

## Swedenborgian Sunday School Notes for the Revised Common Lectionary

### Luke 6:17–26 • Blessings and Woes

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Luke 6:17–26 . . . . . Blessings and woes  
Jeremiah 17:5–10 . . . . . Curses and blessings

#### Overview

We return today to a thread that is woven throughout the Bible story. What makes us truly happy, and what truly makes us sad? Our story today turns our usual ideas of happiness and sorrow on their heads. We may think material possessions and popularity will make us happy, but it is spiritual “possessions”—love, understanding, and kindness—that make us truly and deeply happy, and that heal our souls.

#### Key Points

- Our worldly success or failure is far less important than our spiritual success or failure.
- We should do what is good, not so that people will admire us and reward us, but simply because it is the right thing to do, and is commanded by God.
- Material and physical pleasures are superficial by themselves; but the pleasure of loving other people and loving God is deep and lasting.

#### Example for Teaching Children

Last week we learned about how Jesus called his first disciples at the beginning of his ministry. This week, as we continue the story of Jesus’ ministry, we heard part of a “sermon” that Jesus gave to his followers. Sometimes it is called “The Sermon on the Mount,” and there is a longer version of it in Matthew 5–7. Today we are going to talk about the first part of the Lord’s sermon.

What makes you happy? (*Give time for response and discussion.*) What makes you sad? (*More time for response and discussion.*) Sometimes we think that what would make us happiest of all would be to have lots of money to buy everything we ever wanted, and to be really popular and looked up to.

In our church, we don’t think it is wrong to have money, or to be popular and respected. But what if these are the *most important* things to us? What if we care more about money and popularity than we do about other people? How will we act? Do you think we will really be happy? (*Allow time for discussion. Don’t try to correct “wrong” responses.*)

These are very hard questions that each one of us has to make up our own mind about. This is exactly

why the Lord put us here on earth: to give us a chance to make up our own minds about what is most important to us. So the Lord lets us feel what it is like to enjoy our bodies, and our toys, and nature, and many different things that exist in this world.

The Lord also tells us—especially in the Bible—about the joys of *spiritual* things. What are some of the spiritual things you have? (*If they don’t have any ideas, suggest that they think about things in their hearts and minds, and feelings between themselves and their family and friends.*) While we are here on earth, we can also experience the happiness of loving people and getting to know them, sharing our ideas and feelings with them, doing fun things together, and helping each other out.

Sometimes, when we can’t buy everything we want, and when other people seem more popular, we may get so sad that we cry. But our sad feelings can turn into a much deeper kind of happiness when we focus on following God and on loving each other.

#### Basic Correspondences

- poor = knowing we need the Lord
- weeping = regretting wrongs we have done
- rich = thinking we’re better than others
- laughing = disrespecting others

#### Thoughts from Swedenborg

In the Bible, being “well fed” means having the Bible, which contains the knowledge of what is good and true. Being “hungry” means lacking this knowledge, and being prevented from gaining it.

*Apocalypse Explained #386c.16*

In the other life, when people have only truth their ideas appear so closed that things from heaven can barely flow in, except in such a general way that it is hardly noticeable that they come from heaven. But the ideas of people who have both truth and goodness appear so open that things from heaven flow into a microcosm—or reflection—of heaven within them. Heavenly things flow into these people’s true ideas through the good things that are in them.

Truth has its own life taken away when goodness begins to take the primary position, and to direct our lives. . . . “Mourning” means removing truth’s own life, . . . since it refers to a time when our state of mind is turned around. *Arcana Coelestia #3607.3*