

Jesus spent the night in prayer, seeking His Father's guidance, before He chose the twelve men who would be His apostles. We should follow Jesus' example of prayer for guidance before we make decisions in our own life. Accompanied by His newly chosen apostles, Jesus taught the multitude that had gathered to hear Him, describing the blessings of the redeemed and the woes of the unredeemed.

**Verses 1-11:** One Sabbath day Jesus responded to the Pharisees' complaint that His disciples were violating the Sabbath by rubbing ears of grain between their hands so that they could eat it. Jesus replied that not only was the disciples' actions a necessary exception to the law, but that He was also "the Lord of the Sabbath" and could authorize the disciples' activity. Then on another Sabbath day, Jesus was in a synagogue while the scribes and Pharisees were watching to see if He would heal a man that had a withered hand who happened to be there that day. Jesus knew that they wanted to accuse Him of violating the Sabbath but He healed the man anyway, asking them if it was lawful to do good or to do evil on the Sabbath. They became angry because they couldn't respond to Jesus' action or question and they began to discuss among themselves how they should deal with Jesus.

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12 And it came to pass in those days, that he went out into a mountain to pray, and continued all night in prayer to God.

Jesus frequently went into secluded places so that He would be undisturbed as He sought His Father's fellowship and guidance in prayer. On this occasion Jesus was about to make some important decisions the next day, so He prayed all night long to determine His Father's will.

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13 And when it was day, he called *unto him* his disciples: and of them he chose twelve, whom also he named apostles;

**"And when it was day, he called *unto him* his disciples"** – The word "disciple" refers to a learner or pupil and Jesus had many people following Him that met that description. At one point He sent out 70 disciples in pairs to various cities in order to prepare each city for His arrival (Luke 10:1). Thus, when disciples are mentioned in any given passage, we have to look at the context to determine if the term refers to the twelve that we usually think about or the larger group of followers. It is obvious that the "disciples" mentioned here refers to the larger group of followers.

**"and of them he chose twelve, whom also he named apostles [*delegate; someone sent*]"** – After praying all night, Jesus decided to choose twelve men out of the larger group to be His apostles. These men were to be given special authority and responsibilities (**Mark 3:14-15** "*And he ordained twelve, that they should be with him, and that he might send them forth to preach, And to have power to heal sicknesses, and to cast out devils:*"). All believers are disciples of Jesus, but only these chosen twelve were granted the role of apostle and, except for the Apostle Paul, no one else in scripture was given that title. Anyone who calls himself an apostle today is attempting to assume a role and title that is not his to possess.

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14 Simon, (whom he also named Peter,) and Andrew his brother, James and John, Philip and Bartholomew, 15 Matthew and Thomas, James the *son* of Alphaeus, and Simon called Zelotes, 16 And Judas *the brother* of James, and Judas Iscariot, which also was the traitor.

**"Simon, (whom he also named Peter,) and Andrew his brother"** – Simon's brother, Andrew, was one of the two disciples of John the Baptist that began following Jesus (John 1:35-37). When Andrew became convinced that Jesus was the Messiah, he brought his brother Simon to see Jesus. The name "Peter" means "rock" in Greek. In John 1:42, Jesus gives Simon the name "Cephas," which comes from the Aramaic word for "rock."

**"James and John"** – These are the sons of Zebedee, Simon's fishing partners (Luke 5:10).

**"Philip and Bartholomew"** – Philip the apostle is only mentioned once beyond the Gospels (Acts 1:13). Bartholomew is thought to be the disciple named Nathanael in John 1:45.

**"Matthew and Thomas"** – Matthew is Levi the tax collector (Luke 5:27-28) and we refer to Thomas as "the doubter" of Jesus' resurrection (John 20:25), even though all of the disciples doubted reports of the resurrection (Mark 16:9-13).

**"James the son of Alphaeus, and Simon called Zelotes"** – Luke supplies us with more information about these two men to distinguish them from the other James and Simon. The name "Zelotes" means "zealot" and may have been a nickname for Simon.

**"And Judas the brother of James"** – This Judas was apparently the brother of James, the son of Alphaeus and was not the traitor.

**"and Judas Iscariot, which also was the traitor"** – The name "Iscariot" means "man of Kerioth," the home town of Judas. Jesus had chosen Judas to be one of the twelve despite knowing that he would never be a genuine believer (**John 6:70-71** "*Jesus answered them, Have not I chosen you twelve, and one of you is a devil? He spake of Judas Iscariot the son of Simon: for he it was that should betray him, being one of the twelve*"). It served God's plan for Jesus to be betrayed so that He could be crucified, and so Judas was chosen because he would willingly choose to betray Jesus for money (**Luke 22:22** "*And truly the Son of man goeth, as it was determined: but woe unto that man by whom he is betrayed!*").

**Verses 17-19:** Jesus came down from the mountain where He had prayed all night (v. 12) and then chose the twelve apostles (v. 13). After this, He stood in the plain where a great multitude of people came to hear Him and to be healed of their sicknesses and have demonic spirits cast out. Once He finished with all who needed healing, Jesus began to teach. In vs. 20-26, Jesus contrasts the blessings of believers with the woes of those who prioritize material gain over spiritual gain.

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20 And he lifted up his eyes on his disciples, and said, Blessed *be ye poor*: for yours is the kingdom of God.

**“And he lifted up his eyes on his disciples”** – The word “disciples” here is apparently being used of the multitude that had gathered to hear Jesus (as opposed to referring only the “the twelve”). This appears to be either Luke’s account of the Sermon on the Mount (Matt. 5:1-7:29) or simply an occasion where Jesus reused much of the same material that He used in the Sermon on the Mount.

**“and said, Blessed *be ye poor*: for yours is the kingdom of God”** – While this statement may be comforting to the poor who will receive material blessings in God’s kingdom, the context implies that Jesus is referring to those who realize how spiritually needy that they are. Only those who recognize their need of salvation will be able to obtain it through Christ and thus inherit the kingdom of God.

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21 Blessed *are ye that hunger now*: for ye shall be filled. Blessed *are ye that weep now*: for ye shall laugh.

**“Blessed *are ye that hunger now*: for ye shall be filled”** – The word “now” refers to the current period of time before Jesus’ kingdom comes. Matthew’s quotation shows that Jesus is referring to those who hunger after righteousness because they realize that they do not possess it on their own (Matt. 5:6 “*Blessed are they which do hunger and thirst after righteousness: for they shall be filled*”). Jesus will satisfy their desire for righteousness by giving them His (Phil. 3:9 “*And be found in him, not having mine own righteousness, which is of the law, but that which is through the faith of Christ, the righteousness which is of God by faith*”).

**“Blessed *are ye that weep now*: for ye shall laugh”** – Jesus is referring to those who weep because of their sin or because they are being persecuted because of their desire for righteousness. There will come a day of rejoicing for them in God’s kingdom.

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22 Blessed are ye, when men shall hate you, and when they shall separate you *from their company*, and shall reproach you, and cast out your name as evil, for the Son of man's sake.

Jesus explains why those who weep will eventually rejoice. They will reap the blessings that God has reserved for those who suffer for Jesus Christ. The implication is that they are willing to suffer rather than renounce their allegiance to Christ.

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23 Rejoice ye in that day, and leap for joy: for, behold, your reward *is great in heaven*: for in the like manner did their fathers unto the prophets.

Suffering for Christ puts you in good company, because the prophets of God also suffered because they represented Him. Jesus says that we will be overcome with joy in “that day” (the day of God’s kingdom) because of the rewards that God will give us.

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24 But woe unto you that are rich! for ye have received your consolation.

Scripture never condemns people just because they are rich. Many of the OT saints were wealthy because of God’s blessings. The condemnation here is for people who prioritized worldly riches over spiritual concerns. They sought after riches rather than seeking to please God. Jesus says that these rich people have already received their “consolation” (comfort). They will lose everything when God’s kingdom arrives because they did not seek after what is truly important (Mark 8:36 “*For what shall it profit a man, if he shall gain the whole world, and lose his own soul?*”).

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25 Woe unto you that are full! for ye shall hunger. Woe unto you that laugh now! for ye shall mourn and weep.

Jesus expands on the woes that shall befall those who prioritize riches, because the tables will be turned between them and those who obtained salvation through Christ.

**“Woe unto you that are full! for ye shall hunger”** – While those who hungered after righteousness will be filled in the kingdom (v. 21), those who are full now (of riches and worldly goods) will go hungry because they will be in hell.

**“Woe unto you that laugh now! for ye shall mourn and weep”** – Those who prioritized riches and laughed because of their enjoyment of them in this world will mourn and weep because they will be bankrupt of every good thing in hell.

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26 Woe unto you, when all men shall speak well of you! for so did their fathers to the false prophets.

**“Woe unto you, when all men shall speak well of you!”** – The evidence that you do not belong to Christ is that the world loves and approves of you. What meets the world’s approval is vastly different from what meets God’s approval, so if we are pleasing the world then we are not pleasing God. Jesus is obviously issuing this warning to those who seek the world’s approval and/or already have it because they belong to the world. The woe is in the fact that they will die in their sins unless they repent.

**John 15:19** (Jesus talking to His disciples) “*If ye were of the world, the world would love his own: but because ye are not of the world, but I have chosen you out of the world, therefore the world hateth you.*”

**James 4:4** “*Ye adulterers and adulteresses, know ye not that the friendship of the world is enmity with God? whosoever therefore will be a friend of the world is the enemy of God.*”

**“for so did their fathers to the false prophets”** – People in the OT who weren’t seeking after the LORD loved the false prophets because they only prophesied what these people wanted to hear. The people didn’t want to be rebuked for their sin and so these false prophets never addressed it. There are false prophets in our day as well and they are doing the same thing (1 John 4:5-6 (speaking of the false prophets) “*They are of the world: therefore speak they of the world, and the world heareth them. We are of God: he that knoweth God heareth us; he that is not of God heareth not us. Hereby know we the spirit of truth, and the spirit of error*”).