

Luke 6:27-36

"Love your enemies"

September 8, 2024

1. Intro

- a. In the previous weeks in our study on the Sermon on the Plain, we've looked at the characteristics of those who Jesus calls blessed
 - i. Blessed are you who are poor, for yours is the Kingdom of God
 - ii. Blessed are you who are hungry now, for you shall be satisfied
 - iii. Blessed are you who weep now, for you shall laugh
 - iv. And last week, we looked at one of Jesus' harder teachings on what it means to be blessed...
 1. Blessed are you when people hate you and when they exclude you and revile you and spurn your name as evil, on account of the Son of Man!
 - a. Jesus tells us, on that day when you experience all of those things, and that day IS coming, brothers and sisters, REJOICE!
 - i. LEAP FOR JOY!
 - ii. For Jesus says that when our persecution increases here on this earth, then so also will our reward be increasing in heaven
 1. None of the prophets of the Old Testament were liked by the masses
 2. No one was excited about the messages they brought
 - a. Yet Jesus infers in this teaching that, because they were FAITHFUL in the face of hatred and reviling and being called evil, they were greatly rewarded in heaven for enduring to the end
 2. And so also will you be rewarded, brothers and sisters in Christ, if you also will endure
 - a. In Matthew 24, as Jesus is speaking to his disciples on the Mount of Olives, he says to them, and to us...
 - i. *⁹Then they will deliver you up to tribulation and put you to death, and you will be hated by all nations for my name's sake. ¹⁰And then many will fall away and betray one another and hate one another. ¹¹And many false prophets will arise and lead many astray. ¹²And because lawlessness will be increased, the love of many will grow cold. ¹³But the one who endures to the end will be saved. ¹⁴And this gospel of the kingdom will be proclaimed throughout the whole world as a testimony to all nations, and then the end will come.*
 1. Endure to the end, and you will be saved
 2. Blessed are you when people persecute you, for GREAT is your reward in heaven
 - b. In Revelation 2, as Jesus, now resurrected and ascended to the throne, sends out his letters to the seven churches, he has this to say to the church in Smyrna...
 - i. *⁹I know your tribulation and your poverty (but you are rich) and the slander of those who say that they are Jews and are not, but are a synagogue of Satan. ¹⁰Do not fear what you are about to suffer. Behold, the devil is about to throw some of you into prison, that you may be tested, and for ten days you will have tribulation. Be faithful unto death, and I will give you the crown of life. ¹¹He who has an ear,*

ii. And you, CHURCH, will no longer be good for ANYTHING

iii. Just like it does no good to go into a dark room and turn on a light, but then immediately cover that light with a thick blanket

1. That's not what light is for, is it?

2. A light is meant to illuminate the darkness

a. You, CHURCH, are meant to illuminate a dark and decaying world

i. And if you choose not to, then again, you will no longer be good for anything

iv. So in response to their fears about persecution, Jesus says in the Sermon on the Mount, "Don't forget what I have saved you FOR!"

1. And he does the very same thing here in the Sermon on the Plain

a. How are we to be the salt of the earth?

b. How are we to shine in such a way that brings glory to our Father in heaven?

c. How are we to remain faithful to the end?

i. Jesus tells us, starting in verse 27...

2. Luke 6:27-31

a. *²⁷But I say to you who hear, Love your enemies, do good to those who hate you, ²⁸bless those who curse you, pray for those who abuse you. ²⁹To one who strikes you on the cheek, offer the other also, and from one who takes away your cloak do not withhold your tunic either. ³⁰Give to everyone who begs from you, and from one who takes away your goods do not demand them back. ³¹And as you wish that others would do to you, do so to them.*

i. Things just got significantly more difficult, didn't they?

1. Jesus is not pleased when his followers forget their calling to be the salt and the light in the world

2. But nor is he pleased when his followers live and act and REACT like the rest of the world around them

a. So let's break these things down and dig deeply into the words of our Lord and Savior here

3. First, Jesus say that we are to LOVE our enemies

a. If you've been in the church for awhile, you might have heard it said that the Bible has a couple of primary words for the word, LOVE

i. Typically, when the Bible uses the Greek word, *phileo*, for love, it is referring to more of a warm affection between friends

1. This is the love that deepens over time as good friends deepen their relationship, and the bond between them grows tighter and tighter

ii. But when the Scriptures use the word, *agapao*, for love, there is a different weight attached to it

1. In a broader sense, this is a love not from the perspective of one friend to another, but from the perspective of the God who IS love

a. This is a love that is deeply rooted in HIS will and HIS attributes

i. This is the *agapao* love that flows from Him who so LOVED the world, that He gave His one and only Son, that whoever believes in him shall not perish, but have eternal life

ii. This is the *agapao* love that God showed to US when, while we were still sinners, Christ died for you... and for me

- iii. This is the *agapao* love that enables US to love, because He loved us FIRST
 - b. Both *phileo* and *agapao* are important in the life of a follower of Jesus
 - i. But *agapao* clearly stands as the preeminent, God-exalting, and Christ-glorifying love of the saints
- iii. And here in verse 27, we are called to *agapao* our enemies
 - 1. When people hate you because you have chosen Christ over all of the trinkets and treasures of this earth, Jesus says you are to LOVE them with a deep, God-honoring love
 - 2. When people exclude you because you have made the choice to live according to all of the precepts and statutes and commands of the Word of God, Jesus says you are to LOVE them with a love that brings glory to the name of your Father
 - 3. When people revile you and they spurn your name as evil on account of your faith in Jesus Christ, Jesus says you are LOVE them, as God has loved YOU
 - a. The call is to *agapao* our enemies
 - i. But Jesus keeps pressing even further
 - 1. It's not enough to just LOVE our enemies from a distance, as we retreat to our homes and hope that we never have to interact with them face-to-face
- iv. Jesus goes further and says, "THIS is HOW you are to love them..."
 - 1. DO GOOD to those who hate you
 - a. Don't just avoid being mean or cold or distant toward them
 - b. Don't just be superficially nice to them when you accidentally run into them while you're out running errands
 - i. This imperative from Jesus means that you ACTIVELY and INTENTIONALLY seek out ways to do good to those who hate you
 - 1. Think about when your best friend, or someone in your family, has a birthday coming up
 - a. You INTENTIONALLY start to think, days in advance, of how you might show your love to that person
 - i. What kind of gift will I buy them?
 - ii. Where can I take them out to dinner?
 - iii. What can I do to show them that they are truly loved, in a way that truly speaks to THEIR heart?
 - ii. This is the kind of intentionality that Jesus calls us to... not to our best friends
 - 1. But to those who HATE us
 - a. Do GOOD to those who hate you
 - 2. And BLESS those who curse you
 - a. I was just reading a few days ago about how King David fled from Jerusalem when his son, Absalom, tried to take over
 - i. As he was leaving the city, a man named Shimei, from the house of Saul, came out and cursed David, yelling at him and throwing rocks at him
 - 1. David at first takes the high road, and says, "Maybe this cursing is from the Lord... let Shimei continue in his cursing."
 - 2. He later evens pardons Shimei once Absalom is killed and the Kingdom is restored

- a. But then in 1 Kings 2, as David is giving his final instructions to his son, Solomon, his last words to him are... “Don’t forget about Shimei. You know what to do with him. Bring his gray head down with blood to Sheol.”
 - ii. Isn’t this how we REALLY feel with those who curse us, or speak evil against us, or slander us, or gossip about us?
 - 1. On the outside, we might appear to take the high road, as we refrain from slandering right back at them in order to defend OUR name
 - a. But really, on the inside, isn’t there also a part of us that says to God, like David said to Solomon, “Don’t forget about so-and-so, Lord. Make sure they get what they deserve.”
 - i. But that’s not what Jesus says for us to do here, is it?
 - b. Jesus says BLESS those who curse you
 - i. Literally, this word means “SPEAK WELL of those who speak badly about you”
 - 1. Use your words to say GOOD things about them
 - 2. Use your words to pray GOOD things over their lives
 - 3. Use your words to ask that God would BLESS them with His favor
 - ii. Friends, THIS is how we actively agapao our enemies
 - 1. We bless them with our words TO them, and we bless them with our words ABOUT them!
3. If you’re on social media much, you might have noticed the growing trend among Christians where they talk about their church service and say something like, “Man, worship today was ON FIRE!”
 - a. Or, if you’re cool enough, you might say, “Worship today was LIT!!”
 - i. In the eyes of so many church-goers today, worship is just something we do for thirty minutes or so on a Sunday morning
 - 1. But in Romans chapter 12, Paul writes this to the Christians in Rome
 - a. He says in verse 1,
 - i. ¹I appeal to you therefore, brothers, by the mercies of God, to present your bodies as a living sacrifice, holy and acceptable to God, which is your spiritual worship.
 - b. Worship is not just singing a bunch of songs about Jesus
 - i. Worship is about giving your whole body to the Lord as a living sacrifice
 - 1. Paul goes on in chapter 12 to give a pretty lengthy list of what this looks like...
 - a. Love one another genuinely
 - b. Abhor what is evil...
 - c. Outdo one another with brotherly affection...
 - 2. But then he gets to verse 14, where he says,

- a. “Bless those who persecute you; bless and do not curse them”
 - c. Brothers and sisters in Christ, do you want to TRULY offer your bodies as living sacrifices to the Lord, worshiping him with all your heart, soul, mind, and strength?
 - i. If so, then a crucial part of your worship will look like you BLESSING those who curse you
 - 1. It means that you let go of your right to say whatever is on your mind
 - 2. It means that you let go of your desire to rant about your enemy on social media
 - 3. It means that you lay ALL of those things before God in prayer, and you instead use your words to BLESS your enemies
 - a. And in doing so, you worship your Father in Heaven
 - d. So we love our enemies by doing good to them
 - e. We love our enemies by blessing them
- 4. And third, we love our enemies by PRAYING for those who abuse us
 - a. Jesus’ words are not getting any easier, are they
 - i. This word that he uses here for abuse can mean simply threatening or being ugly to someone
 - 1. But it ALSO can mean to deceptively manipulate, to physically abuse, and even to molest
 - ii. How are we to love our enemies who treat us in such an emotionally traumatic way?
 - 1. We are to pray for them
 - a. I think it’s safe to say from the context here that Jesus IS NOT saying that we should pray for them like David often prayed for his enemies...
 - i. That they would be slaughtered by the sword and that God’s wrath and judgment would be fully unleashed upon them
 - 2. No, we are to pray for those who abuse us, WITH LOVE
 - a. We are to pray for those who abuse us, with WORDS OF BLESSING
 - b. Now certainly we are called to use wisdom in these circumstances, aren’t we?
 - i. The church has erred often in the past when it comes to this verse when they have encouraged wives to stay in abusive marriages, or when they have not reported cases of abuse to outside authorities
 - 1. If we ever find ourselves in an abusive relationship, we SHOULD do all we can to remove ourselves from those circumstances
 - 2. And if there is a report of abuse that we learn about as a church, we SHOULD make sure that it is fully disclosed to the proper authorities
 - a. But after we have applied all the necessary wisdom to the situation, the command still stands...
 - i. We are to PRAY for those who abuse us

- c. Is this not what Jesus himself did, as he was hanging on the cross, rejected by his very own people, beaten to a pulp, gasping for every single breath, and he uses one of those excruciatingly painful breaths to say,
 - i. *“Father, forgive them, for they know not what they do.”*
 - 1. The Lord has set for us an example
 - 2. And we are called to follow him in every way
 - a. Love your enemies
 - b. Do good to those who hate you
 - c. Bless those who curse you
 - d. And pray for those who abuse you
- b. Jesus then gets even more specific, as he continues to relentlessly hammer on this subject
 - i. In verse 29, he says, *“To one who strikes you on the cheek, offer the other also, and from one who takes away your cloak do not withhold your tunic either.”*
 - 1. The clear principle that Jesus is teaching is simply this: revenge is not ours to pursue
 - a. Again, back in Romans 12, Paul expounds upon this principle when he says in verse 17,
 - i. *¹⁷Repay no one evil for evil, but give thought to do what is honorable in the sight of all. ¹⁸If possible, so far as it depends on you, live peaceably with all. ¹⁹Beloved, NEVER avenge yourselves, but leave it to the wrath of God, for it is written, “Vengeance is mine, I will repay, says the Lord.” ²⁰To the contrary, “if your enemy is hungry, feed him; if he is thirsty, give him something to drink; for by so doing you will heap burning coals on his head.” ²¹Do not be overcome by evil, but overcome evil with good.*
 - b. Friends, in our American culture of protect yourself and your loved ones and your stuff at ANY cost, these commands found in the Scripture are unashamedly COUNTER-cultural
 - i. When people insult us, our refusal to insult them back speaks volumes about our trust in our standing with God
 - ii. When people strike us, our refusal to strike them back speaks volumes about our trust in the justice of our God
 - iii. When people steal from us, our refusal to take them down in order to keep what is ours speaks volumes about the sovereignty of our God
 - c. The writer of the book of Hebrews speaks to these very things when he says in chapter 10,
 - i. *³²But recall the former days when, after you were enlightened, you endured a hard struggle with sufferings, ³³sometimes being publicly exposed to reproach and affliction, and sometimes being partners with those so treated. ³⁴For you had compassion on those in prison, and you joyfully accepted the plundering of your property, since you knew that you yourselves had a better possession and an abiding one. ³⁵Therefore do not throw away your confidence, which has a great reward.*
 - 1. There it is again...
 - a. GREAT is your reward in heaven
 - i. Even as you are exposed to reproach and affliction
 - ii. Even as you joyfully accept the plundering of your property

- iii. Even as your enemies strike you on your cheek
 - ii. Turn to them the other cheek, for your confidence is NOT on your earthly well-being and protection
 - 1. Your confidence is IN CHRIST
 - 2. Your confidence is in all the riches of heaven that await you on the OTHER side of eternity
 - a. Christians, trust in your position in Christ
 - b. Trust in God's justice against the wicked
 - c. And trust that He is sovereign over ALL things, including the slap on your cheek and the stealing of your cloak
- ii. And if anyone begs from you, give what they are asking for
 - 1. Does this mean that we are to stop and give money to every panhandler on the street, as their numbers seem to be increasing in Tulsa more and more each day?
 - a. I don't think that's what Jesus was talking about
 - i. He's not encouraging his followers to become enablers within a broken system of addictions and apathy and handouts
 - 1. Remember, all of these instructions fall under the heading of "Loving our enemies"
 - a. Back again to Paul in Romans 12...
 - i. If your enemy is hungry and begging for food, we don't say to them, "Too bad buddy, you should have been nicer to me in the past"
 - ii. If our enemy is thirsty and begging for a drink, we don't ignore them and say to them, "Sorry pal, you reap what you sow"
 - iii. NO. Paul said, "If your enemy is hungry, feed him. If he is thirsty, give him something to drink."
 - ii. And then pay attention to the "WHY" behind Paul's commands...
 - 1. "For by doing so you will heap burning coals on his head"
 - a. What Paul is saying here is, when you are kind and generous to your enemy when he is in need, your GENUINE kindness and generosity will be like a burning fire to his conscience
 - i. And as his conscience is seared, God-willing, the evil in his heart will be overcome by your good
 - ii. And MAYBE this person who was once your enemy, might just see the light in YOUR heart
 - iii. And MAYBE they might turn and glorify your Father who is in heaven
 - 2. And MAYBE, your enemy will become your brother or sister in Christ
 - a. All because you turned the other cheek when you were struck
 - b. All because you gave them your tunic when they stole your cloak
 - c. All because you gave to them when they were in need
 - i. And did not demand that they return to you ANYTHING they had taken

- iii. And Jesus says, if you are unwilling to do these things, just put yourself in their place for a moment
 - 1. What if YOU were the wicked one?
 - 2. What if YOU were the enemy of those who were good?
 - 3. And what if YOU suddenly found yourself in desperate need?
 - a. Would you not be incredibly moved by the kindness and meekness and humility and generosity of those who you once persecuted?
 - b. Would you not be moved by the love of those who you once hated?
 - i. Jesus says in verse 31...
 - 1. "As you wish that others would do to you, do so to them."
 - 2. The Golden Rule, when put in its PROPER context, has FAR greater weight to it than when we simply try to teach our kids to be nice to people
 - iv. For Jesus goes on to say that, again if we are not willing to do these things, then we are no better than a bunch of sinners
 - 1. ³²If you love those who love you, what benefit is that to you? For even sinners love those who love them. ³³And if you do good to those who do good to you, what benefit is that to you? For even sinners do the same. ³⁴And if you lend to those from whom you expect to receive, what credit is that to you? Even sinners lend to sinners, to get back the same amount.
 - a. Do you want to continue being bitter against your enemies?
 - b. Do you want to continue withholding good from those who mistreat you?
 - c. Do you want to continue speaking words of anger and slander and unforgiveness against those who curse you?
 - i. Well, Jesus says if that is the case, then you really are no better than they are
 - ii. And even more damning to our hearts, he says that if this is what you choose to hang onto in your hearts, then you are not a son or daughter of God
 - v. Jesus says in verses 35 and 36,
 - 1. *³⁵But love your enemies, and do good, and lend, expecting nothing in return, and your reward will be great, and you will be sons of the Most High, for he is kind to the ungrateful and the evil. ³⁶Be merciful, even as your Father is merciful.*
- c. Brothers and sisters in Christ, if you truly desire to be a son or a daughter of God Most High, then you must strive to act like your Father
- i. For when you were His enemy, He loved you enough to send his one and only Son to die for you
 - ii. When you hated and reviled him with your words and with your actions, did the ultimate good for you by removing your cold heart of stone, and replacing it with a heart of flesh that KNOWS Him and longs to follow His commands
 - iii. When you were ungrateful for the many blessings He poured out upon you, even in the midst of your rebellion, He showed his kindness by casting your sin away, as far as the east is from the west
 - iv. When you were evil, He was merciful.
 - 1. This is how our Father has treated each of us, friends
 - a. And we were absolutely undeserving of ANY of it!
 - b. Jesus is not calling us to the impossible in this passage
 - i. He is calling us to BE who we truly ARE

2. If you are a Son or Daughter of the Most High, then you absolutely CAN live your life in such a radically counter-cultural way
 - a. You CAN love your enemies
 - b. You CAN do good to those who hate you
 - c. You CAN bless those who curse you
 - d. You CAN pray for those who abuse you
 - i. You have been adopted into the family of God, and He has given you His very Spirit to dwell within you
 1. So you absolutely CAN do ALL of these things
3. But here is the only way it will happen in your life:
 - a. You must DIE to yourself, plain and simple
 - b. You must deny yourself, and take up your cross, and follow Jesus
 - i. When you are hated and excluded for your faith in Jesus and your adherence to his Word, you deny your desires to retreat into your nice, safe, Christian bubble...
 1. You pick up your cross...
 2. And you DO GOOD to those who hate you
 - ii. When you are slandered and reviled and cursed on account of Christ, you deny your desires to fight back with hurtful words of your own...
 1. You pick up your cross...
 2. And you BLESS those who curse you
 - iii. When you are abused and mistreated and taken advantage of by the world, you deny your desires for vengeance...
 1. You pick up your cross...
 2. And you pray for the forgiveness of your enemies
 - a. Just as Christ prayed that YOU would be forgiven
 - d. Brothers and sisters, your Father was kind to you when you were ungrateful and evil
 - i. And He has every right to demand that you do the same to others
 - e. Your Father was merciful to you when you were His enemy
 - i. And He has every right to demand that you do the same to others
 1. These are the expectations that a kind and loving, but also a firm and stern, Father has for His children
 2. These are the expectations for all who desire to bear the name, Christian
 - a. Love your enemies
 - b. Do good to those who hate you
 - c. Bless those who curse you
 - d. Pray for those who abuse you
3. And in so doing, the name of your Father will be glorified on this earth!