

Luke 6:36-37a
January 20, 2019

Open with Prayer

HOOK:

A young man was filling out a college questionnaire to help determine roommate compatibility. The first question was “Do you make your bed regularly?” He checked “yes.” The second question was “Do you consider yourself a neat person?” He checked “yes.” His mother reviewed his answers, knowing full well they were far from truth, and asked him why he lied. “What?” he replied. “I don’t want them to assign a roommate to me who’s a slob!”

It’s easy to look at this story as an outsider looking in, but if the truth be told, we’re much like this student. We’re all prone to excuse or minimize our own faults, while magnifying the faults of others. Most of us criticize others to cover up for the same faults in our own lives. So it’s not surprise that we tend to be generous in our own self-assessments but can be harsh in our judgments of others.

Transition: Jesus is on to our propensity to justify self and blame others. As He concluded the section of His teaching dealing with loving even our enemies, He knew that our tendency would be to dodge those requirements by judging our enemies and excusing ourselves. In today’s passage, Jesus is going to introduce us to some principles that will help us live a more righteous life that sets us apart from an unbeliever. And as we get further along in today’s study, He is going to help us apply these principles. Hopefully, by the end of our lesson, all of us can please God BY applying the PRINCIPLES He wants us to live by. Let’s begin with verses 36-38.

BOOK (NIV 1984):

V.36:

- Be merciful, just as your Father is merciful.

V.37a:

- “Do not judge, and you will not be judged.

Process Observations/Questions:

Q V.36: To love others as we ought, what practice does Jesus introduce to us and why? [Be merciful just as our Father is merciful]

Q: What is mercy? Is there a difference between mercy and compassion? [**Mercy (Greek usage denotes emotion of compassion and sympathy)** is not simply feeling compassion but exists when something is done to alleviate distress.]

Q: Do you think there are any prerequisites we need to meet before we can show mercy to others?

- We must personally **know our merciful Father**.
- We must have personally tasted God’s great mercy to us.
- We must understand the essence of the gospel message, i.e. we are sinners who deserve God’s judgment yet received His mercy instead. [**X-REF Eph 2:4-5**]

Q: How can we know when to show mercy to someone who has wronged us and when to confront? Are these in opposition? [Let people engage]

Q: One of the tensions people feel with a verse like this is, “Where does God’s justice” fit in? If someone has wronged us, we want God’s justice for him. We want him to pay for what he did. How do we work through that tension? [Let people engage.]

Warren Wiersbe summarizes these verses well. He says, "Two principles stand out: we must treat others as we would want to be treated (Luke 6:31), which assumes we want the very best spiritually for ourselves; and we must imitate our Father in heaven and be merciful (Luke 6:36). The important thing is not that we are vindicated before our enemies but that we become more like God in our character (Luke 6:35). This is the greatest reward anyone can receive; far greater than riches, food, laughter, or popularity (Luke 6:24-26). Those things will one day vanish, but character will last for eternity. We must believe Matthew 6:33 and practice it in the power of the Spirit."

Darrell Bock has an excellent word on Jesus’ commands on “being **merciful.**” It means being quick to encourage people toward restoration after they fall. Mercy does not gloat over sin or take pleasure in pointing it out; it roots for the sinner to find a way home to spiritual health.

Q V.37: Jesus isn’t done yet! This verse is loaded. What is the first thing Jesus asks us not to do? [Judge (**Greek usage suggests “kritikos” or critical, discriminate**) not, lest you be judged.]

Q: This verse tends to create much tension. Let’s start from the vantage point of a non-believer who knows enough of the Bible to be dangerous. Why do they like to quote this verse? [This passage is often quoted by those who does not want to hear or abide by the authority of God’s Word.]

Q: So, is Jesus saying we are to never judge someone else? [In John 7:24, Jesus commands us to continually "**judge** (present imperative) with righteous judgment.” Note the qualifier "**righteous!**" Jesus forbids hypocrisy and a condemning spirit rising from self-righteousness.]

Q: What is the difference between being judgmental and being discerning? Why is this distinction important? [Let people engage]

LOOK:

In Isaiah 55:8 we read that God’s ways are not our ways. If we want God’s blessing in our lives, we must go God’s way, which is usually counter to the ways of man. Man’s way is to go easy on ourselves and judge others more harshly than we judge ourselves. God’s way is to be merciful toward others and to judge our own sins. Since it goes against our flesh, it is something we must constantly work at if we want to please God and experience His blessing.

Close in Prayer

Commentaries for Today's Lesson:

Martin, J. A. (1985). Isaiah. In J. F. Walvoord & R. B. Zuck (Eds.), *The Bible Knowledge Commentary: An Exposition of the Scriptures* (Vol. 2, p. 221)

Jesus then taught His followers a fundamental principle of the universe—what one sows he will reap (vv. 36–38; cf. Gal. 6:7). Jesus outlined five areas which were proof of the sowing and reaping theme, mentioned so often in Scripture: (1) Mercy will lead to mercy (Luke 6:36). The disciples were exhorted to have the same merciful attitude God displayed toward them.

(2) Judgment will lead to judgment (v. 37a).

Cabal, T., Brand, C. O., Clendenen, E. R., Copan, P., Moreland, J. P., & Powell, D. (2007). *The Apologetics Study Bible: Real Questions, Straight Answers, Stronger Faith* (pp. 1532, 1416). Nashville, TN: Holman Bible Publishers.

6:37 For more on Jesus' command not to judge, see Mt 7:1–2: Jesus did not prohibit judging of any sort, as verse 6 makes clear. Rather, He warned against judging others in way that we would not want applied to ourselves. To judge another person in a harsh spirit is to take on a role reserved only for God. Only the Lord can see beyond the outward appearance to underlying motives and causes in a person's heart.

Stein, R. H. (1992). Luke (Vol. 24, pp. 209–211). Nashville: Broadman & Holman Publishers.

6:36 Be merciful, just as your Father is merciful. This concluding summary follows the form found in Lev 19:2. The Matthean parallel (Matt 5:48) reads, “Be perfect, therefore, as your heavenly Father is perfect.” The main difference involves the terms “merciful” and “perfect.” “Merciful” suits the immediate context better in that it matches “kind” in Luke 6:35. (Matthew’s “be perfect,” on the other hand, fits well his emphasis in chap. 6 concerning the need for a righteousness that surpasses that of the Pharisees and teachers of the law, i.e., a perfect righteousness.) We also find reference to God’s mercy in Luke 1:50, 54, 58, 72, 78 (cf. also 10:37; Ps 145:8–9).

The Lukan Message

The Lukan emphasis on love for enemy is seen most clearly when one compares his expanded account with the parallel in Matthew. Luke’s stress on the command to love one’s enemies is also seen in the following account (6:37–42), which deals with the need to forgive and not condemn others. His addition of “everyone” to the example in 6:30 also reveals his emphasis. Luke wanted his readers to recognize the need to love their enemies.

Jesus, the early church, and all the Evangelists of course emphasized that the command to love lies at the heart of Jesus’ ethical teaching. Luke nevertheless went out of his way to stress this. The believer is to love the outcasts, sinners, and Samaritans. See Introduction 8 (5). Only in Luke do we read that at his crucifixion Jesus said, “Father, forgive them, for they do not know what they are doing” (23:34). This prayer is then paralleled in Acts 7:59–60, where “while they were stoning him, Stephen prayed ... ‘Lord, do not hold this sin against them.’” Luke’s readers, just as Jesus’ disciples, are to love their neighbors regardless of whether they are friends or enemies. Whereas feeling positively toward one’s enemies and “liking” them are indeed impossible at times, Luke

helps us to understand that we can love our enemies by willing good toward them, by doing good in return for evil, by blessing instead of cursing, and by praying for them. Often even the ability to will good for one's enemies may seem impossible, but Luke believed that the same Spirit who empowered Jesus (Luke 4:14) dwells in believers and can empower them to choose love for enemies. Thus, Pentecost keeps this from being simply an impossible ideal.

Context

This third section of the Sermon on the Plain picks up the principle of 6:36, which involves being "merciful." God's mercy is frequently associated with his lack of condemnation (cf. 6:37ab) and his gracious forgiveness (6:37c, 38; cf. Pss 103:8–12; 111:4). As a result, the mention of God's mercy and the command to be merciful leads quite naturally to the specific application of that mercy in not judging or condemning others and in being forgiving. This section begins with a twofold prohibition followed by a twofold positive command and reveals once again Luke's love for "fours" (see comments on 6:22).

Comments

6:37 Do not judge. What is being forbidden here is not the legitimate exercise of judgment in lawcourts or in church discipline but the tendency to criticize and find fault with others. Marshall aptly observes, "It is not the use of discernment and discrimination which is forbidden but the attitude of censoriousness." It forbids a Christian from finding "status by negation," i.e., looking better by criticizing others as worse. The use of the present imperative in this and the next prohibition can better be translated "stop judging" and suggests that readers stop what they are presently doing, rather than that they should guard themselves against ever doing this sometime in the future.

And you will not be judged. Luke concluded this command with an emphatic promise by using the subjunctive of emphatic negation—the strongest negation possible in Greek, i.e., you shall not in any way be judged. Matthew has this as a purpose clause, "[so] that you be not judged" (Matt 7:1, RSV). In both we have the use of the "divine passive" in order to avoid using God's name, i.e., instead of "and God will not judge you." (See comments on 6:21.) In keeping this commandment, one will not entirely escape God's final judgment (cf. 2 Cor 5:10), but rather in the day of judgment one will be judged mercifully (Luke 6:38c; Matt 7:2).