

Transcript

The Jesus Story - The Sermon on the Plain: Part 2

I would like to read to you a few verses from Luke Chapter 6, beginning at verse 27:

27 *“But I say to you who hear: love your enemies, do good to those who hate you,*

28 *“bless those who curse you, and pray for those who spitefully use you.*

29 *“To him who strikes you on the one cheek, offer the other also. And from him who takes away your cloak, do not withhold your tunic either.*

30 *“Give to everyone who asks of you. And from him who takes away your goods do not ask them back.*

31 *“And just as you want men to do to you, you also do to them likewise.*

A little background to try and get the picture here. The crowd around Jesus was very large, we found this in verse 17, with a crowd of His disciples and a great multitude of people.

Verse 20 is more specific, it tells us just who this message is for:

20 *Then He lifted up His eyes toward His disciples. and said:*

To the multitude this message would be seen as simply: “The Road to Ruin”, but this message was not for the multitude, this message is just for His disciples

“But I say to you who hear”.

‘To you’ are the words that we need to take note in this sentence, “But I say to you who hear”. This message is just for those disciples who are listening to Him.

Now we need to take this one step at a time! Love your enemies, do good to those who hate you. This first command - and this is a command - seems almost impossible to obey. Love your enemies, do good to those who hate you.

But there is something that we need to understand here. Love is not a matter of feelings. It is not something you can't help. Love is something that you decide to do.

God bestows an abundance of love and mercy, even to his enemies every day, and as believers we are to imitate this type of divine love by loving and praying for our enemies. We as believers are to live out the Love of God in a very un-loving world.

God's people will have their enemies, even as Jesus did and we must be like Jesus in the way we handle them. We must be giving and forgiving, and we must pray for them.

Here is a good question. How do you pray for those who hate you? Certainly not that God would destroy them, but that He would change them. The best way to conquer an enemy is to make a friend of him.

Those who want to be followers of Jesus, are to love all people regardless of how unlovely or even hostile they may be. We must be willing to put that love into action,

and be willing to do good when it is in our power to do good.

Everyone of us has experienced the love of God. John 3v16 makes this very clear. “For God so loved the world”. This means the whole world and there are some really unpleasant people in the world. Even when people are sinful and rebellious, this is what we read in Romans 5v8:

8 But God demonstrates His own love toward us, in that while we were still sinners, Christ died for us.

This was not because we deserved it, it was only because of God’s love for us. We who have experienced God’s love should be the ones who understand what it means to be loved undeservedly. Our Salvation was paid for with the precious blood of His Son. There is no greater love than this “For God so loved the world”.

But, we really need the help of God’s Holy Spirit if we are to do good to those who hate us, bless those who curse us, and pray for those who hurt us. When believers are hated, cursed, and hurt, they are to respond with love.

Here is something worth thinking about. If the measure of God’s love was the same measure that we use to others, I wonder just where we would be today?

28 “bless those who curse you, and pray for those who spitefully use you.

When someone curses you, bless that person in return. When you are mistreated and harassed by others take this as an inducement to pray for them. The disciples of Jesus should show a higher quality of love than those who are not his disciples.

The love that marks out the real disciples of Jesus gives without expecting anything in return. (6:35). Jesus is telling his disciples what their attitude must be to the very enemies who have cast them out and spoken evil of them.

I say to you, love your enemies and do something wonderful for them in return for their hatred. We really need to think about this. Are we really showing compassion when we do good deeds only to those who do good deeds to us? Because those who don’t even know God will do that.

Jesus calls his followers to love their enemies, those who would oppress them, steal from them and those that show them violence. Followers of Jesus must show the same character as their Father.

It is not so much a question of following rules, or even seeking fairness, it is being able to understand our new relationship. This is what we read concerning believers in John 1:12:

12 But as many as received Him, to them He gave the right to become children of God, to those who believe in His name:

Our Sonship, is the key to understanding the teaching that Jesus brings to us.

After the crucifixion, just before Jesus returned to heaven, this is the message that Jesus told Mary to take to the disciples, John 20:17:

17 “Go to My brethren and say to them, ‘I am ascending to My Father and your Father, and to My God and your God.’”

It is a question of accepting our new position, just what we have inherited by the new birth. We have inherited the Father's nature and the way we exhibit that nature is by behaving as his mature sons. The followers of Jesus are now sons of the Father.

And, as followers of Jesus we find, it is not so much a matter of keeping rules but a matter of developing a God-like character.

The whole of the sermon on the plain is full of good advice for those who want to be disciples of Jesus but there is one verse that stands out - verse 31. This has been called the golden rule. You can find this golden rule in almost every religion of the world, but it is always in a negative form.

Have you ever noticed that most people who quote this don't get it quite right? You ask somebody what they think the golden rule is and they will tell you: "Never do to anyone else what you don't want them to do to you."

Jesus brings a completely new dimension to this:

31 "Just as you want men to do to you, you also do to them likewise."

This is just one of the differences between the teaching of Jesus, teaching and the world's philosophy.

The world's philosophy says, "I'm alright, I've never done anybody any harm." Well it may sound noble, but that is very negative. The question that we should be asking ourselves is: "Did we do them any good?" It is not a case what you 'did not' do that matters, it is a question of what 'did' you do for them.

Just look again at what Jesus said: "And just as you want men to do to you, you also do to them likewise." I really like the Message translation of this verse:

31 "Here is a simple rule of thumb for behaviour: Ask yourself what you want people to do for you; then grab the initiative and do it for them!"

Moving on now to verse 35. In verses 35 and 36, Jesus lays out just what our character is to be:

35 "But love your enemies, do good, and lend, hoping for nothing in return; and your reward will be great, and you will be sons of the Most High. For He is kind to the unthankful and evil."

36 "Therefore be merciful, just as your Father also is merciful."

"Therefore be merciful, just as your Father also is merciful." When I first became a Christian, there were two words that I thought meant the same thing: Mercy and Grace, until someone explained the difference to me.

Grace is receiving what you don't deserve. Mercy is not receiving what you do deserve.

"Therefore be merciful, just as your Father also is merciful." This verse carries with it the instruction to live in such a way as to mirror the character of God. What a goal this is to set our sights on! We who were by nature the enemies of God, constantly will receive from Him all the benefits of His compassionate love.

Even though we were His enemies, He loved us. He loved us when we were

altogether unlovely. When we were not thankful to Him, He was merciful to us. When we sinned against Him, He never returned evil for evil.

This is now the standard of love that Jesus tells us that we are to show to others. God's pattern of relating to His people is the same pattern that Jesus tells us to display as imitators of Him.

Here on face value we have a problem. How can we be imitators of someone that we have never seen? John in both his gospel and his first epistle tells us: No man has seen God at any time (John 1:18 1John 4:12).

There is an answer to this problem; this is what Jesus said when answering the question of Philip. "He who has seen Me has seen the Father (John 14:9).

And, very clearly Jesus declares in John 10:30:

30 "I and My Father are one."

"Therefore be merciful, just as your Father also is merciful." This should be the mark at which we as Christians should aim. That is to walk in the steps of Jesus.

Just think of this for one moment. If Jesus had dealt with the world in the same way that the world dealt with Him, all of us would have been ruined forever in hell.

Jesus is calling on all Christians to take on a righteous, but unnatural attitude toward mistreatment. Our human nature wants to hate those who hate us. Our human nature wants to respond in kind to evil things done to us. In other words, we desire the eye-for-an-eye reaction in response to evil things done to us.

Mahatma Gandhi, political and spiritual leader of India, told his audience one day that: "If we operate the eye-for-an-eye response to each other, it will not be long before the whole world will be blind."

Jesus is calling us to be better people than this. Instead of hating our enemies, He wants us to love them. They may abuse or mistreat us and spitefully use us. If so, we should pray for God's blessings on them. When we pray like this, it will go a good way to improve our attitude toward them and will lead us to do good for them.

God is an avenging God. God promises to make unjust things just. God says: "Vengeance is mine, I will repay" (Rom. 12:19). But He reserves vengeance for Himself; we are not to show vengeance but are to imitate Him in His mercy.

As Jesus continues the Sermon on the Plain, He points to four laws that affect our everyday lives:

37 "Judge not, and you shall not be judged. Condemn not, and you shall not be condemned. Forgive, and you will be forgiven."

38 "Give, and it will be given to you."

"Judge not, and you shall not be judged." This is one of the most quoted yet least understood teachings in the New Testament. Many people believe this forbids telling people, especially religious people, that they are wrong and must repent. Rebuking others is at times unavoidable, it is not forbidden.

Jesus was not doing away with civil courts or church discipline when He said,

“Judge not, and you will not be judged.” What Jesus was talking about here was a personality trait. A personality trait we may find sometimes in ourselves, one that sometimes involves being judgmental in our spirit and over critical of other people.

This has to do with how we pass judgment on other people. There is the charitable way of judging, this what we could call the “best case” analysis. It involves giving the benefit of the doubt. We’re not always sure whether a person is as guilty of a particular sin as it appears.

Even in the criminal courts, the standard is “beyond a reasonable doubt.” Beyond a reasonable doubt means there is no reasonable grounds to believe that they have committed any sin.

What Jesus is saying here is: be very, very careful that we are ready at any moment to give our neighbour the benefit of the doubt if there is doubt, to give the charitable judgment whenever possible.

Sadly, the only person that we usually give the charitable judgment to is ourselves. We usually reserve best-case analysis for our own activity. There is the charitable way of judging, the one that Jesus commands us to follow. Condemn not; forgive.

Jesus expanded the idea beyond simply judging others. He also told us not to condemn and to freely forgive. When we refuse to forgive those who repent of their sins, we expose ourselves to God’s eternal justice rather than His mercy.

I would hate to stand before God and ask Him to forgive me of my lifetime of sin and have Him look at me and say: “Don’t you remember that day when somebody sinned against you and they repented and apologized and asked for your forgiveness, and you refused to give it, and now you want Me to forgive you?”

If we do not judge or condemn, we will not be judged or condemned. If we forgive, we will be forgiven. But, if we are harsh, unmerciful, and unforgiving in our judgments of others, God will judge us harshly and without mercy or forgiveness. God will measure out to us according to the same measure we use for others.

This is a powerful motivation for us to be generous with love, forgiveness, and goodness to others. If we want more of those things from God, we should give more of them to others. If we want other people to give us the benefit of the doubt, then we must stand ready to give them the benefit of the doubt.

The only proper standard for spiritual judging is the word of God. 2 Timothy 3:16:

16 All Scripture is given by inspiration of God, this is what it is profitable for and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness.

It is wrong to rebuke others when we are as guilty as they are.

Many people can see the sins of others but overlook similar conduct in themselves. If we can see that other people are wrong, surely we ought to be able to see when we are wrong when we do the same things or worse.

It is wrong to judge others while refusing to be judged by the same standard by which we judge them. Some people are quick to rebuke others but become quite upset if

anyone rebukes them.

Not only should we show others when their lives contradict God's word, but we should also humbly accept rebuke when our lives violate God's word.

How should we treat our enemies? We must love them, do them good, and pray for them. Hatred only breeds more hatred. This is something that we just cannot do in our own strength. We can only do this with the help of the Holy Spirit. In Romans 5:5 this is what we read:

5 Because the love of God has been poured out in our hearts by the Holy Spirit who was given to us.

And in Galatians 5:22–23 we see the result of this:

22 But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, longsuffering, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, self-control.

23 Against such there is no law.

We now come to the last verse that we shall be looking at today, Luke 6:38:

38 "Give, and it will be given to you: good measure, pressed down, shaken together, and running over will be put into your bosom. For with the same measure that you use, it will be measured back to you."

This is true and has been tested when it comes to generosity with material resources. Simply said, you can't out-give God. He will return more to you, in one way or another, more than ever you can give to Him.

But the most important application of this is not just the giving of material resources, though it does include these. But with us being generous in our support, blessing, and forgiveness we are never the loser when we give those things using the example of God's generosity as a guide.

We need to learn to give, the way that God gives.

Notice Jesus' method of measuring out blessing to us in response to our giving: "Generous measure, pressed down, shaken together, running over!" It's the very picture of generosity.

But we need to understand the lesson that we are to learn here. In the phrase "it will be measured to you" Jesus teaches us that we will receive with the same measure we use to give. What Jesus is saying is that you'll get back what you give out, whether judgment or forgiveness. And, you'll receive it in the same amount that you dispense it.

Just what lessons can we learn from verses 37 and 38? Well, there are two things that we are not to do: to judge and condemn; and there are two things that we are to do: forgive and give.

Verse 37 is simple enough to understand: don't judge, and, you will not be judged. Don't condemn, and, you will not be condemned. Forgive, and you will be forgiven.

This has to do with how we regard and treat other people. If we want to be right in our judgments, then we need to be generous toward others.

The first step in righteous judgment is acquiring the right attitude of heart. We need to be generous, and charitable in our judgment, “for with the same measure that you use, it will be measured back to you.”

When it comes to our judgment and assessment of others, what goes around, usually comes around. The general fact is our generosity toward others will generally produce an overflowing generosity toward us.

Verse 38 tells us: “Give, and it will be given to you. A good measure, pressed down, shaken together, and running over.”

Give. If there is a single word in the whole dictionary that summarizes the Christian life, this is it: give. This is what Paul had to say in Acts 20:35:

35 “I have shown you in every way, by labouring like this, that you must support the weak. And remember the words of the Lord Jesus, He said: “It is more blessed to give than to receive.”

This is something that we need to understand; it is not just about how much you put in the offering on Sunday morning, there is a great deal more to it than just our offerings. 1 John 3:17:

17 But whoever has this world’s goods, and sees his brother in need, and shuts up his heart from him, how does the love of God abide in him?

I believe that we are about to go through a time that will be, for a lot of people, difficult times financially. What I would like to do to close today is just read a few scriptures that I believe may help.

Now I must make a couple of things very clear before I do. In no way do I believe in the prosperity gospel preached by some. God does not need a single penny of your money. He owns the cattle on a thousand hills. The wealth in every mine. The wealth of the world belongs to Him anyway.

What He has done is to make us stewards of some of that wealth, and whatever He has entrusted us with, we will have to give an account for.

You really must read the parable of the talents in Matthew 25. As stewards we are to act as wise servants in how we use whatever talents have been given to us.

Now you may not know just how you are use your talents? This is the advice from James 1:5:

5 If any of you lacks wisdom, let him ask of God, who gives to all liberally and without reproach, and it will be given to him.

I don’t think it could be much clearer than that. If you don’t know what to do, pray, and you will find the answer. God is good and just. He knows your heart and your motives.

This passage of scripture in Matthew 25 is one that I think we all need to be constantly aware of. In verse 13 we are told to “watch”, which simply means ‘be on your guard’.

13 “Watch therefore, for you know neither the day nor the hour in which the

Son of Man is coming.

What follows is a very clear instruction on just how we are to take care of those around us, and we really need to take note. When we get to verse 45 we find just what happens when we fail in our duty of care:

45 “Then He will answer them, saying, ‘Assuredly, I say to you, inasmuch as you did not do it to one of the least of these, you did not do it to Me.’

46 “And these will go away into everlasting punishment, but the righteous into eternal life.”

Ecclesiastes 9:10 describes the urgency of what we are to do:

10 Whatever your hand finds to do, do it with your might, for there is no work or device or knowledge or wisdom in the grave where you are going.

2 Co 6:2 is a verse we are very familiar with:

2 Behold, now is the accepted time; behold, now is the day of salvation

Salvation and service are to be the priorities of our lives. This is the day; we are not promised tomorrow. If we are going to be saved it needs to be today. Any acts of kindness we are going to do, now is the time.

In Proverbs 3:27 we find just who we are to do good for.

27 Do not withhold good from those to whom it is due, when it is in the power of your hand to do so.

As followers of Jesus, we take Him as our guide. This is what we find in Acts 10:38:

38 “How God anointed Jesus of Nazareth with the Holy Spirit and with power, who went about doing good.

There were no special groups that Jesus ministered to, He just went about doing good to anyone who needed it.

In John 13:35, we find what should be the badge for discipleship:

35 “By this all will know that you are My disciples, if you have love for one another.”

In 1 John 3:17, we find out if we have earned this badge:

17 But whoever has this world’s goods, and sees his brother in need, and shuts up his heart from him, how does the love of God abide in him?