

Be Different

Read Luke 6:27-36

This passage is the heart and soul of the NT ethics and our moral code of conduct. Jesus is teaching here in Luke 6 between verse 27 until the end of the chapter, the attitudes and actions of those who are followers of Christ. This teaching comes to us directly from the mouth of Jesus, spoken with divine authority and I hope, this morning, that we receive the words of Jesus as such.

I believe that this teaching from Jesus is one of the most radical teachings to come from all of Scripture. Without doubt, those who heard Jesus preach this firsthand would have been taken aback by this teaching and would have seen this teaching as radical. Especially the Scribes and Pharisees would have been extremely hostile to this teaching. They were used to the teaching of an eye for an eye, and a tooth for a tooth. But if we look at this teaching from a different perspective, we see that this teaching from Jesus was not a new piece of doctrine. Earlier, when Jesus explains the 10 commandments, his ideas then were shocking. Not only is killing someone against the 10 commandments but thinking angry thoughts against another and with hatred in your heart, Jesus tells us that we have already committed a sin, without committing the act of killing. Again, Jesus tells us that not only the physical act of adultery is a sin but if you lust after a woman in your mind, you have committed the sin without committing the act. What Jesus did was not add new content to the 10 commandments but rather he explained the full intent of the law as it was originally given. Jesus explained the law in its entirety. And Jesus is doing the same thing here. If you remember back to the last time I preached, it was on loving God and loving your neighbor. Jesus didn't add to the law but rather explained the full intention of what it means to love God and to love your neighbor as yourself. At this time, the Jewish religious leaders had described and explained the law by saying, to love your neighbor as yourself, only pertains to other Jews, that this law did not apply to Gentiles and foreigners. But what they had truly done was twist and distort the original significance of the law. And what Jesus is saying here is, "wait a minute, this is what the commandment to love your neighbor as yourself really means." Every human being has been stamped with the image of God and is valuable to God beyond understanding. Now, as we progress through this passage with some very strange sounding commands from Jesus, I want us to think about how these same commands, show, how God relates to us. How we, by nature, are enemies of God but receive from Him, his unconditional love. Even though we are his enemies, he has loved us, when we were altogether unlovely. When we were not thankful, he loved us. When we were rebellious, he loved us. When we were downright nasty and evil towards God, He has never returned evil for evil. But the pattern that God exhibits in relating to us, is to be the same pattern in which we are to relate to our enemies, because we are to be imitators of Jesus Christ.

Over the last 5 weeks, we have shown you that love is more often translated as a verb, not a noun. Love is an action. So when Jesus says to love your enemies, he isn't saying that you have to have warm fuzzies and loving affections towards your enemies. You could translate this verse, 'be loving towards your enemies'. Jesus breaks this down, its how we behave towards our enemies that he is talking about. Let's be honest. We all have enemies. As Christians, it's our responsibility to learn how to identify and interact with those who we see as our enemy.

Verse 27.

Jesus prefaces what he is about to say with, “but I say to you who hear.” This is a command for all. Everyone who has ears, let him hear. Jesus says “do good to those who hate you”. Wait, what? Do good to those who hate you? You might be saying to yourself but Jesus, that goes against all of who I am? And you would be right, but Jesus still commands it. We are to do good towards our enemies. But what does our flesh want to do? When someone curses you, we want to curse them back. When someone does evil to you, we want to do evil back. But Jesus says, do good to those who hate you. I titled my sermon today “Be Different” for a reason and I think by the end of it, you’ll understand why.

Verse 28

Bless those who curse you, pray for those who abuse you. When was the last time someone cursed you? How did you respond? To that coworker that curses and verbally abuses you, to the family member that shouts obscenities at you, tells you that your no good, worthless, did you respond with a blessing towards them? Did you say something nice to them? Or did you curse them right back? Now, I am not trying to make light of an awful situation. If you find yourself in an abusive situation, please tell someone. Tell a trusted friend, tell your pastor, tell someone that loves you and will encourage and help you. If the abuse has reached a dangerous level, get the authorities involved or seek a counselor. But also, pray for them. Have hope for them. Its hard, but you are not alone. The worlds standards or thoughts are not to guide the followers of Christ. Hebrews 12:14 “Pursue peace with all men, and the sanctification without which no one will see the Lord.” If we do not love our enemies, we are no different than the world. By loving and praying from those who hurt us, we show the world something very different

Verse 29

To the one who strikes you on the one cheek, offer the other also. Picture in your mind, you are standing face to face with someone and you want to hit them. In Matthew, Jesus says if someone is going to strike you on your right cheek, give him the other also. So you want to hit someone on the right side of the face, but you are right handed. Well the only way you can do that is if you use the back of your hand. In the 1st century Jewish nation, to strike someone on the right cheek with the back of your hand was considered the ultimate insult that you could give to someone. So not only is Jesus telling us not to return blow for blow or punch for punch, but Jesus is telling us, do not return insult for insult. Instead of insulting them back when they insult you, let them insult you, and insult you, and insult you, and insult you. Jesus says give them your other cheek as well. But do not return insult for insult. Nonresistance and forbearance are to be the instructions among Christians. Christians are to endure personal ill treatment without coming to blows. You are to be as the anvil when bad men are the hammers, and thus you are to overcome by patient forgiveness. The rule of the judgment seat is not for common life, but the rule of the cross and the all-enduring sufferer is for us all. Yet how many regard all this as fanatical, utopian, and even cowardly? The Lord, our King, would have us bear and forbear and conquer by mighty patience. Can we do it? How are we the servants of Christ if we do not have his spirit? Jesus goes on to say, if they want your coat, give them your shirt.

Verse 30

If someone comes and ask you for help, help them and do not look for anything in return. Now, the Bible is not against the loaning of money with interest. What the Bible is against is usury. If you want a good example of usury, look in your wallet, look at the interest rate on your credit cards. The interest rates on credit cards are heavy and burdensome and it exploits its users. The principles these banks follow is so ungodly and against the law of God. We are to help and give to those in need cheerfully because it is Jesus himself that tells us to do so. A disciple of Christ must be free from the love of possessions. What you are given in this world is not yours. You don't own anything really. Everything you have been given is a gift from God above and meant for you to manage. You are managing your time, your gifts, your money, your possessions. What, from this world, are you going to take with you into the next, nothing! So why are you clinging onto it so tightly? Most people cling to their possessions, money or time because to them, it is security. But do you put your security in earthly treasures, that rust and rot away? That is how we have to view God's church as well. We are managing His church and His church is too important for us to fail. That is why we need everyone's help. You have gifts and talents that only you have. You are here, in this church, to help this church become what God intended. Step out on faith and trust God with the outcome. Volunteer and serve in a ministry that you are passionate about. I can promise you, if you have passion for a specific ministry, it will be some of the most rewarding moments of your life. Give, and do not look for anything in return. If someone steals from you, takes away something of yours, Jesus tells us do not demand your stuff back. This morning, we are not talking about easy things. However, easy or hard, this is still what Jesus commands. When you walk the way that Jesus tells us to walk, you will look crazy to the world. But remember, we are to be in the world, not of the world. Be different than the world.

Verses 27-30, these verses show what characterizes a follower of Christ, actions of love and generosity.

Verse 31

The golden rule. Here we see Jesus restating a command of the OT in Lev. 19:18. Again, Jesus didn't bring new doctrine to the table, Jesus explained it the proper way. One thing I like about this verse is that Jesus is connecting and showing continuity between OT and NT. Jesus mentions this again in Mark 12, remember Step One, Love God, Step Two, Love your neighbor as yourself. You can see the Scripture doesn't deviate on this subject. Give to someone even if it means you are not going to get anything back. Don't use the help of your brother for your own profit. Don't exploit the need of someone for your personal gain. As you wish that others would do to you, do so to them. Treat them the way that you want to be treated. Put yourself in the other persons shoes. But what Jesus is really telling us here is, be like God. God loved you before you loved God.

Verses 32-34

In the next 3 verses, Jesus makes this principle of loving your enemies real. There is nothing uncommon about loving those that love you. There is nothing uncommon about doing evil to those that do evil to you. It doesn't take an ounce of effort to repay like for like. What credit are you to Christ or what reputation do you bring to Jesus if someone does kind to you and you return kindness back. Jesus says even sinners do that. That's not being different. But here is what

is different. To be different, to credit Jesus as the reason why you are doing what you are doing, to gain a reputation that shines Jesus, is to return good for evil. Not that our name may be glorified. Not that thanks is due to us, but that Jesus is lifted up and glorified. Now you are different. Now you look like Jesus. If you do good to those who do good to you, what benefit is that to you? Even sinners do that! If you lend to someone and expect to receive it back, what credit is that to you? Even sinners do that! We are called to be different.

Listen to these words and ask yourself, is that me?

“Too many consider that the service of the church is intended merely to feed them. They never look on the house of God as a barracks for soldiers, or a place where workmen come together to sharpen their tools; they only regard it as a sacred shop, a spiritual pantry, or a heavenly lunchroom where much is to be received and little or nothing returned. We must get out of the cramping influence of the spirit that makes religion a selfish provision of ourselves. We are to serve, not to recline at our ease. What are we doing that we are so anxious to rest and benefit ourselves? The Lord Jesus Christ would not have us always asking “How can I be happy? How can I obtain spiritual enjoyment?” Servants are not supposed to spend their time in doing their own pleasure and seeking their own profit. A manservant whose whole time was taken up with watching his own wealth would be of small value to his employer. Even so, we have something else to do beyond watching over our own inward feelings. To snatch a brand from the burning fire is better than to warm our own hands. To feed a hungry soul with the bread of heaven is a far higher deed than to eat the fat and drink the sweet ourselves. There is more plunging our arm up to the elbow in the mire to find a jewel for Christ than in washing one’s idle hands with the scented soap of respectable propriety.” That is powerful. Do you come to church for yourself, or do you ask yourself, how can I make a difference? You are a servant because Jesus was a servant. As a servant of Jesus, we are not to be spending our time focused solely on ourselves and our own profit. If all you do is focus on your own wealth and happiness, how can God use you to reach others? It is better to get your hands dirty in service to the Lord than to sit at home and get your nails done. Its better to get burned and persecuted for spreading the Gospel than to wash yourself in perfume and oils at home. Its better to feed the bread of life, Jesus Christ, to others than to sit at home and enjoy your own food. If you are a follower of Jesus, then follow Jesus and step out in faith because there is work to be done.

Verses 35-36

Here we see a quick summary of the passage and it is Jesus himself that does it. Love your enemies, do good, and lend, expecting nothing in return. Now that Jesus has explained all of this, now after summarizing it all, he gives us what the reward will be. Jesus says that our reward will be great. There is a reward for doing good when evil was done to us? Jesus tells us there are 2 rewards. First our reward shall be great. What is given out, lent or lost on earth, from a heart that’s true, will be made up to us in heaven, unspeakably to our advantage. Store up treasures in heaven where rust and moth cannot touch it. Second, it should contribute greatly to our honor because we will resemble the goodness of God, and we will become sons of God. The glory ultimately goes to God because when people ask us why we do good to those who do evil to us, its an opportunity to praise God, to give all the glory and honor and praise to God above. The reward for obeying Jesus’s love command will be great, though much of it will not be in this life. But your selfless love will reflect that you are children of God. God’s people are to be like God, as merciful as He is. Because we were at one time, God’s enemy. You were once God’s enemy

allowing your sinful nature to have dominion and authority over your life. Before we were saved, our sinfulness and disobedience provoked God's anger. Our rebellion against God, our doing evil to other people dishonors Him. You have all heard the saying, you are either with me or against me. There is no middle ground and the same is true with God. You are either a child of God, acting like a child a God, listening to His commands, or you are in constant rebellion against God, thinking you can do it yourself, sinning with no shame or remorse, living by your fleshly desires. But one day, God will intervene, and when He does, He will either be just or merciful. I implore you sinner, come to Christ, believe in Him, so that you do not receive God's justice.

"Be merciful, even as your Father is merciful." God is merciful to his children and therefore we must be merciful to others in their evil towards us. God has given us an example, Jesus Christ. Romans 5:8 "but God shows his love for us in that while we were still sinners, Christ died for us." Jesus was beaten, mocked, cursed at, tortured and killed and not once did he strike back, hurl an insult or think bad about those who were doing this to him. In fact, on the cross he says, Father, forgive them, for they know not what they do. That is our example. That is how we should act. You were an enemy of God when Jesus came and died for you. That is how we are to treat our neighbor, with love. Jesus loved you before you loved him. Jesus died for you WHILE you were still a sinner.

Napoleon said "Alexander, Caesar, Charlemagne and I myself have founded great empires; but upon what did these creations of our genius depend? Upon force. Jesus alone founded His empire upon love, and to this very day millions will die for Him." Love towards your enemy's changes things. It's unique. It's powerful. It makes you different than the world. We are to be in the world but not of the world.

James pushes the envelope harder and says in James 4:4 "You adulterous people! Do you not know that friendship with the world is enmity with God? Therefore whoever wishes to be a friend of the world makes himself an enemy of God." We are to be here on this planet but not like everyone else. We are called to a higher calling. We are to be like Jesus. That's what Christian means, little Christ. We should be good to those who do evil to us because God is good to people and gracious beyond all that they deserve. God is good to you, even with all the evil that you have done towards God. He is gracious beyond all that you deserve. Therefore you must be merciful to those who do evil to you.

If there is a core meaning to these teachings its this, mercy, not vengeance. The world returns evil for evil. The world wants to avenge itself. Be different. Show mercy. God is an avenging God. God promises to make unjust things, just. Look at Romans 12:19 "Never take your own revenge, beloved, but leave room for the wrath of God, for it is written, "Vengeance is Mine, I will repay," says the Lord." God says, vengeance is mine. I will repay. It is not yours to repay. Now, when it comes to public matters, there is a legitimate place for the state and church courts but what Jesus is talking about here is Christian personal ethics. And what marks a person as a Christian, is your ability to show mercy when the world would have you show justice. Because you have been a recipient of mercy. Because God has shown mercy to you, show mercy to others.

1 John 4:7-12

7 Beloved, let us love one another, for love is from God; and everyone who loves is born of God and knows God. 8 The one who does not love does not know God, for God is love. 9 By this the love of God was manifested in us, that God has sent His only begotten Son into the world so that we might live through Him. 10 In this is love, not that we loved God, but that He loved us and sent His Son to be the propitiation for our sins. 11 Beloved, if God so loved us, we also ought to love one another. 12 No one has seen God at any time; if we love one another, God abides in us, and His love is perfected in us.

I'll end with this.

One night, in 2002, Eric Smallridge was driving drunk, coming home from a party. While driving home, he struck another car, killing two 20 year old girls instantly, Megan and Lisa. During his sentencing hearing, he expressed deep remorse for what he had done, weeping bitterly and wishing he could trade places with the girls. But he was sentenced to 22 years in prison. Over the next few years, Renee, the mother of one of the girls, started organizing events around their state to raise awareness about drunk driving. But she knew there was something more she needed to be doing. She needed to love the one who did her incredible evil. During one of Eric's hearings years later, Renee took the stand and told Eric, the judge, the courtroom and the world, that she forgives him, the evil that he committed. From that display of love, Eric's sentence was cut in half and he was released in 2012. Today, the two of them travel the country, as family, to share the Gospel of Jesus. They are powerful examples on how to love your enemies.

My challenge to you this morning, be like this woman. Forgive those that hurt you. Love your enemies and pray for your enemies. I want you to pray for your enemies over the next 30 days, I challenge you to write that person's name down that God is bringing to your heart this morning and pray for them, for their wellbeing, for their good, for 30 days. Faithfully pray for them for 30 days and see how you feel about them in 30 days.

Be different. The love that God has shown you, show to everyone else.

Pray