

Compassionate

Luke 6: 27-38

The context for today's lesson has been called the Sermon on the Plain. While there are many similarities to Jesus' Sermon on the Mount as presented in Matthew, the central theme presented in Luke's gospel is loving others. When considering Luke's gospel, it is useful to

recognize several relevant points: Luke was not one of the 12 Apostles who experienced learning directly from Jesus but rather he traveled with Paul, Luke is not a Jew but rather a Gentile who came to his salvation and faith, Luke's perspective is that of a physician so his account is often detailed, orderly, and based in factual accounts of witnesses as well as his own observations.



With the key focus on *Loving Others*, we must acknowledge that there are often many worldly excuses available to us for discrediting or ignoring other people. We can label them or classify them callously as too old, too uneducated, too young, too ignorant, too radical, too . . . (you fill in the blank) to be deserving of our attention and kindness. However we chose to dismiss others or justify mistreating them, we should never forget that we, too, will be subject to judgement. This lesson comes at a specifically timely crossroad in our world and country where, to read the news, we could easily conclude that the world of hate is winning. It is our responsibility, as Christians, to respond differently than what may be manipulated or what may seem like a natural human reaction. Before we judge or correct others, we should examine ourselves. Before we respond with anger in response to a real or perceived affront, we should consider the damage from our response to the intended recipient but also to our hearts. We must also acknowledge that, for most of us, this message is not a new concept: we've heard this before.

Love All

Luke 6: 27-28

The audience for Jesus' sermon included His twelve disciples as well as the larger crowd that followed Him. It also included people who had traveled north from Judea and Jerusalem and south from Tyre and Sidon. These throngs brought with them people with illnesses and demonic afflictions seeking healing and deliverance from their suffering. Jesus spoke directly to His disciples as well as to His followers and the masses. While all may have heard Him speak, some did not "hear" the message of spiritual understanding to demonstrate God's compassionate love to others. Maybe we haven't actually heard this message fully either. Thankfully, we have the opportunity to get it right even if we haven't in the past.

Jesus explains that we are commanded to *Love our Enemies*. Nothing that glorifies God comes from loving those who love us: even sinners do that. A deeper explanation of this comes

from considering that God loved us while we were His enemies. Jesus demonstrated this to us and we can imitate His example. Loving others is more than an emotion. Loving our enemies requires that we do good to those who are not only hostile toward us but who may actually hate us. To do good for those people entails kindness and benevolence in our actions towards them but also to *Bless Them that Curse Us*. We must desire God's blessings upon them, speak kindly of them, and ask God to show favor to them. Lastly, we are to pray for them who may actively be doing harm to us instead of retaliating in like fashion. Only God can provide us with the strength to behave in this way.

Luke 6: 29-30

In this passage we discuss the concept of *Turning the Other Cheek*. It is my feeling that Jesus' message was not that we should meekly endure suffering at the hands of another. I believe we are to stand strong in Christ or even rebuke them and bring them before the church. What I think He may be referring to is when we are being attacked for being believers and, therefore, suffering for Christ's sake. In those situations, offering the other cheek demonstrates to the offender that we are willing to suffer for Christ. This response is the opposite of what our nature might demand; that we either flee or turn and fight. When we demonstrate love in those situations rather than engaging in a physical or verbal fight, we show God's grace and the empowerment of His spirit in us.

A further example of God's grace in us is demonstrated in our response to someone who has wronged us by stealing or violence; in this example our outer garment. The unexpected response is to offer them our shirt rather than engaging in a lawsuit. What our action is demonstrating is that our possessions are less important than our love for the other person, even if they have wronged us.

The next example is that of showing benevolence to every person who asks of us. Does this refer to indiscriminate handouts or something perhaps more personal? Surely, we are to demonstrate generosity and care for the poor, but I think Jesus expects us to demonstrate love in a more tangible way. We should not demean or call the person inferior by our handout but rather respond with love and kindness demonstrating respect for the person in need. We should not dictate or question the gift or their motives as this is between them and God.

How is our benevolence to be demonstrated if the request enables what we know is behavior that will potentially cause the person or others around them harm?

The final command is to not ask for something that has been taken to be returned. This principle is consistent with valuing the person more than the possession. Rather than holding the loss of the item against the person, we should consider it a gift to them in Christ's name as a way of demonstrating our love.

Luke 6: 31

Verse 31 is often called the Golden Rule. This familiar saying commands us to treat others as we wish to be treated. Believers are to treat all people with dignity and respect, especially those who are unable to defend themselves. I believe this refers to those as small as the unborn and those who are experiencing the end of life. The principle demands the application of Christian ethics as well as the scripture.

With a Pure Heart* *Luke 6: 32-36

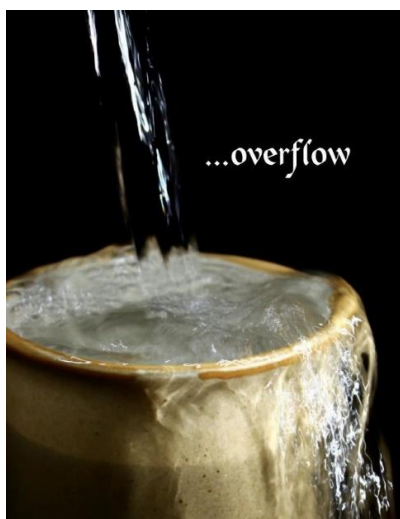
While there is nothing wrong with loving those who love us as this is a part of our Christian fellowship, but our responsibility does not end there. Even unbelievers can demonstrate love to those who love them. More is required of us in order to glorify God. When we seek thanks for our behavior, that also does not glorify God. Demonstrating love for others, including those who are our enemies, shows God's grace and genuine kindness. The second question related to this same grace applies to doing good to those who also do good to you. Again, there is nothing wrong with this but it is no different than the behavior demonstrated by non-believers and does not bring credit to us or glory to God.

The final example is when we lend to those who will also lend to us. No praise is due to either party as this same behavior is often demonstrated by non-believers. Followers of Jesus are held to a higher standard than worldly people who also love, help, and lend to those who love, help and lend to them. Christ's command to love others extends beyond the expected to the undeserving. When we consider Christ's sacrifice for us, we can better understand the concept of receiving undeserved grace. This is what glorifies God. Our reward is not wealth or fame; rather, it is to be known as a *Child of the Most High*. Our reward will be in heaven.

And with Mercy* *Luke 6: 37-38

These final two verses present negative principles and positive responses to show the reciprocal nature of how to treat others. Judge not, lest ye be judged. Judgement, condemnation, and forgiveness all surround the root concept of whether we consider someone guilty. Leaving judgement to God, the true judge, does not mean that we cannot and should not practice discernment. Likewise, forgiveness and lack of judgement does not imply that there are no earthly consequences for breaking the law. The point is that we will be judged and we will be condemned and we will be forgiven or shown mercy in the same measure by which we have judged, condemned, and forgiven others. All will face judgement.

Rather than criticizing and judging others, we are to focus on how we can benefit them and, in this way, glorify God by showing our love for others. We are charged to demonstrate the character of Jesus in the world. This calls for actions and behaviors beyond the normal human response. Calling on our Lord to help us will enable us to meet this challenge.



**"Give, and it will be given to you.
A good measure, pressed down,
shaken together and running
over, will be poured into your
lap. For with the measure you
use, it will be measured to you."
(Luke 6:38)**