

Before we get to this teaching in Luke, Jesus is locking horns with Scribes and Pharisees about the nature of God and how we understand God's intent in this life. This is the source of pairing blessings with woes. *It is rhetorical combat.* The blessings are all Jesus. And the woes are all aimed at the self-satisfied disposition of Jesus opponents.

They believed If God approves of you *there will be riches, food, laughter and good reputation.* Why wouldn't there be? And they were happy to work that equation backward and say – *if you don't have those things – you must have done something to displease God.* So, the matching of woes to the blessings are in direct conflict with the "God only loves those at the top" school of thought.

Back in the opening scene Luke goes into great detail about where people are from – and ends with Jesus healing all of them. *All of them.* Gentiles included. This flies in the face of the teaching of the religious leaders as well. To them, accepting and blessing those considered outside the realm of God's covenant community made no sense. And accept and bless "God among us" did.

The "now" we live in easily lends itself to imagining that the poor are cursed. Jesus says the coming Kingdom of God will turn everything upside down. So, the "then" which is coming will fulfill the needs not met in this life. And those who see over abundance in this life as the sign of God's favor are in for a shock.

Jesus teaching today turns on two things: Challenging the interpretation of God's love for us now **based upon our life circumstances** – and the task before us to live as God's children – **citizens of the kingdom of God now.** We live "now" in light of the coming Kingdom – "then." *This means we don't get to think we are better than someone else because we have more money than they do, drive a nicer car, live in a bigger house...all the things our culture tells us is true.* And neither do we get to believe all that counts is money and if someone has it, they must have done something wrong to get it. Life is not about money – life is rooted in God and pursuing the things of God's kingdom. ***When we get it right – "then" flavors "now" and "now" gives a foretaste of "then."*** These really are the good old days – ***when we live them as God's children by the values of God's kingdom.***