

The Sermon on the Plain, part 3: Doing What He Says (Luke 6:39-49)

Sunday school November 6, 2016

I want to call your attention to **READ Luke 6:27-38**. Last week we started studying the commands and rationale Christ gives His disciples in these verses. There are many commands in there, but I summarized them in three main areas: love (your enemies), do good (to them which despitely use you), and give expecting nothing in return. I commented last time that these are the kind of commands that are easy to tell other people to do but very hard to do yourself. Partly for that reason, after He gives the commands in verses 27-31, He then goes on in verses 32-38 to give some reasons why we should heed these commands. God does not have to explain why He tells us to do the things He tells us to do, but in this case He does to help us do them. We studied the first reason last time: doing these things is different from what sinners, i.e. the natural man, does. The natural man is very willing to love, do good, and give if he thinks he will get loved, done well, and given to in return. We are to do it expecting nothing in return, and that marks a difference between those who follow Christ and those who don't. So the difference is our motives, why we love, do good, and give. We should do it not because we expect something in return (that's what the natural man does), but because He tells us to. That should be our motive for doing these things.

Transition: So we have three more reasons to clean up from last time. Next reason from your outline from last time...

IIB. Great Reward READ v. 35a. When you love, do good, and give expecting nothing in return, you will in fact get something in return anyway. God will make sure of it. Jesus says, "your reward (the thing you will get in return) will be great." He doesn't say specifically what your reward will be. Some people take this reward to be material goods in this world, mainly because of a misunderstanding of **READ v. 38**. The image here is of a merchant who is not stingy or beguiling but makes sure his customer gets a good deal rather than give them the bare minimum to satisfy his obligations like most merchants do these days. Some people interpret this verse entirely materially. They say, "you give all your money to the church and its ministry and God will give you more money than you ever had before in return." Not necessarily. We had a guy at my church up in Ohio, whom I won't name. He worked for one of those stewardship companies that try to get you to give money now and through your will to various ministries. He preached a sermon on financial stewardship with that idea and based it off of this verse. The problem is there is nothing to indicate that the reward has to be material. Sometimes God works that way, but sometimes He doesn't. He's promised to meet all of our needs, but He hasn't promised to make us rich beyond our wildest dreams in this world. Sometimes your reward is in the next world. The principle taught in this verse is: you can't outgive God. He already gave us His Son, the best thing He had to give, and paid my death payment that I couldn't pay. If you love, do good, and give expecting nothing in return, your reward, in this world and/or the next, will be great.

Transition: Next reason, and an extension of this idea...

IIC. Being Like God READ v. 35-36 We should love, do good, and give expecting nothing in return because God does. Romans 5:8 says, “But God commendeth his love toward us, in that, while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us.” God didn’t send His Son to die and save us because of the great things we can do for Him in return for our salvation. We can’t do anything to earn salvation, and He’s God; He can do everything for Himself. He lets us be used by Him to do things for Him, but He can do everything for Himself. God sent His Son to die and save us because He loves us. He loved people (us) who had nothing to offer Him. The very first series of lessons I brought here was Ephesians 1: the spiritual blessings we have because we are in Christ. He didn’t adopt us, redeem us, forgive us, seal us, and so on because we could do something really great for Him in return. He gives us all of those spiritual blessings because He loves us and because we believe in Him. So God loves, does good, and gives expecting nothing in return. To be like God, we need to do likewise.

Transition: Last reason...

IID. Final Judgment READ v. 37-38 All of these phrases, judging, not being condemned by God, receiving forgiveness, being given rewards by God remind me of the judgment seat of Christ. As I’ve mentioned a couple of times already, this passage is really about motives. Romans 14:10 reminds us that, after our time on this earth is through, we will stand before a God who knows our motives even if people around us don’t. He knows if we are doing it expecting something in return (what the natural man does) or if we are doing it in obedience to Him (what the blessed people are to do). So love your enemies, do good to them that hate you, and give expecting nothing in return because it is different from the natural man, He will give us a great reward, it’s what God does, and we will stand before a God who knows our motives. Those are the 4 reasons to keep these commands.

Transition: With that dispatched, let’s move on to the new stuff, which is **READ Luke 6:39-49. HAND OUT OUTLINES** After giving a sequence of commands and some rationale behind those commands, Jesus closes His Sermon on the Plain with further exhortation to do the commands He has given. The key verse is **READ v. 46**. So these last few verses are an exhortation to be a doer of His word. Remember that the main audience of this sermon is His disciples, or people who are following Him. So Jesus is saying He has two types of disciples in this audience: those who are hearers only (they hear His commands but don’t do them), and those who are hearers and doers. He is exhorting His hearers to be doers also. James says the same thing more succinctly. Jesus takes 11 verses to make this point, but James takes only 1, James 1:22: “But be ye doers of the word, and not hearers only, deceiving your own selves.” That’s the same point Jesus is making here, but Jesus gives a lot more elaboration. In His elaboration, Jesus uses 4 metaphors to encourage His hearers to be doers also. They are the 4 Roman numerals in your outline.

Transition: So we start with the first metaphor, which is...

I. Blind Leaders READ v. 39-40 This warning is really directed to leaders in the body of Christ. He starts with 2 rhetorical questions. The first is “Can the blind lead the blind?” Implied answer: yes, but it won’t turn out well. If you don’t think the blind can lead the blind, you need to spend some time in the modern or liberal churches. Most of them have small group “Bible studies,” most of which are really nothing more than social groups usually led by someone who doesn’t know much Bible. They don’t even know what most of His commands are, much less actually doing them. I’m not against small group Bible studies, but you need leaders who are hearers and doers of God’s word. Otherwise you have the blind leading the blind. So Jesus’ point is: if you are a leader in My body but not a doer of My word, then you are just as blind as the people you are trying to lead. That’s not going to end well.

The reference I gave you is Isaiah 9:16. It’s speaking about the leaders of Israel in Isaiah’s time, and it says, “For the leaders of this people cause them to err; and they that are led of them are destroyed.” Flipping around to the other side, as followers we have to be careful who we choose as leaders. That’s true nationally, with elections now 2 days away, and it’s also true as a church. Notice that both the blind leaders and the blind followers end up in the ditch. This is why I don’t like either choice for President in this election: I don’t think either major candidate is a doer of God’s word. If our nation is not destroyed, it will only be by God’s mercy. I don’t like to be that negative, but I think that is the situation. Leaders are warned: don’t be hearers only. Followers are warned: don’t follow blind leaders.

Transition: Next metaphor...

II. Beam and Mote READ v. 41-42 From the language in verse 42, this is a warning against hypocrisy. If you are going to reprove others, make sure you don’t have the same fault. That makes it very hard to reprove others apart from a direct use of God’s word, communicating the reproof God has already given. Romans 2:1 says more plainly, “Therefore thou art inexcusable, O man, whosoever thou art that judgest: for wherein thou judgest another, thou condemnest thyself; for thou that judgest doest the same things.” The direct application in this context is being a doer of God’s word. If I am not a doer of God’s word, I am the one with the beam. Whatever fault other people might have, and they have plenty because everyone does, if I am not a doer of God’s word, I have a much greater fault. When I start doing God’s word, or more realistically trying to do God’s word (because I am going to fail sometimes), I start to see that the only person who can rightfully judge or reprove anybody is God because He is the only one without any faults. 2 Timothy 3:16: “All scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, *for reproof*, for correction, for instruction in righteousness.” Sometimes I can proclaim the judgment and reproof He has already made in His word, but the ultimate source of the judgment is Him, not me.

Transition: Next metaphor...

III. Good and Corrupt Trees READ v. 43-45 Out in my front yard, I have what is supposed to be a landscaped area. Right now it's basically a patch of weeds, or "corrupt trees" as this text says. I have plans to fix that over Thanksgiving break, but right now if I go out there I find a bunch of weeds including some with thorns and brambles growing in my landscape. How did there get to be some many weeds in my landscape? The previous owners did not mulch it and maintain it properly, and so some seeds birds and wind transport in produce weeds, which produce more seeds, and over time you get a snowball effect. So over Thanksgiving I am going to have to bury the corrupt seeds under several inches of mulch so that the good seeds can grow.

This metaphor leads directly into the key verse, verse 46. **READ v. 46** If I really think of Him as Lord, or as master as v. 40 which I kind of skipped before says, and if when I say "Lord, Lord" they are not just idle words, then I should do what He says to do. If the President or Provost or Dean down at University tells me to do something, I'm going to do it because they have authority over me. They can fire me if I don't do it. If Pastor tells me to do something here, I'm going to do it: he has authority over Fellowship Baptist Church. So why don't I always do what Jesus says? The answer is I have some corrupt seeds inside me. I inherited some from my parents, the sin nature. Some of them I have planted there myself. But the more closely I follow Him, over time those corrupt seeds get rooted out. Eventually they will all be rooted out, not in this world, but in the next world when we will be sinless like our Master is. I look forward to that day.

Transition: Last metaphor...

IV. House Builders READ v. 47-49 Two houses are referenced here. One is built on a solid rock foundation; the other is built on no foundation. The reference I gave you is Ephesians 2:20, where the foundation of the body of Christ is identified as the apostles and prophets, with Christ Himself as the chief cornerstone. In this context, building on that foundation means that we are doers of His word. Notice that the storms beat on both houses. If you are going to be a follower of Christ, storms will come. They came for Jesus, they came for Paul and Peter and the apostles, and they will come for us too. The house or life that endures the storms is the one that truly recognize Him as Lord, not just in word, but in deed.

Conclusion

Today as then, there are two types of followers of Jesus: the hearers of His word only, and the hearers and doers of His word. Later in His ministry, the hearers only go away and stop following Him. We'll get to that part in a few months, but that hasn't happened at this point yet. He still has a great multitude at this stage. The hearers and doers are the ones who truly recognize Him as Lord, not just in word, but also in deed. So the exhortation is: be doers of the word, and not hearers only.