

Luke 6.37-49
Two Ways; One Foundation

The late first century Christian writing, the *Didache*, begins with these words, “*There are two ways, one of life and one of death. And there is a great difference between the two ways. And this is the way of life: First, 'you shall love God who made you'; second, 'your neighbor as yourself.'*”

And then, as the *Didache* goes on to describe the Way of Life, a lot of what it says is taken right from Jesus’ teaching here in Luke 6, which we’ve been looking at for the past couple weeks.

And that’s no coincidence. Because it’s just that truth—the truth of the Two Ways—that’s been the main theme of Jesus’ teaching in this sermon.

That’s what he started off with in the Blessings and Woes. It’s the foundation for the teaching about loving your enemies and doing good to those who hate you. And it’s what Jesus drives home here as the sermon moves toward its conclusion.

Just as we heard in our Old Testament reading today from Deuteronomy 30, there are two ways—the *good way* that leads to life, and the *evil way* that leads to death. And there’s a great difference between the two ways.

1. The Teacher and His Disciples (verses 37-42)

Now, verses 37-38 sort of *summarize* everything Jesus just said in the last section about loving your enemies and giving freely to everyone. And here once again he holds before us the reality of the coming judgment.

Judge not, and in the *coming judgment* you will not *be judged*.
Condemn not, and you won’t *be condemned*. Forgive, and you’ll *be forgiven*.
Give, and more will *be given back to you*.

And what we have here are two couplets, purposely placed side by side. *Judging and Condemning. Forgiving and Giving.*

The first two commandments, *judging* and *condemning*, are negative—*do not judge; do not condemn*. The second two, *forgiving* and *giving*, are positive—*do forgive; do give*.

And the first part about *not judging* is possibly one of the most often quoted parts of the Bible by unbelievers. If you say to somebody that sexual activity outside of marriage is sin. *Don't judge!* You try to tell somebody it's wrong to live a life of constant indulgence. *Don't judge!*

But is that *really* the sort of thing Jesus is talking about? *I don't think so*. And for two reasons. First, the Bible everywhere tells us to make judgments about what's right and what's wrong. And it condemns us when, instead of judging rightly, we call evil good and good evil.

But second, in this context that's just not what the words of Jesus have in view. Because this *immediately follows* the section we looked at last week about loving your enemies and doing good to everyone regardless of what you can get in return.

And with that in mind, we can see that when Jesus says "*Judge not*" and "*Condemn not*," what he's talking about specifically is the decisions you make about how you treat people.

In other words, Jesus is summarizing everything he said in the last section. To judge and condemn in the sense he means it here is to decide how you're going to treat someone *based on* how they treat you, or *prejudices* you might have, or what you can get out of them.

It's really the same thing James has in mind in James 2.4, when he talks about making distinctions and becoming judges with evil thoughts. It's to favor some people *over* others because of what you'll get in return.

It's to *predetermine* according to your own standards the sorts of people who *will* and *will not* be the recipients of your favor.

So, if you treat the poor and outcast with contempt, God will use that standard and do the same to you. Because apart from his mercy, you're poor and outcast yourself.

If you seek to destroy your enemies rather than show them love and mercy, God will use that same standard for you and condemn you. Because, remember, we're all by nature God's enemies. And we're only made his children by his undeserved mercy to us in Christ.

And forgiving and giving to others is really just the positive flip side of not judging and condemning. If you refuse to forgive others, God will refuse to forgive you. If you refuse to give to others, God won't give you anything in the coming age. And even what you have will be taken away.

But if, as a Christian, you forgive your enemies, then God will freely forgive you. And if you give to others without expecting anything in return, He'll give you what you don't deserve without demanding anything back.

This is really the hallmark of being a disciple of Jesus. Because to be a Christian is to understand that you *desperately need* God's mercy and forgiveness. And *really knowing* that will lead you to have a forgiving and merciful heart towards other people.

And so, there's really *nothing* we ought to be *more vehemently* on our guard against in ourselves than resentment and an unwillingness to forgive those who wrong us.

And in all these things, Jesus is telling us to be like him, *isn't he?* That's the big thing we saw last week. Jesus loved his enemies. He prayed from the cross, "*Father forgive them.*"

He gave of himself freely to everyone *without* regard to what he'd get back. He was poor, hungry, a man of sorrows.

And that's how we're to understand this parable he tells in verse 39. A blind man leading a blind man will send both into a pit. If you follow any master but Christ, you're a blind man being led around by another blind man!

Because Christ is the *only master* who can lead you in the straight way of righteousness. And so, Jesus is telling these people who've come to follow him, *and us*: Be like me, your teacher. That's really the main point of this last portion of the sermon.

Like he says in verse 40, *mere students* can't be above their teacher. Our only goal is to become fully trained *so that* we can be *like* our teacher.

And if Christ our teacher was poor, humble, loving, forgiving, and all those things to everyone without discrimination, we're to be the same. Because *anything else* is blindly following the blind.

And if you hate people, if you're seeking after worldly riches and power, if you only care about what you can get out of other people, then that's what you're doing—blindly following the blind into a pit.

And Remember, this is all set against the backdrop of Jesus' controversy with Israel's religious leaders.

In 6.11, the last verse right before the beginning of this section we're currently in, Luke says the Pharisees and scribes began at that point discussing with one another what they might do to Jesus.

That led to Jesus spending a night in prayer, *choosing* the 12 apostles, and then healing a multitude of people who came to him from all over the region. And then he started preaching this sermon.

You see, the teachers of Israel were blind. They rejected Christ, and by doing so led those who followed them into a pit. They *neglected* the poor and outcast. Instead of bringing in the lost sheep of Israel, they drove them further away.

And that's why Jesus rebukes the Pharisees so harshly in places like Matthew 23. Where he pronounced woe upon them, just as in this chapter in Luke he pronounced woe upon the rich and the powerful.

And in Matthew 23 he calls the Scribes and Pharisees *blind* 5 times—*blind* fools, *blind* men, *blind* guides, *blind* Pharisees.

They're the same as the false shepherds described in Ezekiel 34. They *made themselves* full and fat, but they *starved* the sheep. They trampled over the poor and defenseless. And because of that, they'll be destroyed. And to follow them is to fall into destruction with them.

Then, in verses 41 and 42 Jesus talks about taking out the log in your own eye before pointing out the speck in your brother's eye. Now, how does that fit with the main point here of being like your teacher?

Well, it fits because when you follow Christ, you'll eventually lead others in some way. When you follow Christ, you're in a community of his people.

And when you're in that community—a community that takes sin seriously—it can be a temptation to focus on the faults in other people, but neglect them in yourself.

And in order to really lead and help other people, you need to be able to see, *don't you?* But if you have a log jammed into your eye, your vision will be severely impaired.

I mean, picture this scene Jesus presents us with. It's actually pretty funny, *isn't it?* You can almost see it as like a comic in the *New York Times*.

Two guys standing next to each other. One guy has this huge log in his eye. And the other guy has something in his eye but you can't even really see it. And the guy with the *log sticking out* of his eye says, "Here, *let me get that for you!*"

It's funny because it's *insane* to do that, *right?* But so often people really do things like that when it comes to pointing out faults in other people, *don't they?*

Now, a speck in your eye can be annoying. But it's minor. But if you have a log in your eye, you'd *better get that thing out, and quick!* *Get to the hospital man. You have a log in your eye!*

I once knew this guy who was *constantly* on the lookout for *theological inaccuracies* in things people said. It didn't matter if you were man, woman, or child—if you were around this guy you'd better have your theological ducks in a row, or else you'd get a *swift rebuke*.

But the sad thing is that this guy was also *filled* with anger and bitterness. And a lot of people gently warned him that he should be more concerned with himself than with the small errors of other people.

But he wouldn't heed that advice, and his bitterness eventually led him to leave the church.

That's something like what Jesus is warning against here. You have to be more concerned with sin in yourself than in others. Get that log out

of your eye, and then you can help your brothers and sisters, by *leading* them along, rather than beating them down.

Because in order to be able to lead others in the way of righteousness, you have to practice it yourself.

Because that's the only way you'll be able to help others from a heart of humility and love rather than trying to lord it over them in an attempt to gain power and influence for yourself.

I mean, we *are* called to help our brothers and sisters in their faith and life, *aren't we?* Yes, *we are*.

That's why the last verses of the book of James say this, "*My brothers, if anyone among you wanders from the truth and someone brings him back,²⁰ let him know that whoever brings back a sinner from his wandering will save his soul from death and will cover a multitude of sins.*"

So, if you see one of your brothers or sisters wandering from the truth in any way, it's your responsibility to try to lead them back into the Way of Life.

But Jesus' point here in Luke 6 is that in order to do that, you need to see clearly yourself. Look in the mirror. See if there's a log in your eye. If there is, get it out *before* you try admonishing other people. Or else you'll *hurt* both yourself and the people you're trying to correct.

2. The Tree and Its Fruit (verses 43-45)

Well, then Jesus illustrates and expands the point in verses 43-45 by talking about the tree and its fruit. And this is where we see that this *isn't* just about your outward actions. But again, it's about *which kingdom* you belong to, and *where* your *treasure* is.

A good tree produces good *fruit*, and a bad tree produces bad *fruit*. So, as you follow Christ, inspect your fruit to make sure you're a good tree that's producing good fruit.

And how do you know whether you are? Well you know it by what you say and what you do. Good fruit is just the sort of stuff Jesus has been talking about—loving and doing good to everyone, *blessing* them rather than *cursing* them, forgiving those who wrong you.

Now, that's not to say you'll be absolutely perfect. As long as we're in this present age, we all struggle against the remnant of sin that remains in us, which *feeds* off of the outside influences of the world and the devil. Just like a tree has to withstand outside forces of wind and bugs.

But it *does mean* that, as one who's united to Christ by faith, sin *no longer* has *dominion* over you. Because sin isn't your Master. Jesus is!

Think about a fruit tree. Sure, there may be some defects on a good tree. You *may even* find a rotten piece of fruit on it from time to time due to pestilence or some other reason.

But those things are out of character of what the tree essentially is—*A good tree*. And ultimately, you know whether or not it's a good tree by the *overall* fruit it produces.

And the calling for a Christian is to always strive to be more like Jesus—the *one perfectly good* tree. The *source* of all good fruit. *In other words*, it's to strive to be a perfect tree in every way. A tree that brings forth nothing but good fruit.

And so, yes, we *do* still struggle in this present age against the world, the flesh, and the devil. But *even so*, the *life* of the Lord Jesus is being worked within us to make us into *better* trees that produce *better* fruit.

And this is all connected, too, with what came immediately before about the teacher and his disciples. The teachers in the Good Way of Christ are teachers who produce good fruit like a good tree.

In other words, *which teachers* ought we to follow? *Only* teachers who follow Christ. Teachers who can see. Teachers who've taken the log out of their eye. Teachers who produce good fruit—the kind of fruit described by Jesus in this chapter. Love, goodness, and mercy.

And it's *no coincidence* that Jesus shifts metaphors in verse 45 from *fruit* to *treasure*. Because, remember, he's been telling us to live for the *treasure* of the age to come and not the treasure of this world.

And by bringing us back to imagery of treasure here he shows that the tree metaphor is intimately tied up in that theme of treasure. Whether or not you're a good tree or a bad tree will depend on which treasure your heart is set on.

Is it set on the good treasure of God's Kingdom and righteousness? Or is it set on the evil treasure of what's esteemed in this world? You see, we still haven't left the basic point of verses 20-26—there are two kingdoms and two ways. The question is, To which one do you belong?

And to be a good tree, with your heart set on the treasure of God's kingdom, is to be united to Christ and be made like him. Because *Jesus* is the Good tree who bears Good fruit. And it's *only* those who abide in him who bear good fruit.

John 15.4-5: *"Abide in me, and I in you. As the branch cannot bear fruit by itself, unless it abides in the vine, neither can you, unless you abide in me. ⁵ I am the vine; you are the branches. Whoever abides in me and I in him, he it is that bears much fruit, for apart from me you can do nothing."*

3. The Rock and the House (verses 46-49)

And notice in verse 46 that even at this very early stage, there seems to have already been a problem with people who believed in Christ not being obedient to his teaching. *"Why do you call me, Lord, Lord," but not do what I tell you?"*

Jesus is saying, *Look to Me. Listen to Me. Build your life on Me and My teaching.* All other teachers of the world are blind guides. They're bad trees producing bad fruit. They have no foundation.

It doesn't matter whether we're talking about religious authorities that support a system of hypocrisy and injustice. Or political pundits. Or the figureheads of wealth and entertainment.

All those things and the people who preach them will lead you into a pit if you follow them instead of Christ.

And if you build your life on them and their teaching, you won't be able to stand. Because there's only one Way that has a foundation that can withstand the *coming Day of God's judgment.*

That's the Way of the Lord Jesus Christ and his cross. And unless you build your life on him and his teaching, that Day will come crashing in on you like a torrent and take away *every comfort* you once thought you had.

Because, you see, the flooded stream here in verses 48 and 49 *isn't just* the storms of life, as it's often assumed to be. But it's the coming Day of God's judgment.

Remember, that's been the *underlying presupposition* of Jesus' teaching here in Luke 6 from the very beginning.

The Day of God's judgment is coming when he'll put everything right. When he'll *destroy* those who hate him and oppress his people, and exalt those who love him. It's coming ever closer—*rising up* like a flooding river.

And the point is about the foundation upon which you built the house of your life when that flood of judgment comes.... And *it is coming*.

And as you prepare for that Day, there are *two ways* you can try to build your house. But there's really *only one foundation*. Are you walking in the way of life? Is your life built on the rock of Christ and his teaching?

I mean, try to picture in your mind these two houses: One built with a deep foundation on a rock. The other just laid on the surface of the ground, without any foundation.

Now, they may look exactly the same on a sunny Spring day in the mid 70s. There are plenty of people doing a lot of good things. There are a lot of unbelievers in America who're *just really nice people*.

But if they aren't following Christ, they haven't built on a foundation. Because they've bought into the lie that the flood *isn't really coming*.

You see, this *isn't ultimately just* about how nice you are, or how "spiritual" you are. The question is, *What Kingdom* do you belong to? *What* are you living for? *What* kind of a tree are you? *Have* you built on the *foundation* that is Christ and his teaching?

Because when the flood comes, and the wind and rain and hail starts pounding and pounding, *only one* of those two houses has *any chance* of standing. And that's the house built on the rock. And that *Rock is Christ*.

And even though the flood here is ultimately the Day of God's judgment, the principle still applies to the smaller storms of our lives that come crashing down in on us.

Because they're all part of the estate of sin and misery into which the Fall of our first parents plunged us. And *as such* they're like foretastes of the final judgment for those whose house has no foundation.

But for those who build their house on the foundation of Christ and his teaching, those storms can't destroy the house. For those who are in Christ, When the flood of suffering and trial and sorrow comes, there may be fear. You'll hear things pounding against the house from the outside.

But the house itself *won't be shaken*. And in the end it'll only be made stronger. As the strength of the foundation is proven amidst the flood.

So, are you building your house on the foundation of Christ and his teaching? *Or are you* building on a ground with no foundation?

Friends, there are two ways—the *Way of Life* and the *Way of Death*. And there's a *great difference* between the two ways. Make it your daily task to walk only in the Way that leads to Life, by faith in Christ and obedience to his teaching.