

The Upside-Down Kingdom
A Sermon by Rev. Frances Savill
Sunday November 27, 2022

Luke 6:17-30

Most of you know that I am a military chaplain as well as a minister. Military training isn't easy, it is supposed to stretch and challenge us. Days are long. Very long. Starting with PT early at dark. There are tests daily, new information constantly, inspections, timings, etc. It's stressful, and it's intended to be stressful.

I had my car and music CD on, and there was a recurring song that seemed to play much more often than any other. The song was *Keep Making Me*.

The words go like this:

*Make me broken So I can be healed
'Cause I'm so calloused And now I can't feel
I want to run to You With heart wide open
Make me broken*

*Make me empty So I can be filled
'Cause I'm still holding unto my will
And I'm completed When you are with me
Make me empty*

*Make me lonely So I can be yours
'Til I want no one More than You, Lord
'Cause in the darkness I know you will hold me
Make me lonely*

*'Til you are my one desire
'Til you are my one true love
'Til you are my breath, my everything
Lord, please keep making me*

I was pretty broken at that time, stressed and struggling, and I did not like that song. I couldn't pray those words, hearing it I thought; "You have no idea what you're talking about." Who prays "make me broken", "make me empty".

But I did pray; "Lord, please keep making me." And I did sense that God was using that time of brokenness, as part of making me, even if I didn't like it.

Courses end, and life settles down, and things are busy, and I found myself praying those words. At times I find myself calloused, and I need God to break me, a little, so my heart can be opened again. And my constant prayer is "Lord, please keep making me." Make me more and more into the image of my Lord.

We come to Luke 6 with Jesus' teaching on what life in His kingdom is like. And in this teaching, Jesus describes an upside-down world – values opposite to any other. Jesus calls for radical generosity and mercy. His kingdom calls for servant leadership, where sworn enemies are to find a new way of life and be reconciled in Jesus.

I find The Message to be most helpful in understanding what Jesus is calling us to:
You're blessed when you've lost it all.
God's kingdom is there for the finding.
You're blessed when you're ravenously hungry.
Then you're ready for the Messianic meal.
You're blessed when the tears flow freely.
Joy comes with the morning.

Vs 22-23 Count yourself blessed every time someone cuts you down or throws you out, every time someone smears or blackens your name to discredit me. What it means is that the truth is too close for comfort and that that person is uncomfortable. You can be glad when that happens - skip like a lamb, if you like! For even though they don't like it, I do, and all heaven applauds. And know that you are in good company; my preachers and witnesses have always been treated like this.

Vs 24 But it is trouble ahead if you think you have it made. What you have is all you'll ever get.

Vs 25 And it is trouble ahead if you're satisfied with yourself. Your self will not satisfy you for long. And it is trouble ahead if you think life's all fun and games. There's suffering to be met, and you're going to meet it.

Vs 26 There's trouble ahead when you live only for the approval of others, saying what flatters them, doing what indulges them. Popularity contests are not truth

contests - look how many scoundrel preachers were approved by your ancestors! Your task is to be true, not popular.

Vs 27-30 To you who are ready for the truth, I say this: Love your enemies. Let them bring out the best in you, not the worst. When someone gives you a hard time, respond with the supple moves of prayer for that person. If someone slaps you in the face, stand there and take it. If someone grabs your shirt, giftwrap your best coat and make a present of it. If someone takes unfair advantage of you, use the occasion to practice the servant life. No more payback. Live generously.

We follow a King whose crown is not made of diamonds and precious jewels, but a king who wears a crown of thorns.

We follow a Saviour who not only taught radical generosity, but he lived it, and practised it, and continues to show us how generous and gracious God is to us.

We follow a Saviour who not only teaches us to love our enemies and pray for those who persecute us, but while we were sinners, while we were his enemies, he died for us, forgiving us, and showing us God's mercy and love.

I will often hear people say things like: "I can worship God as well or better on a golf course, than I can in a church." And that's true. We can worship God anywhere and everywhere.

And the church is not easy – there are so many different people with so many different likes and dislikes and things are not all the way I want them. But for those who want to grow as disciples of Jesus, who want Jesus to continue to make and remake them, in His image, this is the better place.

Here we don't get our own way. Here we are reminded that the values of God's kingdom are upside down to the values of our world. Here we are reminded that we are called to be radically generous, merciful, forgiving and caring.

And here we experience God's radical love, forgiveness, generosity, mercy and caring for us in the body and blood of Jesus given for us, and through other disciples around us. Lord, please keep making us.

Let us pray: Lord Jesus, your kingdom is not what we expect, and is not easy for us. But in your love, we learn your ways, and you continue to make us new. Thank

you that your radical love, mercy, forgiveness, and generosity meets us here.
Amen.

Luke 6:17-30 The Message

¹⁷ He 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. ¹⁸ They had come to hear him and to be healed of their diseases, and those who were troubled with unclean spirits were cured. ¹⁹ And everyone in the crowd was trying to touch him, for power came out from him and healed all of them.

²⁰ Then 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. ²³ Rejoice 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. ²⁷ “But I say to you who are listening: Love your enemies; do good to those who hate you; ²⁸ bless those who curse you; pray for those who mistreat you. ²⁹ If anyone strikes you on the cheek, offer the other also, and from anyone who takes away your coat do not withhold even your shirt. ³⁰ Give to everyone who asks of you, and if anyone takes away what is yours, do not ask for it back again.

This is the word of the Lord.