those whom they have long ignored.

The truth is, we have all sinned and fall short of what it means to belong to the kingdom of God, both spiritually and in our relationship with those around us.

But through the grace of God, manifest in Christ's death and resurrection, we can know God's forgiveness.

And through the power of God's Spirit, at work through his church, we can be empowered to renew our relationship with God.

My friend's, only through God's Spirit, can we live what Luke tells us Jesus preached this day, and become his disciples, his church on earth.

Amen.

The grace of the Lord Jesus Christ and the love of God and the fellowship of the Holy Spirit, be with us all. Amen.