



SUNDAY SCHOOL FEBRUARY 16, 2025

Prayer:

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OLD TESTAMENT

Jeremiah 17:5-10

BLESSED ARE THOSE THAT TRUST THE LORD

Thus says the Lord:

Cursed are those who trust in mere mortals
and make mere flesh their strength,
whose hearts turn away from the Lord.

They shall be like a shrub in the desert
and shall not see when relief comes.
They shall live in the parched places of the wilderness,
in an uninhabited salt land.

Blessed are those who trust in the Lord,
whose trust is the Lord.

They shall be like a tree planted by water,
sending out its roots by the stream.
It shall not fear when heat comes,
and its leaves shall stay green;
in the year of drought it is not anxious,
and it does not cease to bear fruit.

The heart is devious above all else;
it is perverse—
who can understand it?

I the Lord test the mind
and search the heart,
to give to all according to their ways,
according to the fruit of their doings.

OVERVIEW

Jeremiah 17:5-10 is a passage that contrasts those who place their trust in human strength with those who trust in God. It contains themes of divine judgment, blessings for the faithful, and the condition of the human heart. The passage highlights two paths—one leading to destruction (for those who trust in human strength) and one leading to flourishing (for those who trust in God). The passage concludes with a profound statement on the deceptive nature of the human heart and God's ability to judge people according to their actions.

BIBLICAL CONTEXT

Jeremiah was a prophet during the final years of the kingdom of Judah before its destruction by the Babylonians in 586 B.C. His messages were often warnings against idolatry, reliance on foreign alliances, and injustice, which were leading to Judah's downfall. Jeremiah 17 is part of a broader section condemning Judah's unfaithfulness and emphasizing trust in God rather than human strength. This passage follows a pattern seen throughout the Bible—such as in Psalm 1—where the righteous are compared to trees planted by water, and the wicked are associated with barrenness.



Key Themes in Jeremiah 17:5-10:

- Trust in humans versus trust in God
- The heart's deceitfulness
- Divine judgment based on deeds

This passage aligns with other biblical teachings, such as Proverbs 3:5-6, which warns against relying on human wisdom, and Psalm 1, which contrasts the righteous and the wicked.

See separate document “May Contain Lies”.

HISTORICAL / NON-BIBLICAL / POLITICAL CONTEXT

During Jeremiah's ministry (late 7th to early 6th century B.C.), Judah faced immense political turmoil. The kingdom was caught between three powerful empires: **Babylon, Egypt, and Assyria**. Judah's leaders, fearing Babylon's dominance, sought protection through political alliances—particularly with Egypt—rather than placing their trust in God. **Jeremiah condemned these alliances, warning that reliance on human powers would lead to destruction.**

From a **political perspective**, Judah's rulers were attempting to navigate a complex web of international power struggles. After the fall of Assyria, **Babylon emerged as the dominant empire**, defeating Egypt at the **Battle of Carchemish (605 B.C.)**, which made Judah a Babylonian vassal state (constituents that pledge loyalty to a monarch). Despite Babylon's warning and Jeremiah's prophecy, King Zedekiah rebelled by aligning with Egypt, a decision that ultimately led to the **siege and destruction of Jerusalem in 586 B.C.**

In a **non-biblical context**, other Ancient Near Eastern cultures shared similar beliefs about divine judgment and the consequences of misplaced trust. However, unlike those cultures, Jeremiah emphasizes that the heart—not fate, omens, or human alliances—determines destiny, and only God can judge it rightly.

The message of Jeremiah 17:5-10 becomes a direct political critique of Judah's foreign policy: Trusting in political alliances (human strength) leads to ruin, but trusting in divine guidance ensures survival, even amid turmoil.

HISTORICAL TIMELINE / BIBLICAL TIMEFRAME

- **627 B.C.** – Jeremiah's prophetic ministry begins during King Josiah's reign.
- **609 B.C.** – Josiah dies, and Judah becomes a vassal state under Egypt.
- **605 B.C.** – Babylon defeats Egypt at the Battle of Carchemish; Judah falls under Babylonian influence.
- **597 B.C.** – First Babylonian deportation (including Ezekiel).
- **586 B.C.** – Babylon destroys Jerusalem and the Temple, fulfilling Jeremiah's warnings.

Jeremiah 17:5-10 likely dates to the later years of Josiah or the early reigns of Jehoiakim/Zedekiah when Judah was struggling politically and spiritually.



SCHOLARLY METAPHORICAL & MODERN-DAY INTERPRETATION

Jeremiah 17:5-10 presents a metaphorical contrast between two ways of life: one rooted in self-sufficiency and the other in divine dependence.

- ***“Cursed is the one who trusts in man...”***
 - In a metaphorical sense, this reflects misplaced trust in political power, financial security, or personal ability rather than in God.
 - In modern terms, societies that rely solely on human institutions for moral guidance often become spiritually barren.
- ***“Blessed is the one who trusts in the Lord...”***
 - This imagery of a tree by water is reminiscent of Psalm 1 and suggests that those rooted in faith will endure hardships and remain spiritually nourished.
 - In today’s world, people who cultivate deep spiritual trust (rather than being swayed by cultural trends or political promises) are likened to trees with strong roots.
- ***“The heart is deceitful above all things...”***
 - This statement challenges modern assumptions that human nature is inherently good.
 - It aligns with psychological and philosophical discussions on human fallibility, unconscious biases, and self-deception.
- ***“I the Lord search the heart and examine the mind...”***
 - In an era where personal identity and morality are often defined by self-perception, this verse emphasizes that ultimate judgment belongs to God.
 - Modern application: Instead of trusting only in our emotions or reasoning, we should seek divine wisdom and moral accountability.

SUMMARY

Jeremiah 17:5-10 contrasts two paths:

1. **Those who trust in human strength** are likened to dry, barren shrubs in the desert—unfruitful and vulnerable.
2. **Those who trust in God** are like trees planted by water, thriving even in difficulty.

The human heart is deceitful, people often misjudge their own motives, but God sees and rewards them based on their true actions. The **deceitfulness of the heart** is not a separate path but a **reason why people struggle with choosing between the two**.

This passage remains deeply relevant today, cautioning against misplaced trust in human institutions while affirming the necessity of divine dependence. It serves as a reminder that true security and wisdom come from God alone.



NEW TESTAMENT (GOSPEL)

Luke 6:17-26

JESUS TEACHES AND HEALS

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

Then he looked up at his disciples and said:

“Blessed are you who are 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 on that day and leap for joy, for surely your reward is great in heaven, for that is how their ancestors treated 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 how their ancestors treated the false prophets.”

OVERVIEW

Luke 6:17-26 is part of Jesus' **Sermon on the Plain**, a passage that closely parallels the better-known Sermon on the Mount in Matthew 5-7. In this passage, Jesus pronounces blessings (Beatitudes) on the poor, the hungry, the sorrowful, and the persecuted, while issuing woes (warnings) to the rich, the satisfied, the joyful, and those well-regarded by society. This passage serves as a radical reordering of values, upending societal expectations and aligning with God's vision for justice and righteousness.

The term Beatitudes comes from the Latin word "beātītūdō", meaning blessedness or happiness. The name Beatitudes was assigned because each statement in the passage begins with “Blessed” (in Latin, Beati).

See Beatitudes in the Addendum



BIBLICAL CONTEXT

- **Gospel Context:** Luke emphasizes Jesus' ministry to the marginalized and oppressed. Unlike Matthew's version of the Beatitudes, which spiritualizes some conditions (e.g., "poor in spirit"), Luke's account is more direct—blessing the *physically* poor and pronouncing woe on the *materially* rich.
- **Theological Themes:** The passage introduces themes of reversal, justice, and the Kingdom of God. It aligns with Old Testament prophetic literature, particularly Isaiah, where God's favor is given to the oppressed and judgment is cast on the oppressors.
- **Literary Context:** Luke presents this sermon shortly after Jesus has called His disciples, making it an inaugural declaration of His teachings about the Kingdom of God.
- **Comparison with Matthew:** The Beatitudes in Matthew (Matthew 5:3-12) contain more blessings and focus on internal attitudes (e.g., "poor in spirit"), whereas Luke presents a more social and economic focus with both blessings and woes.

HISTORICAL / NON-BIBLICAL / POLITICAL CONTEXT

- **Social Context:** First-century Judea was marked by extreme economic disparity. The Roman occupation imposed heavy taxation, and wealth was concentrated among the elite (Sadducees, tax collectors, landowners). Most of Jesus' audience would have been among the poor and oppressed.
- **Religious Context:** Many Jews at the time believed that wealth was a sign of divine favor, while suffering was often seen as punishment for sin. Jesus' message contradicted this belief, suggesting instead that God's Kingdom elevates the poor and brings judgment on those who trust in wealth.
- **Political Context:** Roman rule upheld social hierarchies, benefiting the wealthy and oppressing the common people. Roman governors, such as Pontius Pilate, maintained order through military force and harsh punishment for dissenters. Jesus' teaching, emphasizing care for the poor and justice for the oppressed, was implicitly subversive and countercultural.
- **Cultural Context:** Honor and shame were central to society. Jesus' statements about the persecuted being "blessed" would have been shocking because honor was considered the ultimate social currency.

This context highlights how Jesus' Sermon on the Plain would have been perceived not only as a spiritual teaching but also as a social and political challenge to the prevailing systems of power and privilege.

HISTORICAL TIMELINE / BIBLICAL TIMEFRAME

- **First Century CE:** Jesus' ministry takes place around 27-30 CE. This passage is part of His early teachings, likely given in the first year of His public ministry.
- **Roman Rule:** During this time, Judea was under Roman occupation, with Herod Antipas ruling Galilee and Pontius Pilate governing Judea as a Roman prefect.
- **Jewish Expectations:** Many Jews anticipated a Messiah who would overthrow Roman rule and restore Israel's national glory. Jesus, however, presented a different vision of the Kingdom, focusing on spiritual transformation and justice rather than military conquest.



SCHOLARLY METAPHORICAL & MODERN-DAY INTERPRETATION

- **Reversal of Values:** Jesus challenges materialism and self-sufficiency. In a modern context, this passage critiques economic inequality, consumerism, and the idea that wealth equates to divine blessing.
- **Spiritual Hunger vs. Material Satisfaction:** The "poor" and "hungry" can also symbolize those who recognize their dependence on God. In today's world, this might include those who seek meaning beyond material wealth, acknowledging their need for spiritual fulfillment.
- **Persecution and Social Rejection:** Those who stand for justice and righteousness often face opposition. In modern terms, this applies to individuals advocating for social justice, whistleblowers exposing corruption, and believers who face discrimination for their faith.
- **Warning Against Complacency:** The "woes" caution against spiritual complacency and misplaced security in wealth or social status. This applies to societies where excess wealth and privilege lead to indifference toward suffering.
- **The Beatitudes as a Call to Action:** Many Christian social justice movements, from the Civil Rights Movement to modern efforts against poverty and systemic injustice, draw inspiration from this passage.

SUMMARY

In **Luke 6:17-26**, Jesus delivers a radical sermon emphasizing God's favor on the poor, hungry, sorrowful, and persecuted while pronouncing judgment on the rich, satisfied, and well-regarded. This message contradicts worldly values, offering a vision of a Kingdom where human status is reversed, and righteousness is the standard. The passage reflects the Old Testament prophetic tradition, calling for justice and mercy, and remains deeply relevant in discussions about wealth, social justice, and spiritual priorities in contemporary society.



ADDENDUM

May Contain Lies

See separate document.

The Beatitudes

LUKE 6:20-23

- Blessed are you who are poor, for yours is the kingdom of God.
- Blessed are you who hunger now, for you will be satisfied.
- Blessed are you who weep now, for you will laugh.
- Blessed are you when people hate you, exclude you, insult you, and reject your name as evil because of the Son of Man.

MATTHEW 5:3-12

- Blessed are the poor in spirit, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven.
- Blessed are those who mourn, for they will be comforted.
- Blessed are the meek, for they will inherit the earth.
- Blessed are those who hunger and thirst for righteousness, for they will be filled.
- Blessed are the merciful, for they will be shown mercy.
- Blessed are the pure in heart, for they will see God.
- Blessed are the peacemakers, for they will be called children of God.
- Blessed are those who are persecuted because of righteousness, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven.
- Blessed are you when people insult you, persecute you and falsely say all kinds of evil against you because of me.

Rejoice and be glad, because great is your reward in heaven, for in the same way they persecuted the prophets who were before you.