

**Conversations on**  
**Luke 6:17–26**

*Discuss this passage in light of the commentary below.*

*Idea!* Go to [www.youtube.com/watch?v=i41qWJ6QjPI](http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=i41qWJ6QjPI) and listen to Beyoncé’s performance of “I Was Here” at The United Nations. Discuss: How did the projected images in the video illustrate people “leaving their mark” in a positive way? To what extent do the lyrics to this song echo Jesus’ teaching about God’s reign?

**WHAT is important to know?**

Jesus focuses his eyes (*ophthalmoi*) on the disciples after the healing excursion in verses 18–19. The reference to eyes in this passage (v. 20) should not be glossed over as insignificant. It is not so much that the people are able to see God in this encounter with Jesus. The subtle undercurrent and the word of hope in this passage is how the disciples (and presumably all those would-be followers of Jesus) are seen by God! So the raising of the eyes by Jesus is a symbolic metaphor for the watchful eyes of God, who is ultimately responsible for the blessings and curses that are at the heart of this sermon. (*Gay L. Byron*)

- ✠ What were people in the crowd expecting from Jesus that day?
- ✠ What does Jesus say in Luke 6:20–26 about whom God blesses?

**WHERE is God in these words?**

This is the raw, unvarnished, faith-rattling declaration of the realm of God. The realm of God rests among those who have nothing but God. Jesus’ Sermon on the Plain—these wondrous yet stark beatitudes—jar us out of our faithful complacency. The God Jesus speaks of is not always the God we proclaim. Our human inclination is to fit God into our own small definitions, cultures, and places. But God is always breaking down the barriers we construct to keep God in or out. Here, once again, God is calling us back. (*David L. Ostendorf*)

- ✠ What does it mean to “have nothing but God”?
- ✠ How did Jesus’ teaching turn things upside down for people who had wealth, power, and privilege—the ones society considered to be blessed by God? How do you think these individuals responded?
- ✠ How did Jesus’ teaching turn things upside down for people who were poor and living on the margins of society—the ones society considered to be lacking God’s favor or blessing?

**SO WHAT does this mean for our lives?**

The sermon seems to be addressed not to the people in general who have gathered around him, but to the disciples—to the church. Pastorally this highlights the fact that the very nature of the sermon, the values and ethics that it expresses, are apparently not intended to be a moral code binding on the society in its widest sense. Rather, it is for those who have made a commitment to follow Christ. At the same time, the fulfillment of the demands of this sermon will not be the outcome of personal effort and resources, but of divine grace. The good news is that our fulfillment of the demands of the sermon is the enabling work of the gift of grace, the gift of the Spirit. (*Howard K. Gregory*)

- ✠ What calling might those original disciples have experienced when they heard Jesus’ teaching about blessing and woe?
- ✠ What is Jesus seeking from your congregation—seeking from you—as you live as disciples and witnesses today?

**NOW WHAT is God’s word calling us to do?**

[Jesus] is speaking not just “on the plain,” but *plainly*. We can trust Jesus to be absolutely “on the level” with us every step of the way, telling us the truth of our lives as he sees us. We hear this truth only through our participation in a community—the community of lifelong partnerships and families, the community of the eucharistic fellowship, the community of those who pray and discuss the Scriptures together, the community of service, the community of mutually committed members. (*Peter Eaton*)

- ✠ Which communities are most supportive of you as you seek to hear the truth about following Christ?
- ✠ How does trust in God’s grace shape your witness?

*Holy God, attune our ears and our hearts to your Word, and guide us with your Spirit. Amen.*