

*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 all in the crowd were 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 in that day and leap for joy, for surely your reward is great in heaven; for that is what their ancestors did to 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 what their ancestors did to the false prophets.*

Jesus looked out over the crowd, a crowd of people like you.

Who will he bless?

Will he choose to bless the one whose children are born with teeth that are perfectly straight, born strong and healthy and bright? As he looks over the crowd will he say, "Yes, they really need my blessing this day"? Or will he see the family with the child whose vision is weak, who struggles to learn how to add, the child battling sickness season after season? If you had the power to bless, which would you choose?

When Jesus looks out over the crowd, will his eyes search for the smiling faces, or for those bearing a great weight of sorrow - the woman whose husband is dying, the man whose wife has Alzheimer's, the one whose careless living has now brought a harvest of tears?

When Jesus eyes look over us all, will he fix his loving gaze on those who have never missed a meal, or those whose stomach is in pain with hunger?

When Jesus reaches out his hand to bless, will he strain to touch the one that everyone is in love with, the one honored for her kindness and her beauty and her sincerity? Or will Jesus lean out as far as he can to touch the one no one else will touch? Puss and oozing sores of body, of spirit, of soul? Who in this crowd needs his touch most, most desperately, most often? If you were Jesus who would you die for? The ones who have it all already?

The mother surrounded by loving children or the childless one?

The home where all is peace and joy and hope or the home full of bitter words and selfish deeds?

Would you die for folks in a mansion in America or for one of the hordes in cardboard shacks on the edge of Mexico City?

If you were Jesus, Son of God, and before you stood the whole world, would you look for eyes that really need you, for hearts so empty that there is room for you?

When Jesus looked upon the crowd this is what he spoke:

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

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

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

*Blessed are you when people hate you and when they exclude you, revile you and defame you on account of the Son of Man. Rejoice in that day and leap for joy, for surely your reward is great in heaven; for that is what their ancestors did to the prophets.*

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

*Woe to you when all speak well of you, for that is what their ancestors did to the false prophets.*

How easy it is to hear these words and think that they are about what people deserve. But when I put myself in Jesus' place I hear these words in a new way - not as what people deserve but what they need.

And if the rich and the full and the laughing and the well-spoken of have so much that they are not desperate for Jesus, how great a woe, a curse that is. They might go through life and never know the love of God in Jesus. How great a curse that is!

But you who come to Jesus empty, waiting to be filled are blessed.