

Becoming Disciples of Divine Love

Luke 6:27-49

August 20, 2017

Luke 6:27. We are continuing our study of Luke and his unique and powerful record of Jesus' Sermon on the Mount. We have noted before that this sermon, the Sermon on the Mount, may be Jesus' most famous sermon. His most well-known sermon. It contains the Beatitudes, which we've already studied and come through. It also contains things well-known as the Golden Rule, "Do unto others as you would have others do unto you." That's contained here in the Sermon on the Mount. It also contains a mantra that's adopted by our, you know, very tolerant culture, "Judge not." Everybody knows that one. "Judge not lest you be judged."

Many of Jesus' sayings that are very well-known come from the Sermon on the Mount. You think about some of the idioms even recognized in our modern day. "The blind leading the blind." "A tree and its fruit." "Build your house on the rock and not on

the sand.” All those sayings come from the Sermon on the Mount, but for all the familiarity we have, or our culture has with this Sermon on the Mount, we also need to recognize at the same time that there is really very little understanding of the Sermon on the Mount, its fundamental truths, its central dictums, its heart, its spirit. Very little understanding, especially as you look around at the wider culture.

But even, even in the church when you think also, too, about those who understand, there’s even less application of the Sermon on the Mount. People really don’t apply what we read here. If we just read it on the face of it and see what it says, we look long and hard to find those who actually put this into practice. Even for those who claim to know and understand Jesus’ teaching, for many of them, they either misapply or just simply fail to do these commands and apply his words as a way of life.

For those of us who do attempt obedience, and I would in humility try to put ourselves in that category, in humility, by God’s grace, we are endeavoring to obey what we read, aren’t we? But we have to admit that even though we are trying to

understand this we are trying to pursue obedience to it, we have to admit we find ourselves falling so far short of putting this sermon into practice in our lives. At least, on a consistent and an intentional basis, I'd say even on an aggressive basis, we find it hard to put this into practice. We are, at the same time, cognizant and wary of what Jesus said to his disciples in Luke 6:46. And keep in mind he's saying this to disciples, professed Christians. Luke 6:46, "Why do you call me 'Lord, Lord,' and do not do what I tell you?" That provokes us, really, that word. It provokes us to pay close attention to what's written here, to give heed to Jesus' teaching.

And I just have to tell you as I've been studying this sermon and digging more deeply into these familiar truths, I've become convinced and convicted in my life. In many cases we have failed, I have failed, to understand the depth of the Sermon on the Mount and what we have understood, we've applied inconsistently or half-heartedly or without intentionality. Often times we're distracted by routines in our life, distracted by responsibilities. We lose sight of what's written here, even though it is like a familiar friend as we come back to it over and over. We still don't seem to perform this with



intentionality, with, with aggressiveness, with boldness and that ought not to be for us as Christians.

This is our Lord's manifesto if I could put it that way. If Jesus were a politician today, he is not a politician. Nothing against politicians, but praise be to God that he sent us not a politician, but an eternal king. If Jesus were introducing this today as a political platform, you could say, this, this is it. This here is what he stands for. And all those who stand with him, if they stand with him, they stand on this platform. This is the foundation. We, who claim his name and profess to believe in Jesus Christ, we pursue consistency to these stated objectives of Jesus Christ.

And for that reason, I am particularly excited, I'm humbled by the study of this as I know you will be, too, but also very deep, deeply grateful to the Lord because he's granted us this opportunity as a church to walk through the Sermon on the Mount together. We have the opportunity to learn and to see Jesus for himself, to hear him speak for himself, to learn what he stands for, to endeavor to obey what he commands us to do, to really

see how he himself lived his life. We have the opportunity to follow him in this.

And we have the opportunity to look through, to look at his teaching through fresh eyes, as it were, practice this in our church, in our homes, in our jobs, our lives. And we do this, really, as a new lifestyle. This is the lifestyle of a believer. It's a new way of living in this world. And frankly, there is no better time than this to pursue it. Because it's nothing short of, really, in this culture especially, nothing short of revolutionary. This is God-glorifying and Christ-exalting stuff and it really is countercultural.

Amid all the muddled messaging coming from so many evangelical churches today, our world so desperately needs to hear and see a fresh witness that's tied to the text, this text. They need to hear and see it, not from all of them out there, but they need to hear it from us. They need to see it in our lives, here where we are. We're all watching this world tear itself apart, aren't we?

GRACE CHURCH



Grace

The devil seems to be having a field day from Charlottesville, USA to Barcelona, Spain and everywhere in between, the evidence of his handywork is reported by newspapers and media entertainment outlets everywhere. Headlines are bleeding with hatred. Acrimony, vitriol scroll across teleprompts, spew forth in public discourse, even from the highest platforms in our county. Language, it's harsh, routinely acerbic, inflammatory, utterly disrespectful to human beings. The images we see, even more heart breaking, aren't they, as we see a world that is enslaved to lust and greed and, frankly, even murder.

Prudence and decorum really dictate against citing specific examples of all that, but I know that you know we all hear and see enough through our week that we could use a break from all that on the Lord's Day, right? But, beloved, we need to give heed to these words. We need to practice and pursue what Jesus is commanding here. It's not that somehow, we, by the way we live, are going to stem the tide of corruption. We've read the end of the book. We know it just goes from bad to worse, to worse, to worse until Christ comes.

We're not going to do this and thus, save the world. That's not what we're trying to do. We're not trying to save politics in America or in any other country for that matter. We're not trying to build nations. We're not trying to win the White House. We're not trying to legislate all this. You know what we're trying to do? We're trying to glorify Christ. That's a higher goal. That's something that we can pursue here and now in our individual lives by practicing the worldview espoused here.

Just remember, we don't really win friends and influence people, do we? Remember that our Lord, by living this way, he was crucified. He was put to death. Before he was crucified, before he died, he was treated abusively. He was treated with scorn and ridicule. Do we, if our Lord went before us and actually lived this out perfectly, consistently, do we think that we're going to get by with any less? The apostles, likewise, they were persecuted, put to death. We pursue this not to change the world, whatever that means. We pursue this because we love our Lord Jesus Christ. We pursue this because we love our God, and we want to see him put on display.

His compassion and mercy pour through this text. In fact, he says at one point, verse 36, "Be merciful even as your father is merciful." We put on display the heart of mercy of our God who extends his hand to guilty sinners like us and offers escape from death, freedom from sin, relationship with him through Jesus Christ, eternal life, and everything in between. We long to see Christ rightly represented on this earth and not misrepresented. One woman who is very dear to me. She has lived many years on this earth as a Christian. And she told me with sadness, "Travis, I think I've never seen a truly good church. I have really wondered if such a thing exists." It's tragic, isn't it?

Listen, if by the grace of God and by the power of the Holy Spirit, if we'll pursue obedience, prayerful pursuit of obedience, practical obedience to what Jesus says here, you know what? Because he cares about his own glory, because he cares about the honor of his own Son, because he cares about the power of his Holy Spirit being put on display in and through his people, you know what, he's going to honor that prayer and that desire for obedience.

GRACE CHURCH



We're going to grow in faithfulness to his Word and consistency to it. We're going to show that dear woman, and the whole watching world, again not in our own strength to emphasize that, but by the grace of God. We'll be able to manifest to the world what a true church looks like, bound together as a family, bound together, not by blood, but by love, by divine love, by the power of the Spirit. We'll be able to show what a, what a people committed to obeying the master, how they actually live their lives by his Word.

We long to do that, don't we, to portray a clear witness to the world so they can see the glory of Jesus Christ, so they can see the wisdom and power of his saving Gospel. Like Paul, 1 Corinthians 2:4-5, "Our speech, our message," that is our, our Gospel message, our preaching, it comes "not in plausible words of wisdom." That is to say, plausible to the world around us, acceptable to a God-hating, God-rejecting world. But rather, our speech and message "comes in demonstration of the Spirit and of power so that your faith may not rest in the wisdom of men but in the power of God." This has nothing to do with us. It has everything to do with him and him working in and through us.

So with that in mind, just as a bit of an introduction, I'd like to read through the main body of the sermon, hear afresh what Jesus actually said here in Luke 6. And after that, we're going to use our time this morning just to walk through Jesus' sermon, getting a bit of an overview that is going to chart the course of our study for the coming weeks. And that will provide us plenty of food for thought and reflection as we, later in the Lord's service, approach the Lord's Table.

So, follow along in your Bibles as I read. We're gonna go past the Beatitudes and the Woes and we'll go to verse 27. "But I say to you who hear, love your enemies, do good to those who hate you, bless those who curse you, pray for those who abuse you. To the 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. Give to everyone who begs from you, and from the one who takes away your goods do not demand them back. And as you wish that others would do to you, do so to them.

"If you love those who love you, what benefit is that to you? For even sinners love those who love them. And if you do good to

those who do good to you, what benefit is that to you? For even sinners do the same. And 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. But 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. Be merciful, even as your father is merciful. Judge not, and you will not be judged; condemn not, and you will not be condemned; forgive and you will be forgiven; give, and it will be given to you. Good measure, pressed down, shaken together, running over, will be put into your lap. For with the measure you use it will be measured back to you.

"He also told them a parable: 'Can a blind man lead a blind man? Will they not both fall into a pit? A disciple is not above his teacher, but everyone when he is fully trained will be like his teacher. Why do you see the speck that is in your brother's eye, but do not notice the log that is in your own eye? How can you say to your brother, "Brother, let me take out the speck that's in your eye," when you yourself do not see the log that's in your own eye? You hypocrite, first take out the log out of your

own eye, then you will see clearly to take out the speck that is in your brother's eye.

"For no good tree bears bad fruit, nor again does a bad tree bear good fruit, for each tree is known by its own fruit. For figs are not gathered from thornbushes, nor are grapes picked from a bramble bush. The good person out of the good treasure of his heart produces good, and the evil person out of his evil treasure produces evil, for out of the abundance of the heart his mouth speaks. Why do you call me, 'Lord, Lord,' and do not do what I tell you? Everyone who comes to me and hears my words and does them, I will show you what he is like. He is like a man building a house, who dug deep and laid the foundation on the rock. And when a flood arose, the stream broke against that house and could not shake it, because it had been well built. But the one who hears and does not do them is like a man who built a house on the ground without a foundation. When the stream broke against it, immediately it fell, and the ruin of that house was great."

Before we get into our outline, I want to make a few preliminary observations. What is the first thing that you noticed as we read that sermon? I think I can imagine what some of you were thinking. A lot shorter than your sermons, Travis. I will grant you the point. But let me defend myself just a little bit. First, we need, because I know you're thinking it, okay? I'm just giving words to what you're thinking. But we preachers need more words to explain what Jesus said with such concision and divine precision. So you have to grant us a pass. We're not him.

Second, when we read Matthew's account, we know in reading Matthew's account that Jesus said a whole lot more on this occasion, didn't he? Not just this. There's more. In fact, third, I believe he spoke for a long time to these crowds because they didn't come 50 plus miles to hear a sermonette. They came to hear meat. Besides, he's a good preacher and all good preachers preach long sermons, okay. End of argument.

I want to mention a quick word about the comparison with Matthew's account of the Sermon on the Mount because no doubt if

you're familiar with the Bible at all, you've read both. A lot of times we read Luke's account through what we've read in Matthew. We try to make the same notes of comparison. And we've actually covered, already, the differences between Matthew and Luke and you can go back and listen to that. But I'll just mention again the fundamental issue is both Matthew and Luke were drawing on the same material, not including everything Jesus said. Neither of them included everything Jesus said on this occasion. But they took from it and they provided an account of the sermon for the purpose of their own gospel in reaching out to their respective audiences.

Matthew wrote to Jews and so he used a concentration of Jesus' words that targeted Jewish issues. He confronted formalism, externalism, ritualism that had come to characterize the Jewish religion in that day. You can see that when you read Matthew's account that Jesus is really deconstructing and correcting and proffering a new view of, well really an old view, of who God is. He is deconstructing, correcting the false world of Judaism, the false teaching of Judaism and its worldview. And he's putting forth what God taught from the very beginning. It's that repeated refrain, "You've heard it said, but I say to you,"

repeated throughout Matthew 5 and 6. Jesus is using his Messianic authority there to correct the aberrations and distortions of the contemporary Judaism. They lost sight of the spirit and the intent of the law.

So Jesus is bringing the Jews back to God's original design in the law, his will in the law and he's going to fulfill the true intent of the law in his own person. That intent is governed by the true love for God and true love for one's neighbor. Matthew 7:12, Jesus said, "So whatever you wish that others would do to you, do also to them, for this is the law and prophets." That's a summary of the dictate of love. Love is the fulfillment of the entire Old Testament. That's Matthew, though, writing to his fellow Jews, evangelizing them, reaching out to them.

Luke, though, he wrote to Gentiles. So instead of deconstructing a wrong view of a law code that they had not grown up with like the Jews did, Luke concentrates on the words of Jesus that target Gentile issues. He said both, as I mentioned before, said both on this occasion, targeting both Jews and Gentiles in his audience right in front of him. But as he targets Gentile

issues, he's confronting the heart of selfishness and greed, which really animates the entire unbelieving world. Opposite of love, especially, as we learn what true love is through Jesus Christ, we see what the real issue is. But with the Gentiles, there is no false system to deconstruct per se, but just simply the need to confront, expose and correct self-centeredness in the sinful heart. That's the issue. Simply the need to command us to live by the dictates of divine love.

That brings us to one more observation by way of introduction before we dive into our outline here. As a preacher, I think this probably stands out more to me than it may to you but notice how Jesus begins in verse 27 in the main body of the sermon. Notice how he commands his audience right from the beginning. Do you notice I don't step up here in the very beginning and command you? In fact, I can't think of one sermon by a faithful preacher that opens up with a tone of command. There's a need for the rest of us preachers to instruct, to teach, to explain, and then to follow up with exhortation encouragement toward obedience, sometimes even to plead. But we're pointing back to authoritative words. We are ourselves are not the authority. The Bible is.

When Jesus speaks, though, he opens up with command. He doesn't stop commanding all the way through the sermon. He commands his audience all the way through the sermon from start to finish. In his direct address to the crowd, Jesus uses here in this main body, he uses about 37 verbs of address. There are other verbal forms like participles and things like that, but 37 verbs to either command or explain or to promise. The highest percentage of verbs in the main body of the sermon, verses 27 to 38, the highest percentage of verbs there are command verbs either in an imperative form or subjunctive form, but they're commands. Sixteen verbs of command in these verses.

So I'm going to go out on a limb here and say, I think he wants us to do something after hearing these words. Don't you? He's preaching to make us change. He's not intending on us staying as we are, none of us. Every single one of us is commanded by our Lord here to change. And at the most fundamental level of our affections. He preaches here without apology, without qualification. He doesn't start out and say, okay guys, I know this is going to be hard. You all come from really bad backgrounds, you've had dysfunctional families, and abuse in

your background. I understand, so don't take me as being, you know, holier than thou. No, he just jumps into it, doesn't he? He dives right into command, as if he's in charge.

You're not going to hear any other faithful preacher of God's Word preach in the exact tone or style as Jesus does. We're going to mimic him in some ways, try to be faithful, but look, we realize we're under shepherds. We realize we're not like him. He's God; we're not. He's Lord; we're not. We're slaves, servants, just like you. All of us are simply trying to explain his words to his people and to encourage and exhort people to obedience. So for all of us, now when I say, us, I really mean first person plural. I'm included. We need to listen carefully, don't we? We need to listen with an ear, not just to hear and understand, but to do, to obey what he says.

So let's really go back through this and listen to this sermon afresh. Let's try, and as you can not to filter what Luke has recorded here through what we've read previously in Matthew. We'll try to keep that out of it, okay? I mean it's not that it's not harmonizing or not, not faithful to do that. But just

to get a fresh approach, we need to read this account from Luke in Luke's own terms with his intent in mind, unpack the argument of Jesus' sermon for us Gentiles so we can get the message Jesus is conveying to us.

To do that, before diving down into the particulars of the text I'd just like to begin with an overview just to get the thirty-five-thousand-foot view. And this is going to help us get the flow of the sermon, his sermon, see the argument and the connections between each point he makes, and this is going to inform our study, as I said, in the coming weeks. So here's how we're going to cover the ground today.

First of all, my first point is going to be a longer point, but I'm going to provide a summary overview of the main body of Jesus' sermon. That's why we, if you look in your bulletin, you should have an outline that I've kind of put together for basically the main body of, well the whole Sermon on the Mount. So you can actually use that as a guide for this overview we give this morning. And so with that overview in mind, just kind of giving you some information, explanation.

Secondly, I want to highlight, you know, a key observation, which I really hope will cause you to feel the weight of Jesus' message. You know that saying, that familiarity breeds contempt? Familiarity, familiarity often causes us to take things for granted, to kind of, kind of smooth over what should be sharp to us. So I want you to hear this, the true gravity that's here.

I want you to understand it that way and as we feel maybe some weight and some gravity of this sermon and our, our conscience is pricked a little bit, I hope that thirdly, we can appreciate some comfort we find, also, as we consider Jesus' intent in preaching this message to us. We find a lot of comfort and encouragement with that and consolation.

So, let's begin point one with number one, you can write this down in, in your outline that you're taking notes with, a brief overview for our edification. Just a brief overview for our edification. Again, we're just going to walk through Jesus' sermon again, moving slowly, making connections. And hopefully, armed with that outline in your bulletin, you'll be able to

follow along, and then informed by what you learn today, you're going to be primed and ready to get the fullest benefit from our study of the Sermon on the Mount. Okay.

Notice in your outline I've broken down the sermon, Jesus' sermon, into three main points. You've got the audience, verses 20-26; the message, verses 27-38; and then you could say the consequences or the implications, application, you could say, verses 39-49. Among commentators, you're going to find the same basic structure. Sometimes they put one verse in a previous section or change it up a little bit, but really, it's basically the same structure. But what I found among commentators is how many commentators seem to interpret Luke's account through the lens of Matthew's account. It's fascinating. Many of them have done previous study in Matthew's fuller account, so we understand why they do that. But, as I said, we hope to, hope to look at this through fresh eyes.

You've already, we've already covered the audience, letter A. That circumscribes the, the people who he's talking to, the audience of Jesus' word, his target. Verse 20 tells us he's

teaching his disciples in particular and then after he pronounces woes upon the rich in verse 27, he turns back, focus again, back on his disciples. Notice there, "But I say to you who hear." You who hear; he is commanding his disciples.

Just a footnote there, it's not explicit in the text, but it is an implicit and necessary truth that that phrase, "I say to you who hear," in contrast to those who don't hear, "I say to you who hear," this presupposes the prerequisite of regeneration. This presupposes that those who have ears to hear have been born again. Those who have eyes to see and ears to hear, they have already been the recipients of the Spirit's power, causing them to be born again. They have received the gift of spiritual life, enabling them to repent of their sins, to understand and trust these words of Christ, to follow Christ in obedient faith wherever his voice leads them. That's happened to those who hear.

There's a whole group of people who do not hear, for whom these just seem like moral platitudes and clever sayings, something that goes on a Hallmark card or some kind of devotional poster.

That's how they hear it. But for those who hear, we hear through different ears because we have a different heart. That's by God's doing. So that's the intended audience, regenerate disciples of Christ. We've covered that already.

Looking at letter B in your outline, this is the outline for the Sermon on the Mount, what's the message? What is the main point we need to learn from Jesus' sermon? Notice how the main body of Jesus' message which I'm marking off from verse 27 to verse 38, it's all about the virtue of love. Love, being one of the communicable attributes of God himself. It's love which defines and prescribes and motivates the ethic that is to govern the way true disciples of Jesus Christ interact with others, not just with one another, all others.

This sermon, then, is about becoming disciples of divine love. This sermon is about becoming disciples of the love of the God that was exemplified perfectly and completely in Jesus Christ. So let me say that again. This sermon, not mine, Jesus, Jesus' sermon. And if I'm faithful to Jesus' sermon, I'm saying the same thing, okay. But this sermon, Jesus' sermon, is about us

becoming disciples of divine love. It's about us becoming disciples of the love of God that was exemplified or put on display perfectly, completely in Jesus Christ.

Okay, look at your outline in your bulletin again. Notice how Jesus in that main body teaches us about the practice of discipleship. And then he teaches us about the goal of discipleship. That's sub-point one, sub-point two, verses 27-34, the practice of discipleship, then verses 35-38 the goal of discipleship. If we are to live and practice the love of God, it means that we truly and practically live according to the great commandment to love your neighbor as yourself. You may remember that Jesus once drew that very truth out of a very intelligent and ambitious lawyer in Luke 10:25.

In fact, you can turn there if you would. We're not going to do a lot of turning in your Bibles, so this will give you a little exercise. Just turn over to Luke 10 and verse 25. The lawyer that came up to Jesus that day said, "What shall I do to inherit eternal life?" And Jesus said, "What's written in the Law? How do you read it?" And that lawyer, he was able to summarize the



teaching and ethic of the entire Old Testament in just two commandments.

When Jesus asked the lawyer how he read the Law, the lawyer responded with this brilliant summary, you may remember, "You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your strength and with all your mind, and your neighbor as yourself." Jesus affirmed him. He had answered correctly. You know, and that means he had understood the intent of the entire Old Testament Law. And I don't about you, but at that point, if I thought about the summary of the entire Law and that is a response to the question, "How do I inherit eternal life?" and Jesus says, "Tell me the commandments," and I say, "Love God and love my neighbor," I don't know about you, but I would have been floored.

Who of us in this room has loved God perfectly with all our heart, with all our soul, with all our strength and with all our mind? Who of us has done that for five seconds? Have you? What about loving your neighbor as yourself? There's no expansion of that, just love your neighbor as yourself. Well, there's a lot

in that. This lawyer, he's not rightly thinking about himself, is he? He's not really looking in the mirror of God's holiness, how God has loved neighbor. He'd understood the intent of the Law, but he had not been applying it.

And the lawyer's follow-up question means he really missed out on the heart of it all together. Look at verse 28, "Jesus said to him, 'You've answered correctly; do this, and you will live.'" "Do this and you will live." I'd cry at that point, I haven't done it! Now what? I mean I blew it. I can't remember, I blew it, I blew it today. I blew it now. I'm blowing it right now! And I've blown it all the way back to my birth! Now what's the plan for inheriting eternal life? "Do this, and you'll live." The lawyer didn't get what he was driving at and he, "desiring to justify himself, said to Jesus, "And who is my neighbor?" Who is that?

"Jesus replied, 'A man is going down from Jerusalem to Jericho, he fell among robbers.'" This is a common thing because travel back then was pretty dangerous. We take for granted the safety, security we have on our roads, a police force, 911. We take all

that for granted. Not then, though. "A man fell among robbers, who stripped him, beat him, and departed leaving him half dead. Now by chance a priest was going down that road, and when he saw him he passed by on the other side. So likewise a Levite, when he came to the place and saw him, passed by on the other side." Interesting, isn't it? The most religious examples, Jesus upholds, he says, look what they do.

"But a Samaritan," verse 33. That would have drawn a hiss and boo from the crowd. They couldn't stand those guys. I mean think about the worst of your adversaries and enemies whether it's political or relational or whatever it is and put them into that Samaritan category. That's how they, I mean they had centuries-long cultural despising of Samaritans. "A Samaritan, though, as he journeyed, he came to where this man was and when he saw him, he had compassion. He went to him, bound up his wounds, pouring on oil and wine. Then he set him on his own animal and brought him to an inn and took care of him. And the next day he took out two denarii," that's two day's wages, "gave them to the innkeeper, saying, 'Take care of him, and whatever more you spend, I will repay you when I come back.'"

The lawyer, he wanted to justify himself. He wanted to restrict the circle of who is my neighbor. He wanted to restrict the application of love for neighbor as tightly as possible. Why did he want to do that? Because he wanted to live without an accusing conscience. He wanted to, to live with a very tight circle of neighbors. He wanted to be justified in ignoring a person in need and still be able to get to heaven. Definitely not an enemy in need. Jesus isn't going to let him off the hook, though.

Look at verse 36. He informed his conscience by drawing out the implications. Jesus said, "Lawyer, which of these three, do you think, proved to be a neighbor to the man who fell among the robbers?" Lawyer didn't ask time to research. He didn't have to deliberate. He didn't have to ponder. He didn't say, wait and let me pray about it. He said immediately, "'The one who showed him mercy.'" And Jesus said to him, 'You go. and do likewise.'" Look, the practice of discipleship extends to all people, even enemy people because all human beings, people of every kind and color and political interest, they all fall under the biblical definition of neighbor.

We're going to have more to say about that next week, but for now just notice how the practicing of the love of God as a genuine disciple of Christ, it involves the cooperation here of our thoughts and our wills. It makes demands on our actions and our words. And our love continues in the private place of our prayer life as we pray for our enemies.

Look again at verses 27-28, "Love your enemies, do good to those who hate you, bless those who curse you, pray for those who abuse you." We are to extend love in practical ways, ways that take up our time, ways that take up our schedule, ways that spend our resources. We're to do that to all, even to enemies, to those who hate us and curse us and abuse us because our enemies don't always respond in righteous ways when we love them like that. When we extend the love of God for them, we learn from Jesus we're to endure all for love. Look at verses 29 and 30, "To one who strikes you on the cheek, offer the other also." That is, you're coming in to show love and what do they do? They strike you. That's not to say we get into a fist fight, it's just, it's an insult.

So don't let that throw you back. Don't let that dissuade you. You keep pressing forward. "Offer them the other also." Keep enduring insults. "From the one who takes away your cloak, don't withhold your tunic either. Give to everyone who begs from you, to one who takes away your goods, don't demand them back." I know what you're thinking, What? Don't protect myself from a beating, don't protect property, give money to able-bodied drunks on the freeway offramps? Never!

Well, to mitigate those concerns, Jesus provides, really, a reliable guide to any genuine disciple that they can use to express love toward enemies. That's come to be known as the Golden Rule, verse 31, "As you wish that others would do to you, do so to them." That is to say, to a genuine disciple, a disciple who's regenerated by the Holy Spirit, who has a new nature with eyes to see, ears to hear, one who is pursuing holiness in the fear of God. Yeah, what that guy wishes for himself becomes a reliable guide for loving others.

What is it that true disciples wish others would do to them? I'll just answer for myself as a true disciple by God's grace. I

can answer that I wish in whatever condition I'm in, I wish others would demonstrate genuine love for me always for my ultimate good, for my growth in righteousness, to the praise of Jesus Christ and to the glory of God. Isn't that what all true disciples wish for? Absolutely, you better believe it.

So if I insult somebody, strike them on the cheek, what do I want, as a true disciple, what do I want people to do to me? Confront me, correct me. Pretty decent guide for expressing love toward others, isn't it? As we grow in the grace and knowledge of Christ, as we mature in understanding of the truth, the more we, more we practice biblical wisdom, that guide is gonna become clearer and more reliable, isn't it?

We need to be aware, though, of subtle temptations to self-interest, don't we? We need to be on guard against the temptation to express love only to friends, only to those you clique with, only to those who kinda, kinda match up with you, right, never to our enemies, never to those you find it difficult to love. That's a subtle temptation for every single one of us. Verses 32-34, "If you love those who love you, what

benefit is that to you? Even sinners love those who love them. Even sinners do good to one another. They lend to each other knowing they're going to get back what they owe," and if they don't get it, they'll sue. Right!

There's nothing other-worldly about those attitudes. There's nothing remarkable about verses 32-34, that's what Jesus is saying. He's saying, you, though, are to be remarkable like God is remarkable. Look at verse 35. This is something that mankind does not see as natural or normal among mankind. The practice of discipleship. Verses 27-34, guides off of the divine standard set by God himself and how God reveals himself in graciousness and kindness and benevolence and mercy. For the true disciple, this is in your second sub-point number two, starting in verse 35. For the true disciple, God himself is the goal of discipleship.

Jesus reiterates what he said in verses 27 and 28, "But love you enemies, and do good, and lend, expecting nothing in return." That is, don't go to law. Don't try to sue the socks off of whoever does you wrong. If you do that, "your reward in heaven

will be great, you'll be sons of the Most High, for he is kind to the ungrateful and the evil." The practice of discipleship is to practice the love of God, demonstrating that other-worldly love to all of neighbors, even the ones who are at enmity with us and in so doing, we're striving toward the goal of discipleship, which is to portray the heart of God, to receive the reward of God.

We portray in our lives the heart of God, putting his benevolence on display. God himself is kind to the ungrateful and the merciful. And if we do the same, we demonstrate that we are sons of the Most High. I listened to Sinclair Ferguson put it this way. He said, "We can afford to be generous because of who we are and who are we? Sons of the Most High." We've also become children of God made that way because of God's mercy.

So we portray the heart of God not just by putting benevolence on display, but also his mercy. Jesus said, "Be merciful, even as your father is merciful." Notice two ways of naming God. One, Most High. He's Most High overall. He's merciful in particular



to the redeemed being sons of the Most High, we're also redeemed sons of the father in heaven.

So as those who have not been judged and condemned, we are also meek to our fellow man, refusing to condemn them. We refuse to withhold forgiveness toward our fellow man. Rather, since we've been forgiven everything, we forgive everything. And we do so eagerly and quickly and summarily. We're meek people. That's what Christians are, meek people. Meekness isn't weakness. It's strength under control. It's power, it's reigned in and rightly harnessed and directed toward good.

One commentator astutely observed, and I believe rightly, that meekness is really the main theme of the entire Sermon on the Mount. It's certainly one of them. Meekness is one of the paramount virtues of our Lord, such that when he called attention to his own virtue, which he rarely did, he didn't say, hey, look how loving I am. Hey, look how giving I am. Look how whatever I am, he, he said this, "Notice my meekness."

GRACE CHURCH



Grace

Matthew 11:29, "Take my yoke upon you, learn from me, for I am gentle," that is meek, "and I am lowly in heart, you'll find rest for your souls." We're generous people because we can afford to be so. We're meek people because God has been so kind to us. Our financial backing, you could say, comes from the Most High God. So don't worry about spending his resources. He's going to repay us one day far beyond what we ever gave. As they say, you can't outgive God.

Our reward from God is both profound, that is to say it goes down to the depths. We've escaped judgment and condemnation by his mercy and grace. But our reward is not just profound, it's also so abundant, eternally abundant, infinitely abundant. Verse 38, "Give and it will be given to you. Good measure," that is it's measured well, "it's pressed down," that is in the cup of grain. They measure it right; they press it down and they get more in there. They shake it together to get all the air out and get more in there. It's running and overflowing all over the cup. "Then poured into your lap. For with the measure you use, it will be measured back to you." That's how God rewards. So you want to be skimpy on how you show love to other people, it's up to you.

The practice of love is the practice of discipleship. Our goal is to please God and to imitate him. That's what Jesus is conveying to his true disciples. So if you're a disciple of Jesus Christ, this is what you live for. If you're a disciple of Jesus Christ, this is what you're created to be and to do. You love to the fullest extent, even loving your enemies, and you do so in the face of insult and injury and opposition and loss. You love with a view of pleasing God and mimicking him to glorify God during your time on earth because it's so short.

Well, that's Jesus' main, main message in the Sermon on the Mount. Go back to Luke 6. That's the essence of Christian discipleship in a nutshell. It's what Paul summarized succinctly in Ephesians 5:1-2. "Therefore be imitators of God as beloved children and walk in love." Walk in love. That's discipleship.

So looking back at the outline in your bulletin, letter A, the audience. Letter B, the message. And letter C has to do really with the practical implications, the consequences. What do we need to do so that we benefit from Jesus' sermon? And again,

this is just an overview. We'll get back to more detail in weeks to come. But to benefit from Jesus' sermon, to put this into practice, it's absolutely vital that, listen, we follow the right teacher, that we listen to the right voice and follow the right authority.

Jesus states the principle very clearly in verse 40. "A disciple is not above his teacher, but everyone when he is fully trained will be like his teacher." Keep that in mind. That is a principle of life. If you immerse yourself in entertainment, that's your teacher. You'll become like your teacher. If you give yourself to the pursuit of money, you're going to listen to those who teach you how to pursue and get money. You'll be like them. If you pursue self-interest, you're going to gather around those teachers, those voices who tell you how to pursue and gain that and you'll be just as self-centered and ugly as they are.

But watch who you listen to, be careful what voice you hear, be wary of following the wrong counsel. You are responsible, after all, to follow the right authority. Every single one of us is responsible. That means, first of all, we don't follow blind

teachers, do we? We heard the same thing a couple of weeks ago from Psalm 1. "Don't walk in the counsel of ungodly, stand in the way of sinners, sit in the seat of scoffers." Second of all, we don't rely on, on fellow sinners, whose spiritual vision is just as impaired as ours is.

And we watch our own counsel to other people, too. Take a look at verse 39. Jesus says, "Can a blind man lead a blind man? Won't they both fall into a pit?" Plenty of blind guides out there, teachers, leaders who are unregenerate, unable to see where they themselves are going. Plenty of preachers like that out there. They're going to lead you nowhere, except into a pit. They're plenty of sinners out there whose eyes are filled with wood. Some of them have got a whole forest growing out of their eye sockets. They've got so many logs. Some have larger pieces than others. Verse 41, "Why do you see the speck that's in your brother eye, but you don't notice the log that's in your own eye. How can you say to your brother, 'Brother, let me take the speck out of your eye,' when you yourselves don't see the log that's in your own eye?" You can see the speck there, but you can't see the log there. That is called blindness. "You hypocrite, first take the log out of your own eye, then you can

see clearly to take out the speck that's in your brother's eye." That is, don't run around trying to help each other until your impaired vision has been cleared up.

How are you going to know that? How are you going to do that? Where are you going to find reliable teaching trustworthy counsel, sound spiritual help as you pursue discipleship. Next section. Follow the fruit. Follow the fruit. Look at the outcome of someone's life. "For no good tree bears bad fruit, nor again does a bad tree bear good fruit, each tree is known by its fruit. Figs are not gathered from thornbushes, grapes aren't picked from bramble bushes. The good person out of the good treasure of his heart produces good, and the evil person out of his evil treasure produces evil. For out of the abundance of the heart his mouth speaks."

Listen, you find the right authority to listen to by looking for fruit, good fruit. Good fruit, good man. Bad fruit, bad man. Good fruit, good man, listen to him. Bad fruit, bad man, don't listen to him. It's pretty simple. Where do we find the very best of men? In Jesus Christ. In Jesus Christ. So those teachers

whose voice lines up with Jesus Christ, listen. If they don't line up with Jesus Christ, don't listen, turn away.

It's not enough to follow him, merely listen to his voice. It's not enough to admire him, to appreciate his teaching. You've got to do what he says. Verse 46, "Why do you call me, 'Lord, Lord,' and you do not do what I tell you?" That there is the Lord challenging to any would-be disciple, any professing Christian who claims to follow Christ. Do you do what I tell you? Do you obey me? Look, there are consequences for following Christ and obeying him. Or, on the other hand, there are consequences for following Christ and not obeying him.

"Everyone who comes to me and hears my words and does them, I'll show you what he's like: he is like a man building his house who dug deep and laid the foundation on the rock. When a flood arose, the stream broke against that house, it could not shake it because it had been well built." Listen, obedience to Christ, listening to, doing what he's commanded about expressing love to our enemies, that sets a sturdy, reliable foundation for our lives that will withstand all storms, all floods. You find

yourself overcome? Check your foundation. See if you're obeying the dictates of love. See if you're obeying what Christ actually commanded you to do. The destructive power of water there, that's a metaphor for judgment, even ultimate judgment. Those who hear and obey Jesus Christ, only they will survive that judgment.

There are others who build also. They follow, but they built differently. They build hastily. You could say they built lazily. And predictably, the outcome is gravely different. "The one who hears and does not do what I say is like a man who built a house on the ground without a foundation. And when the stream broke against it, immediately it fell, and the ruin of that house was great." That, by the way, is not a non-religious person, that's someone who listens to Jesus' words. That right there, those are church people.

You may steer clear of all the blind guides. You may be a discernment person, following all the apologetic arguments and everything. You know what you believe and why. You can maybe discern that someone immersed in sin is like a man with a beam

sticking out of his eye socket trying to pick a splinter out of your eye. You may realize not only the negative side that you need to stay away from those voices and you're very discerning. But, actually, you're very doctrinally astute. You may realize you need to listen to the voice of a good man, of Jesus Christ, a fruit-bearing teacher. You need to look for people who follow him, whose doctrine practices matchup, match up with each other.

But get this, if you don't obey the voice of Christ, none of that matters. If you don't do what he tells you to do, is he your Lord? When judgment comes, the ruin of that is going to be cataclysmic. Why? Because that poor person, he thought he was building a safe, reliable house just by coming to church and listening to good words, sound words. Woe to those who do not join hearing with faith and faith with works?

Well, as I said, that's just a brief overview of the Sermon on the Mount. That's what Jesus is teaching here, just that. And I hope that overview will help to edify you, inform you, prepare you to get the most out of this teaching of Jesus in the upcoming weeks of our study. That right there is the first point

in our sermon outline for this morning. I have a couple more points and they're very brief, okay, very brief. As I said, Jesus is short, I'm long. It's understandable.

But I just want to make a brief and, and really a convicting point and here's the reason. I want to burden your conscience with the weight of Jesus' message. Your like, thanks a lot. Listen, you need to have your conscience burdened with this, okay. It's for your good. Stand by. Here's the second point for your outline, you can call it a weighty observation for our conviction. A weighty observation for our conviction. As we went through the overview of the sermon, I hope you sensed the gravity of what Jesus has commanded us, not just to learn it, that's actually the easy part, but actually to do it. That's the hard part. Easy to state, hard to practice.

Just go back to verse 27. Reflect on what he said there for just a moment, "Love our enemies." Love our enemies, really? I don't know about you, but I don't even love my friends very well, do you? I find within myself, and I hope you keep listening after I say this. I find within myself such selfishness, really such

laziness when it comes, when I'm required to be thoughtful, proactive, intentional about loving other people in my life. Don't you feel that?

What about the next one, Christ commands us to do good to those who hate us? That is, we're to actively and practically do good things, we're to pursue that with them, we're to bless those who curse us, as in speaking words of blessing upon those who slander and mock and scoff and curse? We say, oh, they're using swear words. I can't be around them. What is that? We got more strength than that through the power of Christ. We can step into that.

We're to pray for those who abuse us. Many of us find it difficult to pray faithfully, consistently for the dearest sweetest of saints, people dedicating their lives on foreign mission fields, people devoted to the service and here people, people are suffering injury and illness. To call those people to mind and pray faithfully and consistently, that's good. And we need to continue doing that, but Christ is commanding us to devote private prayer time to loving our enemies by entreating

the Lord for their sake. It's really hard to hate and be bitter against those you pray for, isn't it?

Look, I have no interest in making everyone feel bad. But I do hope your conscience feels some degree of strain from the text. I hope you see how often and how far short we all fall of consistent obedience in loving our enemies. Honestly, we have a hard time loving fellow believers. And at that, even loving them a fraction of the extent that Jesus has described for us here. We think about our marriages, how husbands treat their wives, how wives treat their husbands, how parents and children interact, how the siblings interact with each other. Bringing this text on loving and doing good and blessing and praying for others is really convicting stuff.

Then, when we extend this and we go outside the home, we realize we're rather unlike the good Samaritan. We're often times more like busy priests and Levites, couldn't be bothered to stop and help the injured or needy human being. If we're honest with ourselves, I think we all too often get into the routines of our lives. We fail to think about our time, plan, schedules,

resources, the means God wants to use to demonstrate his love and his benevolence and his mercy and his compassion to a lost and dying world. But as disciples of Christ, that's exactly what he's called and commanded us to be. That's our joy. That's our birthright.

What's so convicting is that we're often so much more interested in ourselves, especially when it comes to something so minor, something so petty, like feeling personal offenses, right, feeling slighted, feeling not respected, not preferred, not honored, not paid attention to. Personal offenses we simply will not abide in our hearts. Wicked attitude grows within like a cancer. It spreads tentacles of bitterness throughout our souls. We become so blinded to our own sin and our departure from the principle of love that we become like that guy with the log in his eye. We're running around trying to pull splinters out of everybody who's offended us, out of their eyes, while we have this log of bitterness and anger in our own.

We desperately need to hear Jesus' teaching and act on it because this is what we're called and commanded to do. And yet,

the more we learn from this, the more our conscience is informed, the worse, it seems, we feel. While there may be many of us who need to stop, examine ourselves, repent, go seek forgiveness of others, I don't want to end there. Because we need to consider a final point here. Our conscience needs to feel this. We do need to feel the weight and gravity, pause, and reflect on this because if we don't do that, we're not really going to be serious about obedience and repentance.

The third and final point, though, I want to make is number three, a word of Gospel for our consolation. A word of Gospel for our consolation. Gospel just means good news. So a word of good news for our consolation, our comfort, our encouragement. This is very brief, but very, very powerful. And it comes straight from the pen of the Apostle Paul. First, Romans, 5:8 tell us that "God shows his love for us in that while we were still sinners, Christ died for us." So all of that failure to do this consistently, obediently, all that failure, if we're in Christ, forgiven. Christ died for us. Isn't that good news?

I'm so grateful. I'm so grateful that all my violations of the love of God, forgiven, paid for. I'm so thankful that all my violations of love toward other human beings, paid for. "God showed his love for us in that while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us." He didn't die for perfect people. There are none, except him. He died for sinful ones.

And by faith in that message we rejoice in Romans 8:1-4. "There is therefore now no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus. For the law of the Spirit of life has set you free in Christ Jesus from the law of sin and death. For what God has done with the law, weakened by the flesh could not do. He sent his own Son in the likeness of sinful flesh and for sin, he condemned sin in the flesh." All those violations of the love for God and love for our neighbor, all paid for. He condemned sin in the flesh. Why? "So that the righteous requirement of the law might be fulfilled in us, who do not walk according to the flesh but according to the Spirit."

Look, what we fail to do, Christ has already accomplished, having perfectly fulfilled the law of God, having perfectly

loved his neighbors, both enemies and friends. What did he pray on the cross? "Father forgive them for they do not know what they're doing." Now, we're set free to follow him in faith. In fact, that is the secret of discipleship, isn't it, the secret of the Christian life. It's an open secret. It's not hidden, but it's revealed, one that we can read about in passages like Galatians 2:20 where Paul says, "I have been crucified with Christ." It means I'm dead. I'm dead to self. "It's no longer I who live, it's Christ who lives in me. The life I now live in the flesh I live by faith in the Son of God, who loved me, gave himself up for me."

Becoming disciples of divine love, following our Lord Jesus Christ, walking in love, doing what he's commanded us to do, we will never do that in our own power. We'll only grow as we strive in the power of the Spirit and Christ lives out that live in us. That's how this is done. As Augustine famously said, he was praying to God, he was praying in earnest that God would help him to overcome when he had no strength, no resources in himself, to overcome sin, he said, "My whole hope is only in thy exceeding mercy. Give what thou commandest and command what thou

wilt. O charity, my God, kindle me, give what thou commandest and command what thou wilt."

That's our prayer, too, isn't it? We have reason to hope that God is going to grant what we ask in the name of Jesus. Why? Because he sent Jesus to do this, to demonstrate this love. He intends to glorify his Son. We know that what Jesus commands, he's already accomplished. Where he commands us to go, he has already been. He doesn't push us from behind. Instead, he leads us from the front, and he says, "Follow me."

The Sermon on the Mount, as we've pointed out before, this is Jesus' worldview. This is how he lived. This is, it's not as if we in our own strength are able to pull ourselves up by our own bootstraps and gut out a greater love than we actually possess. No. We find it in him. We look to God by the Spirit to cause the perfect life of Jesus Christ, his perfect love, to live in and through in us and abide in us. That is the secret of becoming disciples of divine love. That's the secret of the Christian life. It's going to be pure joy to learn, understand and pursue obedience to this together. Amen.

Let's commit that desire to the Lord in prayer. Father, we want to thank you this morning, just as we hear just this overview, it's really convicting stuff. You know, if we just look at ourselves, we're actually dismayed at how far short we fall of loving our, not just our enemies, but even our friends and our family. We find so many holes and weaknesses. But, Father, at the same time, as we recognize who's the one who's preaching this, he actually did it. He went before us and lived the life that he calls us to live and following him in obedience. We ask you, Father, to grant us the power, the motivation, the desire, the will, the strength to do what you command. We don't find it in ourselves, but only in you. Because of that, we have great hope.