

Luke 6:37b-39
January 27, 2019

Open with Prayer

HOOK:

We are continuing our study in Luke 6 in which we're learning that there is something truly unique about Jesus' kind of love. Sociologists have studied human behavior, and they have labeled one kind of human behavior called "reciprocity." They have noted that in every culture this norm, or standard, seems to operate. It's expressed in our saying, "You scratch my back, and I'll scratch yours." This is what reciprocity means: you do something for me, and I'll pay you back. And reciprocity also dictates, you do something bad *to* me, and I'll pay you back for that too.

Most of us are bound by this norm. The Jones family sent you a Christmas card last year? Somehow you feel you *have* to send one to them this year. The Carlsons invited you over to their house? You know it's your turn to have them for dinner. The simple notion that we ought to be nice to those who are nice to us and are under no obligation to be nice to those who aren't, seems to permeate every human relationship.

There is much to be said for the norm of reciprocity. It helps hold society together. If we couldn't depend on people responding in kind, there would be a terrible uncertainty in all our relationships. It's just that *the Christian's behavior isn't to be governed by the norm of reciprocity!* Another norm, another standard, is to replace it. Jesus states this norm or standard as "Do unto others as you would have them to unto you."

Jesus is teaching us how to *initiate His love with others.* We are to take the lead in initiating love. This is what Jesus meant when He said, "Love your enemies." We are not to love because we expect to be re-paid. We are to love, even to lend, without expecting anything back. And we are to love this way because it is the kind of life to which Jesus calls us.

This is hard! How can I love, knowing I may be hurt by an enemy who does not respond as he should? How can I do good being uncertain about how others will see and respond to my actions? It *is* difficult. But Jesus lived this way even though others did hurt and hate Him. And Jesus gave us the Holy Spirit to indwell in us so that we are empowered to initiate His kind of love that should change the world.

Transition: Jesus continues His teaching on "do unto others as you would have them do unto you." We processed his first teaching in chp 6 verse 37, and we are now picking up with the next two teachings in v 37. But to refresh our memory, would someone read 6:36-38 to get the text back in our mind's eye?

BOOK (NIV 1984):

V.37b:

- Do not condemn, and you will not be condemned. Forgive, and you will be forgiven.

V.38:

- 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.”

Process Observations/Questions:

Q V.37b: What does Jesus say next in this verse? [“Do not condemn (**Greek usage katadikazo suggests judicial authority to pronounce against someone, even “unjust judgment against someone, especially the innocent”**), and you will not be condemned”]

Q: How is that different from “Do not judge, or you will be judged?” [It’s the sense of looking down on someone, presuming that we know their heart motives. It stems from a self-righteous spirit on our part. It is the desire to get even or to make the person pay for what he did.]

Q V.37c: What is the last part of this verse? [Forgive (**Greek suggests “set free, release,” and you will be forgiven**)]

Q: What does that really mean? [It’s to release someone from their guilt and penalty of his sin.] Why does that sound familiar?! [Essence of the gospel message! Jesus released us from our guilt and the penalty of our sin!]

Q: How can we forgive when we don’t *feel* forgiving? What does biblical forgiveness mean? [Let people engage]

Q V.38: What is yet another principle Jesus teaches? [You’ll reap what you sow. If you have a generous spirit, God will see your good measure, pressed down, shaken together and running over, and it will be poured into your lap. For with the measure you use, it will be measured to you. You can’t out-give Him!]

Observation: The description “good measure, pressed down, shaken together and running over, and it will be poured into your lap” comes from the grain markets of that day. A good merchant would pour grain into his measure (container). Then he would press it down and shake it so that it would settle. Then he would pour in more grain until it ran over. He would take that overflowing measure and pour it into the lap of your robe, which could be pulled up to serve as a big pocket. That’s how God poured out his generous mercy on us! That’s how we should respond to needy people.

J. Jeremias writes, “*The measuring of the corn is a process which is carried out according to an established pattern. The seller crouches on the ground with the measure between his legs. First of all he fills the measure three-quarters full and gives it a good shake with a rotary motion to make the grains settle down. Then he fills the measure to the top and gives it another shake. Next he presses the corn together strongly with both hands. Finally he heaps it into a cone, tapping it carefully to press the grains together; from time to time he bores a hole into the corn and pours a few more grains into it, until there is literally no more room for a single grain. In this way the purchaser is guaranteed an absolutely full measure; it cannot hold more.*” (cited in Darrell L. Bock, Luke 1:1-9:50, The Baker Exegetical Commentary on the New Testament [Grand Rapids: Baker, 1994], 607-8).

Q: Do you think Jesus is only talking about financial resources in this verse? [Let people engage – No. I believe Jesus is talking about giving of ourselves in ministry to others.]

Q: What do you think is the overarching PRINCIPLE Jesus is teaching in these last three verses? [We reap what we sow and in the amount that we sow. If we live to give, God will see to it that we receive.]

In summary (“Our Daily Bread” by Julie Ackerman Link 8.29.14): May we do good and not evil. May you find forgiveness for yourself and forgive others. May you share freely, never taking more than you give.

Transition: Jesus introduces a parable to reinforce what He shared in the previous text, especially as it relates to ministry. Keep in mind that Jesus’ audience is His disciples. Theologians have spun the question as to whether Jesus is warning His disciples about who they follow, or warning His disciples about dangerous attitudes, or if Jesus is warning against the Pharisees who were leading people astray. Let’s read the text.

[Read Luke 6:39]

V.39:

- He also told them this parable: “Can a blind man lead a blind man? Will they not both fall into a pit?”

LOOK:

We reap what we sow. If we judge others, we will ourselves be judged. If we forgive, we shall be forgiven, but if we condemn, we shall be condemned (see Matt. 18:21–35). He was not talking about eternal judgment but the way we are treated in this life. If we live to give, God will see to it that we receive; but if we live only to get, God will see to it that we lose. This principle applies not only to our giving of money, but also to the giving of ourselves in ministry to others.

Close in Prayer

Commentaries for Today's Lesson:

Wiersbe, W. W. (1996). *The Bible Exposition Commentary* (Vol. 1, p. 193). Wheaton, IL: Victor Books.

Luke 6:37–38 reminds us that we reap what we sow and in the amount that we sow. If we judge others, we will ourselves be judged. If we forgive, we shall be forgiven, but if we condemn, we shall be condemned (see Matt. 18:21–35). He was not talking about eternal judgment but the way we are treated in this life. If we live to give, God will see to it that we receive; but if we live only to get, God will see to it that we lose. This principle applies not only to our giving of money, but also to the giving of ourselves in ministry to others.

Self (v. 39). The four striking figures in this section teach us some important lessons about ministry. To begin with, as His disciples, we must be sure that we see clearly enough to guide others in their spiritual walk. While there are blind people who have a keen sense of direction, it is not likely any of them will be hired as airplane pilots or wilderness guides. Jesus was referring primarily to the Pharisees who were leading the people astray (Matt. 15:14; 23:16). If we see ourselves as excellent guides, but do not realize our blindness, we will only lead people into the ditch (see Rom. 2:17–22).

Martin, J. A. (1985). *Isaiah*. In J. F. Walvoord & R. B. Zuck (Eds.), *The Bible Knowledge Commentary: An Exposition of the Scriptures* (Vol. 2, pp. 220-221)

6:37–38. Jesus mentioned aspects of unconditional love. These actions, not done naturally by human nature, require supernatural enabling—and are thus proof of true righteousness:

(1) Condemnation will lead to condemnation (v. 37b).

(2) Pardon will lead to pardon (v. 37c).

(3) Giving will lead to giving (v. 38). It is simply a fact of life that certain attitudes and actions often reflect back on the individual.

b. True righteousness revealed by one's actions (6:39–45).

6:39–45. Jesus explained that a person is not able to hide his attitude toward righteousness. It is obvious that if a person is **blind** he will lead another **into a pit** (v. 39). He will not be able to hide the fact that he is not righteous for he will lead others astray. Jesus also noted that a person becomes like the one whom he emulates (v. 40). Therefore His disciples should emulate Him. One must rid himself of a sin before he can help his **brother** with that sin (vv. 41–42). And often one's own sin is greater than the one he criticizes in someone else—a **plank** compared with a **speck of sawdust**. The point is that one cannot help someone else become righteous if he is not righteous himself. To seek to do so is to be a **hypocrite**.

Richards, L., & Richards, L. O. (1987). *The teacher's commentary* (pp. 661–662). Wheaton, IL: Victor Books.

In this section's teaching we realize that there is something truly unique about Jesus' kind of love.

Sociologists have labeled one kind of human behavior "reciprocity." They have noted that in every culture this norm, or standard, seems to operate. It's expressed in our saying, "You scratch my back, and I'll scratch yours." This is what reciprocity means: you do something for me, and

I'll pay you back. And reciprocity also dictates, you do something bad *to* me, and I'll pay you back for that too.

Most of us are bound by this norm. The Jones family sent you a Christmas card last year? Somehow you feel you *have* to send one to them this year. The Carlsons invited you over to their house? You know it's your turn to have them for dinner.

This norm of reciprocity operates even in the intimacy of family life. You bought me a present? I'll be warm and loving this evening. Your teenager mowed the lawn without being asked? Well, sure, he can have the car tonight.

The simple notion that we ought to be nice to those who are nice to us, and are under no obligation to be nice to those who aren't, seems to permeate every human relationship.

There is much to be said for the norm of reciprocity. It helps hold society together. If we couldn't depend on people responding in kind, there would be a terrible uncertainty in all our relationships.

It's just that *the Christian's behavior isn't to be governed by the norm of reciprocity!* Another norm, another standard, is to replace it.

The other norm is something we may call *initiating love*. We are to take the lead in initiating love. This is what Jesus meant when He said, "Love your enemies." We are not to love because we expect to be repaid. We are to love, even to lend, without expecting anything back. And we are to love this way because it is the kind of life to which Jesus calls us.

It seems frightening. How can I love, knowing I may be hurt by an enemy who does not respond as he should? How can I do good, uncertain about how others will see and respond to my actions? It *is* frightening. But Jesus lived this way. Even though others did hurt and hate Him.

When we decide to live a life of *initiating love*, we will have two consolations. First, we will be living as Jesus has commanded us; as He Himself lived. And second, we will discover in a love like God's what it means to have a truly abundant life.

Stein, R. H. (1992). Luke (Vol. 24, pp. 211-212). Nashville: Broadman & Holman Publishers.

Do not condemn. The second command stands in synonymous parallelism with the first, for "condemn" is essentially a synonym for "judge." This command both clarifies the meaning of "Do not judge" and, by repeating the same thought, adds emphasis to this teaching. Note that the rhythmic balance of this parallelism is quite evident even in the English translation.

And you will not be condemned. Again there is a corresponding promise made emphatic by the use of the subjunctive of emphatic negation.

Forgive ... Give. These two commands are also present imperatives and thus emphasize that forgiving and giving are seen as actions that are to be done continually. Both these commands have positive promises after them as well, so that all four commands in Luke 6:37–38 stand in synonymous parallelism with one another. All four also possess a promise in the form of a divine passive. This command does not require that the believer ignore the guilt of those who have sinned against them or to proclaim the guilty as innocent. It means instead to forgive the guilty. Compare 11:4, where the believer forgives people who are indeed guilty of sinning against him.

6:38 And it will be given to you. This command goes beyond not judging, not condemning, and forgiving personal injuries and injustices. Like the Golden Rule (6:31), it seeks the positive good of others. As in the Beatitudes, the last member of the four-part series is expanded. It is best

to see 6:38b as modifying only the last command and describing how “it will be given,” using a scene from the world of Jesus.

A good measure. The scene is the purchasing of a commodity of some sort where the amount measured out is not short, skimpy, or even fair but a “good” measurement.

Pressed down. The grain in the measuring container is pressed down, so that all the spaces are filled and the container holds as much as possible.

Shaken together. The measuring container is shaken, so that the grain can fill every empty space.

Running over. The container is filled and on top is a rounded heap so great that it overflows the container. God will bless believers not just in equal proportion to how they give to others but far, far more—superabundantly!

Will be poured into your lap. The picture is of this measure now being poured in the individual’s “container,” which is the fold of his outer garment. Between the shoulders and the belt, this outer cloak would be loose and could form a kind of pocket into which this measurement could be poured. The third person plural (literally *they will pour*) is a circumlocution for “God will pour.” See comments on 6:19.

For with the measure you use. This concluding proverb, which is also found in Matt 7:2 and Mark 4:24 (cf. also *Soṭa* 1:7), points out that the believer’s behavior toward others will determine God’s behavior toward him or her. The issue is not that human generosity is accorded the same generosity (no more or no less) from God but that human generosity is rewarded with divine generosity, which is far greater, as the early part of this verse shows. Of course, showing little generosity will result in little receiving (cf. 8:18; 19:25–26).

6:39 He also told them this parable. The following parable is a proverb (cf. 4:23). The parable is in the form of two rhetorical questions and expects a negative answer for the first (due to the use of *mēti*) and a positive answer for the second (due to the use of *ouchi*). How this parable relates to what has preceded is unclear. This might be a polemic addressed against false teachers, but Luke implied in the next verse (cf. also 6:20) that the disciples were the main audience to whom these teachings were addressed. Or the parable might describe the kind of inward character that causes one to keep the commands of 6:37–38, but this is far from evident. More probably, in light of the subject of 6:37–38, 41–42 (judging others), Luke understood the parable as referring to the danger of being blind to one’s own faults and at the same time judging others. If a disciple has not learned enough to see his or her own faults and yet judges others, how can such a person truly teach or correct others? Both teacher and pupil will be blind and fall into a pit. For a similar parallel in Paul, cf. Rom 2:19. (There is no reason to assume that Luke had in mind the practice of some Christians establishing rules going beyond the actual teachings of Jesus.)