

The Lord's discourse in this chapter is sometimes called "The Sermon on the Plain" as a counterpart to the Sermon on the Mount of Matthew chapters 5-7. It may be the same sermon. In that case, Luke is calling a plateau on the mountaintop "a level place" and emphasizing different portions of a lengthy speech.

It seems more likely that Jesus delivers a similar speech on multiple occasions, somewhat like a politician having a standard "stump speech" with some variations for different audiences. It would hardly be surprising that Jesus would repeat this sermon. It contains the foundational principles under which the coming Kingdom of God will operate, just as our Declaration of Independence stated the principles of our republic before it was established. It bears repeating, over and over.

Besides being shorter, we can note a couple of differences between this sermon and the one in Matthew. For one, Luke includes a list of "woes" corresponding to the blessings, or beatitudes, at the

beginning.

As is characteristic of Luke versus Matthew, there is more of a Gentile flavor here. Both sermons are directed at the disciples but the surrounding crowd described by Luke includes visitors from the coasts of Tyre and Sidon, Gentile regions. We do not find the phrase "You have heard it said of old," drawing contrast between the new dispensation and the old Law of Moses. The ethical examples here can apply to anyone, not just those raised up in the Old Testament scriptures.

But even though the Lord might tailor His actual words to a Gentile or Jewish audience, He is preparing them together to be united under one Head. *"For he himself is our peace, who has made us both one and has broken down in his flesh the dividing wall of hostility by abolishing the law of commandments expressed in ordinances, that he might create in himself one new man in place of the two"* (Ephesians 2:14-15).

Questions:

1. List some kingdom principles that can be found in this passage.

2. Do these principles apply to us today? Completely, partially, or situationally?

3. How are poverty, hunger, weeping, and social rejection blessings?

4. What lesson can a Christian learn from verse 26?

5. What do verses 32-36 tell us about God's love?

6. Read verse 37. When would you say we are to judge, and when not to judge?