

Lesson 25
How to Love
Luke 6:27-35

We are studying the Gospel of Luke. This gospel was written by Luke, a Gentile, to Theophilus, in order to give him an orderly account of all that he had been taught so that he could know these things were certain. The theme is Jesus Christ as the Son of Man, a true human, born into this world of the seed of Adam so that He could publicly identify with mankind, be tempted in all things as we, but without sin, be rejected, and provide salvation for the whole world. We have already covered the introduction of the Son of Man in chapters 1-4 and we are now studying the ministry of the Son of Man in the Galilee in chapters 4-9. During this time Jesus began to display His words and His works. His popularity has grown. His ministry prompted the Sanhedrin to investigate. They observed and discovered that this was a significant movement. They have now begun their interrogation and have already joined with the Herodians to destroy Him. In light of the opposition Jesus has now selected twelve apostles to organize against the opposition and He is now training them and teaching His disciples. We are now at the famous moment of the Sermon on the Mount in Luke 6:20ff, though some doubt this is the same sermon and refer to it as the Sermon on the Plain. This distinction may well be and I am more convinced of it now than I was in previous weeks. Let's pick up with 6:20 and review last week's material and then press on into this week's material.

In 6:20 Jesus turned His gaze toward His disciples, so that the sermon will be primarily addressed to them, though a crowd of unbelieving Jews and Gentiles were present. He was saying to them certain blessings. The Greek word translated "blessed" is from the Hebrew *ashrei* which root means "joy and happiness." Jesus is pronouncing joy and happiness upon His disciples and woe to the crowds. There are four pronouncements of joy and happiness. The first pronouncement is joy and happiness upon you who are poor, for yours is the kingdom of God. Those who are poor are poor spiritually, meaning they recognize their lack of righteousness and need for it. As such they come to God in faith and are now disciples. The reason Jesus says they have joy and happiness is because the kingdom of God belongs to them. The kingdom of God is the kingdom that comes from God, meaning it is sourced in Him. It is the same as the kingdom of heaven. When the nation Israel repents then the kingdom of God/heaven will come to earth and all who have believed will possess it. Verse 21 is the second pronouncement of joy and happiness upon you who hunger now, for you shall be satisfied. Those who hunger now are those who hunger for righteousness to fill the earth. They do not have this hunger satisfied now, but they will have it satisfied in the future when the kingdom comes from God to earth. Verse 21b is the third pronouncement of joy and happiness for those who weep now, for you shall laugh. Those who weep now weep because of their sensitivity to their personal sin, it's the struggle that causes them to weep, but in the future they will laugh because the sin issue will be dealt with and there will be no more struggle, only laughing. In verse 22, the fourth pronouncement of joy and happiness is upon you when men hate you, and ostracize you, and insult you, and scorn your name as evil, for the sake of the Son of Man. Be glad in that day and leap for joy, for behold, your reward is great in heaven. For in the same way their fathers used to treat the prophets. Disciples who stand up for the Son of Man will be hated by unbelievers, they will be ostracized from their inner circle, they will be insulted and scorned. But be glad in those circumstances, Jesus says, and leap for joy knowing two things; first, that your reward is great in heaven, and

second, that you are in good company. All the prophets of old were also hated and ostracized, insulted and scorned, but God loved them and will reward them greatly for their faithfulness to Him.

In verse 24 Jesus pronounces a set of four woes. These are contrasts to the blessings. The first woe answers to the first pronouncement of joy upon the poor. In it He says, but woe to you who are rich, for you are receiving your comfort in full. The word woe is *οὐαί* and means “intense anguish, pain or grief.” So, those who are rich materially will be in intense pain later. This, of course, refers to the rich in general, and not to every rich individual, some of whom believe. But these rich find their satisfaction in riches and see no need for righteousness. As such they are presently receiving all the comfort they will ever receive. All their future holds is intense grief over failing to sense the need for righteousness and faith. In verse 25, the second pronouncement of woe is upon you who are well-fed now, for you shall be hungry. Those who are well-fed have the fine food and wine, but in the future they will be hungry because they will have nothing. In verse 25b the third pronouncement of woe is upon you who laugh now, for you shall mourn and weep. Those who laugh now laugh at others, but in the future they will mourn and weep for their mistreatment because they will have nothing. In verse 26 the fourth woe is pronounced upon you when all men speak well of you, for their fathers used to treat the false prophets in the same way. The world reinforces the unbelief of others in the world, encouraging them in their evil ways, but they are in bad company, they do the same as those who spoke well of the false prophets in the past and in the end they will ultimately be rejected. In summary, Jesus’ words present a reversal of fortunes between His disciples and the crowd of unbelieving Jews and Gentiles. Difficulty for the disciples now, but blessing later; and blessing for the world now but destruction later. The future belongs to us.

In verses 27-38 we come to a section that explains how Jesus’ disciples are to treat others and how they are to respond to others. The first section is verses 27-35 where disciples are commanded how to treat others. At the root we are to love others. This love is expressed by several commands which are followed by illustrations of how to exhibit this remarkable love. The second section is verses 36-38 where disciples are commanded how to respond to others. At the root we are to be merciful and withhold judgment.

In 6:27 then we come to the first section and the command to love others. **But I say to you who hear.** Note the word **But** which is a contrastive *αλλά*. The contrast is with those He just pronounced woe upon. They were unbelievers. The one’s **who hear** are the ones who are listening to Him responsively. In other words, they are His disciples. They not only hear what He says but they do it. The life of a disciple is the life of learning how to live as his master. Jesus is the master. The first command of the Master is **love your enemies**. This is somewhat similar to what was commanded in the OT where Leviticus 19:18 says, “you shall love your neighbor as yourself.” However, rabbinic Judaism had re-defined one’s neighbor in a variety of ways that limited the application. For some the neighbor was another Jew. For others it was any Jew who was not a tax collector. However, the true definition of a neighbor was *anyone who had need*, even Gentiles. The illustration Jesus gives later of the good Samaritan illustrates the true definition. But the command here goes far beyond it. Jesus’ disciple is to **love his enemies**. An enemy is one who is hostile to you and hates you. Therefore, to love one’s **enemies** is an extraordinary type of love. But the disciple has experienced just such a love from God the Father.

Therefore, we are to emulate that love of the Father to others. The Greek word for **love** is from *αγαπαω* and means “to have warm regard for and interest in another,” and may be translated, “*cherish, have affection for, love.*” To take interest in someone who is hostile to you and hates you may not seem possible. However, it is the love that God has shown us. As Paul said in *Romans 5:10*, “...while we were enemies we were reconciled to God.” God loved us while we were still enemies, hostile to Him. So, if we display the love of God it will be a unique display. A display of love that the world does not know. The love of the world is to love those who love them. But the love of the disciple is to love those who hate us. In *Luke 23:34* Jesus showed this love on the cross when He said, “Father, forgive them; for they do not know what they are doing.” In *Acts 7:60* Stephen emulated this love when He was being stoned, saying, “Lord, do not hold this sin against them!” Loving one’s enemies is at the heart of being a disciple.

The second command is also verse 27, **do good to those who hate you**. The Greek word **good** is from *καλως* and means to act “in a manner that is beneficial/acceptable, well.” You are to do this **to those who hate you**. Those who **hate you** have a strong aversion to you. To **do good** to them, to act toward them in a way that is beneficial to them is unnatural, but that is the way of a disciple.

The third command is in verse 28, **bless those who curse you**. The word **bless** comes from the Greek verb *ευλογεω* means “to ask for God to bestow blessing.” But this is not asking God to bless people who bless you. This is asking God to **bless those who curse you**. The word **curse** means “to call down curses upon.” So to **bless** them is not something that is easy to do, but it is the way the disciple is supposed to treat them.

The fourth command is in verse 28, **pray for those who mistreat you**. There are several Greek words for prayer. This is the most common one, *προσευχομαι*. It means “to petition a deity,” in other words, to make some request. In fact, all six Greek words for prayer refer to making a request. The heart of prayer is making requests of God, not merely talking to God. Talking to God includes confession of sin or thanksgiving, but they are not technically prayer, though they can be included along with a prayer and are good. In this command the disciple is to make requests **for those who mistreat** them. That means he’s to actually pray for them. The word **mistreat** means “to insult, to abuse, to threaten,” but probably **mistreat** is the best way to translate. It is very difficult to make requests to God for people that insult and mistreat you, but it is the higher ethic of the disciple, an entirely different way of living, and one that is very uncommon.

Understand that while this was given to His disciples, all of this was heard by the many unbelievers in the crowd. When they heard this they would know that obeying them was well-beyond their reach. As such they would be forced to realize that they needed to come to God in faith. They would also know how to distinguish Jesus’ disciples from the world. And in that sense Jesus’ disciples would be set apart from the world so that they lived very different lives.

Next in verses 29-30 Jesus gives four illustrations of what it looks like to **love your enemies**, a very unnatural thing. First illustration, turning the other cheek. **Whoever hits you on the cheek, offer him the other also**. Some have argued that this refers to a physical punch to the jaw because of the words **hits**, which is *τυπτοντι*, meaning “to inflict a blow, *strike beat, wound,*”

and **cheek**, which is *σιαγονα*, which originally referred to the jaw or jawbone. However, the word **hits** can be used in a figurative sense, such as wounding the conscience, as in 1 Cor 8:12, and the word **cheek**, while it did originally refer to the jaw, is well-known to have been used of the **cheek** as early as the 3rd century BC. If we want to know what this means we may look at the parallel in Matthew. There He says, “but whoever slaps you on your right cheek,” using a word for slap, *ραπιζω*, that is different than the word here translated **hits**, *τυπτοντι*. The Matthew passage also includes the mention of the right cheek, and not just the cheek. Because of these differences I’m divided on whether Luke is parallel to Matthew or making a broader application of Matthew. When we taught Matthew we pointed out that a slap to the right cheek is a back-handed slap. And because the context is religious persecution, we concluded that it was a figurative slap, that is, an insult. And if Luke is a parallel passage then the statement here means the same thing. However, Luke was written to a broader audience of Gentiles, and who notified us that Gentiles were present, may be speaking more generally in order to convey a broader application. If so, I am content with this meaning either a literal slap to the face or a figurative insult. Either way, the point is the disciple should not react by striking back. It is an example of what it means to **love your enemies**.

The second illustration of loving your enemies is verse 29b, accepting robbery. **And whoever takes away your coat, do not withhold your shirt from him either.** The verb **takes away** is *αιρω* and in this context means “to seize control of” by force. It is descriptive of a robbery. In this case the disciple’s **coat** is taken by force. How should the disciple respond? The natural thing to do would be to fight back. But Jesus says, **do not withhold your shirt from him either.** The point is to not fight back but to be willing to allow the thief to rob you again. The parallel in Matthew 5:40 is so different, it doesn’t sound parallel either. There He says, “If anyone wants to sue you and take your shirt, let him have your coat also.” No robbery is in view, but a legal setting. Further, the order is opposite. In Matthew it is suing for the shirt and then letting him have the coat too. In Luke it is stealing the coat and then letting him have the shirt also. These differences are so great that I’m beginning to think these are two different sermons. Whatever the case, the principle is the same, don’t fight back. So, Christ’s command to His disciples is to remain vulnerable to someone who is trying to hurt you and not take revenge.

The third illustration of loving is verse 30, giving. **Give to everyone who asks of you.** The **everyone** who are in view here refer to everyone who is in legitimate need. The point is the disciple’s readiness to give. Giving to others includes some amount of self denial, because in giving to others we are denying something to ourselves. A willingness to part with things and a readiness to give to others is what Jesus is calling for. It is a genuine expression of **love**.

The fourth illustration of loving is verse 30b, not demanding return. **And whoever takes away what is yours, do not demand it back.** The parallel in *Matt 5:42* may not be a true parallel. There Jesus says, “do not turn away from him who wants to borrow from you.” His concept there is lending money to someone who wants to borrow. But here the picture is of force. Someone **takes away** something that belongs to **you**. In that scenario Jesus says here, **do not demand it back.** But ultimately the same principle is in view, because in Matthew, if you lend money to someone you should not expect to get paid back, whereas here if someone takes money you should not demand it back. The principle is one of generosity but Matthew’s account is more specific while Luke’s is more general, providing a broader application. Therefore, the disciple

should be generous towards others, not demanding repayment or return of stolen articles. These are very concrete illustrations of love. They show us what love looks like.

In verse 31 Jesus leaves illustrations and turns back to commands. And here we find what is typically referred to as “the golden rule.” **Treat others the same way you want them to treat you.** Interestingly, the golden rule is also cited by Matthew, but much later in the sermon, and Matthew ties it to the law and the prophets, saying, “In everything, therefore, treat people the same way you want them to treat you, for this is the Law and the Prophets.” But Luke makes no mention of the Law and the Prophets. This could be another indication that this is a different sermon or that because they had different audiences in mind, Matthew and Luke tailored what Jesus taught to their particular audiences, Matthew’s predominately Jewish and Luke’s predominately Gentile. As for the rule itself, it is found in weaker forms in ancient writings, For example, Rabbi Hillel says, “What is hateful to you, do not do to your neighbor...” However, this is a negative form of the command as are most of the ancient forms. Probably the closest saying to Jesus is 2 Enoch 61.2, “That which a person makes request for his soul, in the same manner let him behave toward every living soul.” This is a positive note. But Jesus’ is more emphatic than any found in the ancient world. The literal translation is “And just as you want that men do to you, do to them likewise.” What is emphatic in the verse is what you want, how you want to be treated. The verb is from θέλω and means “wish, desire.” However, you wish others to treat you, that’s how you should treat them. The word translated **treat** in the NASB is from the verb ποιεῶ and means “do.” That is why this is typically translated, “do unto others.” But the sense is essentially the same as when we say “treat.” And the most interesting thing to me is that it is according to what one wishes or desires. In other words, what would you want? How would you want someone to treat you? You would want someone to consider how you would want to be treated and to treat you that way. So the rule is we should consider how others would want to be treated and treat them that way. This is putting the other person’s considerations ahead of our own. In other words, this is not treating them as you want to be treated. Maybe you want to be left alone so you apply this by leaving others alone. But that is not the golden rule. The golden rule is to consider how the other person wants to be treated and to treat them accordingly. A very important difference.

In verse 32, 33, and 34 Jesus presents a series of examples of how we might treat others, and asks how that is different from the world. His point is to show that the disciple’s love is to be different from the world’s. The key phrase in each example is, “What credit is that to you?” In the first one He discusses how we love. **If you love those who love you, what credit is that to you? For even sinners love those who love them.** The words **If you love** are in the Greek εἰ + the indicative signifying a first class condition. The first class condition is assumed to be true for the sake of argument and sometimes translated “since.” Perhaps it’s better to translate, “Since you love those who love you, what credit is that to you?” It is assumed that people do this. But if you do, what **credit is that to you.** The Greek word translated **credit** is χάρις, which is often translated “grace.” The question Jesus is asking is, “How is that being gracious of you if you love those who love you?” You haven’t been gracious at all. Grace is showing someone unmerited favor. But if you love someone who loves you that is merited love. You have not shown grace. And therefore, it is of no credit to you. There is nothing deserving of reward. Jesus says, **even sinners love those who love them.** That is not something difficult to do. The phrase **sinners** is from οἱ ἁμαρτωλοὶ. With the definite article it seems to refer to a class of people,

probably Gentiles and Jewish bad boys and girls like tax collectors and harlots. But in general Jesus probably just has in mind the world, and nothing technical. The world does that, so for a disciple to do only that means he has not risen above the world.

In verse 33 the second example, **If you do good to those who do good to you, what credit is that to you? For even sinners do the same.** Here again, what gracious thing are you doing for others if you do good to them who did good to you. There is nothing of value for doing that. The people of this world do the same thing. Certainly the goodness of the disciple should be more than the world and a remarkable expression that causes heads to turn and take notice.

In verse 34 the third example, **If you lend to those from whom you expect to receive, what credit is that to you? Even sinners lend to sinners in order to receive back the same amount.** Again, there is nothing remarkable about lending to people you expect to pay you back. There can be no reward for that kind of action because you have shown no grace. Even unbelievers do this kind of action. The whole point of these three verses is to highlight that the disciple's love is to excel beyond the love of the world. If we're only scratching someone's back so that they will scratch ours, we haven't risen above the ethics of the flesh. And if we're not rising above the flesh, we're not showing grace and we're not earning any reward. Therefore, the way of the disciple is to give without strings attached.

In verse 35 he describes the love of a disciple, and the end result of this great love. **But love your enemies,** a repeat of verse 27. Love those who hate you and are hostile to you. **And do good** to them and **lend** to them, **expecting nothing in return.** In other words, do these things with no strings attached. Do simply because you want to do. Let there be no hidden agendas or ill-will if nothing is done in return. Simply do because you want to do. How the other person responds is irrelevant. That is the love of a disciple.

If we love in this way, do good in this way and lend in this way, then verse 35b describes how God will respond. **Your reward will be great, and you will be sons of the Most High; for He Himself is kind to ungrateful and evil men.** God responds in two ways. First, by dispensing **great reward.** Reward is μισθος and refers to "remuneration for work done." The work done is that love which was given with no expectation of return, the doing good to others with no strings attached, the lending to others solely because you want to. Work that goes above and beyond deserves **great reward.** Reward is described at times as crowns and at other times as praise. Ultimately there is some verbal praise given and some authority to reign in the kingdom. Rewards, of course, are given only to believers and contribute nothing to going to heaven. The second way God responds is by assigning us **sons of the Most High,** that is as "sons of God." Because we love like He loves we show that we are His sons. We are imitating Him. Because we imitate Him He declares us to be **sons of the Most High.**

Lastly is stated the reason we are called sons, **For He Himself is kind to ungrateful and evil men.** And if God is this way toward them, then we should be this way toward them. Put in the terms of 1 John 4:19, "We love because God first loved us." The kind of love spoken of there is love for one's enemy, not merely the love of the world that loves with thought of return. The bottom line is we are to be like Him. This is the only way that God will look upon what we have done as something special that deserves to be rewarded.

In summary, in verses 27-28 we have four commands. He commands those who hear with responsiveness, that is, His disciples, to love your enemies, do good to those who hate you, bless those who curse you and pray for those who mistreat you, all uncharacteristic responses that should be characteristic of a disciple. In verses 29-30 He gives four illustrations. Whoever slaps you on the cheek, offer him the other also, probably refers either to a physical slap or to a verbal insult, but not a punch to the face. And whoever robs you of your coat, do not withhold your shirt from him either, don't retaliate. In verse 30, give to everyone who asks of you, assuming there is need, simply give. And whoever takes away what is yours, do not demand it back, just let them keep it. In verse 31, the golden rule, treat others with the same consideration that you want them to give to you. In verses 32-34 three illustrations of the how the world treats others is of no value. If you love those who love you, what credit is that to you? For even the people of the world love those who love them. There is no distinguishing mark of the disciple if we don't have a greater love. In verse 33, If you do good to those who do good to you, what credit is that to you? For even sinners do the same. In verse 34, If you lend to those from whom you expect to receive, what credit is that to you? No credit, for even sinners lend to sinners in order to receive back the same amount. So rather than loving as the sinners, doing good as the sinners and lending as the sinners, follow verse 35, love your enemies, do good to them, lend to them and do so with no strings attached. This is the love of God Himself. And for doing so, your reward will be great and you will be called a son of God, manifesting the characteristics of your Father, for He Himself is kind to ungrateful and evil men, and we should be too.

In summary, what can we learn? That **disciples are to imitate the Father and not the world**. This is simple but it's something we have to keep coming back to. We are not here to see what we can get out of the world, but we are here to see what we can give the world. We are to display the love of God to the world and His love is not limited to those who are kind to Him and good, but it extends to all men, no matter what their response is to Him. That is because His love stems from His character and is not dependent on others. And so our love should stem from our character and not be dependent upon others. If we don't do this, how will we be distinguished from the world?

But how are we to apply these? Are we to apply these in a rigid, literal sense? Some reject this idea outright, claiming that it would never work. Others argue that Jesus must have been thinking of the ethics of another world, such as the kingdom, when things are very different. Still others think that the spirit of the commands are the main point, and that they are hyperbolic. That is, that they are exaggerations intended to shock the audience into a new way of thinking. This kind of approach seems best. The main thing is that disciples are to live very differently than the people of the world. The world can love those who love them, but we are to love those who hate us and are hostile to us. The world can lend money to others expecting to be repaid with interest, but we are to lend to others in need without expecting to be repaid at all. This is a very different ethic. How can we do this? The only way we can be ready to do this is explained by verse 35b, **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 Himself is kind to ungrateful and evil men.** So two things, two motives, one, looking forward to the great reward that He will give us, and the sonship that we will have, and also by looking at Him and who He is, that He is kind to ungrateful and evil men. A to what God has done for us, He loved us while we were yet enemies, and also to look forward to what He has in store for us, which is great reward.

6:27.1 “But” is a contrastive *αλλα*, contrasting those He just pronounced woe upon with His disciples who “hear.”
 “you who hear” is a present active participle referring to those who are listening to Him responsively. These would be His disciples.
 Jesus is exhorting them to love, but in a way that is difficult. It is distinguished from the love of the world.

summary Three commands in 27-28 followed by four illustrations in 29-30, then one command in 31 followed by three illustrations in 32-34 and lastly a command to love in 35.

6:20-49 Title
The Sermon on the Mount - based on location
The Sermon on the Plain - based on location
Christ's Authority to Interpret the Law - based on content

mountain One or Two Sermons
Primary argument for two sermons based on description of location (J. Vernon McGee), Matthew says on a mountain, Luke says they came down the and stood on a level place
Secondary argument for two sermons based on differences and omissions. Matthew is 111 verses and Luke is only 29. Matthew records only blessings while Luke also records woes.
Primary argument for one sermon based on the meaning of the Greek word translated "plain," which can refer to a plateau in a mountainous region
Secondary arguments involve similarities between Matthew and Luke

6:20.1 He turned his gaze toward His disciples.

6:20.1a Disciples (μαθητης) are "learners, pupils, apprentices." The discourse is primarily directed toward His disciples, which included His newly appointed apostles. However, it is also directed toward Jewish and twelve Gentile unbelievers who had come to see His works and hear His words (v 17)

6:20.2 There are four "blessed's"
Blessed (μακαριος) is from Hebrew *ashrei* which root means "joy and happiness."