



-- Read Luke 6:27-36

-- Pray

In Matthew 22:36, Jesus is asked, “Teacher, which is the greatest commandment in the Law?” Jesus replied: “‘Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind.’ This is the first and greatest commandment. And the second is like it: ‘Love your neighbor as yourself.’ All the Law and the Prophets hang on these two commandments.” (Matthew 22:37-40)

Since these two commandments of Christ are declared by Him to be the two greatest of all possible commandments, it should not surprise us to discover that they form the foundation of the sermon that is widely regarded as His most important sermon—that is, the Sermon on the Mount, which we have been studying over the past couple of months. And as we encounter verses 27-36 this morning, it is quite helpful to notice that we are now entering into the second of the three major sections of this classic sermon.

What I mean is this: The first third of Luke 6:20-49—verses 20-26—are Christ’s divine commentary upon the first and greatest commandment to, “*Love the Lord your God with all your heart, soul, and mind.*” In those seven verses that we have already studied, Jesus is explaining to His hearers what it really means to love Him with all that we are. In other words, Jesus is telling us what loving God best really looks like.

First, in verses 20 and 24 He tells us that loving God best means coming to Him with sincere poverty of spirit. It means recognizing and confessing that we utterly lack the resources of righteousness needed to purchase God’s favor.

Second, in verses 21 and 25, we see that loving God supremely means coming to Jesus with an insatiable hunger for the holiness that we lack. Indeed, God's people are those whose spirits long for the righteousness and redemption of Christ every bit as much as our physical bodies long for food.

Third, in the second part of verses 21 and 25, Jesus is telling us that loving God above all else means that we will be genuinely broken over our sin. To be sure, anyone who willfully persists in obvious and unflinching sinfulness simply cannot and should not claim to love God best. People in that state clearly love their sin more than their Savior. Rather, those who adore God will come to place of mourning over the sin for which Christ gave His life on the cross.

Finally, verses 22, 23, and 26 indicate that those who really love God best are people who are willing to follow Jesus wherever He leads and do whatever He commands regardless of the consequences. We are those who will willingly suffer the exclusion, rejection, and insults of this world for the sake of our Savior and for the glory of His name.

Thus, we can see how this first section of this great sermon of Christ corresponds to the first and greatest commandment to *Love the Lord our God with all our heart, soul, mind, and strength*. The second section is comprised of verses 27-42, and these verses correspond to what Jesus has told us is the second greatest of all possible commandments, which is this: *"Love your neighbor as yourself."* Therefore as we engage this portion of this great sermon, we will hear Christ describing what it really means to obey this second of the two greatest commandments.

Yet, before we engage our verses for today about loving our neighbors as ourselves, let us look briefly ahead to the third section of Jesus' sermon, found in verses 43-49. In this section, Christ is emphasizing something to which we ought to pay very careful attention: He is stressing that the descriptions He has given about loving God (verses 20-26) and about loving others (verses 27-42) are *necessary* characteristics of true believers. In other words, Jesus is saying that we are able to determine our true spiritual condition by evaluating our lives against the descriptions He has set forth in the preceding verses.

We are blessed to remember the point that I have so often stressed about the Sermon on the Mount—that it is not primarily about ethics, but rather about salvation. In fact, as we have noted, this classic sermon of our Lord is probably the most definitive sermon Jesus ever preached about identifying who is and who is

not part of His kingdom. Thus, this sermon forever stands as the ultimate litmus test for true conversion in Christ.

Look ahead with me at the first part of this third section in verses 43-44. In them, Jesus alludes to this very point, saying, “*No good tree bears bad fruit, nor does a bad tree bear good fruit. Each tree is recognized by its own fruit.*” He makes the same point again in verses 46-49 with the Parable of the Wise and Foolish Builders, stressing that the wise person is the one who not only hears His words, but also puts them into practice. Therefore, as we encounter this second section of Christ’s classic sermon today, we do well to realize that, in it, Christ is presenting us with yet another signal of sincere salvation.

You know, there really is a lot we could say about this text, for it is fully loaded with powerful, challenging, and potentially confusing instruction. But as we consider these words of Christ, let us not forget that they reveal signs of salvation more than mere moral principles. In other words, while these verses do have a lot to say about Christian ethics, they have a lot more to say about an authentically Christian attitude. They paint a challenging picture of the general outlook that should exist in the heart of every true believer. And as we consider what it really means to love our neighbors as ourselves, I think we will discover that the attitude God requires of us and inspires within us is this: selflessness.

-- Video – “It’s All about Me”

Although it is quite ridiculous, that video really does a great job of capturing the default condition of the human heart apart from regeneration in Christ. In its natural state, the human heart is really quite selfish. It generally wants what it wants, how it wants, when it wants... and it usually wants it right now. Our intrinsic mindset without Christ is the mindset of a master—not that of a servant—and in that mindset we tend to harbor a relentless focus upon ourselves and the service of ourselves. Not only so, but we are innately driven to pursue self-recognition and chase after self-exaltation, and we desire to control all things and use all things for the advancement of our own glory. Jeremiah 17:9 says it best, declaring, “*The heart is more deceitful than all else and is desperately sick; who can understand it?*”

We are all born in sin, and that sin makes us inherently selfish. For example, consider infants and toddlers: No one has to teach them to act selfishly; they come by it naturally. This truth of human nature makes Christ’s description of the

redeemed all the more demanding. It reveals just how different we are supposed to be and how differently we are supposed to act.

Christ calls us to a standard of love that is simply not humanly possible, and that is its most remarkable trait. For when we sincerely love as Christ loved, we know that we are driven by the Holy Spirit, and not mere human motivation. This is why 1 John 4:7-8 says, “*Everyone who loves has been born of God and knows God. Whoever does not love does not know God, because God is love.*” And what we see here in our text for today, as well as the entire corpus of Scripture, is that the hallmark of this supernatural love is selflessness.

Selflessness is the radically uncommon characteristic of the redeemed in Christ. As we look at the tremendously challenging commands that Christ sets forth in this text, we are blessed to note that they all have one thing in common: They all require a sincerely selfless spirit. In other words, the only way that you, or I, or anyone else can even make sense of them—let alone obey them—is if we have been gifted by God with the “It’s-not-about-me” mentality of Christ. Indeed, just as Jesus sets forth in this teaching, the “It’s-not-about-me” mentality is one of the chief characteristics that separates God’s people from the people of the world.

Let us see how this selflessness shows up in our verses this morning. First, in verses 27-29 and then again in verse 35 we read Christ’s command to love our enemies. Here we see a repudiation of personal retaliation, and it can only be born of a selfless spirit. Whereas pride says, “Put up a fight,” the selflessness that Christ commands maintains a posture of goodwill toward everyone, including our enemies. You see, the person who cannot be satisfied until he “gets even,” cannot claim to possess the Spirit of Christ, for Christ gave His very life to forgive all of our countless transgressions against Him.

As Romans 5:8 declares, “*God demonstrates his own love for us in this: While we were still sinners, Christ died for us.*” Jesus did not seek vindication against us based upon our many transgressions against His holiness. Rather, He paid history’s greatest price to bless us who had sinned against Him. Therefore, like Christ, we ought to be devoted to doing what is good and right to others, even those who have wronged us.

Listen, as believers in Jesus Christ we have been given a glorious and eternal redemption from sin and its horrible consequences. In Christ, you and I have been justified before our holy and almighty God by the mercy of Jesus Christ who suffered and died for us. Furthermore, we serve over a God who is not fooled. He

is not blind, uncaring, or indifferent about sin. He sees, and He has promised that His perfectly righteous standard will unquestionably come to bear upon every evil and injustice. Why, then, do we so often feel as though we have to retaliate against every person who wrongs us? Why do we try to even the score in order to feel justified and vindicated? Moreover, when we do retaliate in the flesh, what are we expecting to win?

Romans 12:19-21 echoes this instruction from Christ, saying, “*Do not take revenge, my friends, but leave room for God's wrath, for it is written: ‘It is mine to avenge; I will repay,’ says the Lord. On the contrary: ‘If your enemy is hungry, feed him; if he is thirsty, give him something to drink. In doing this, you will heap burning coals on his head.’ Do not be overcome by evil, but overcome evil with good.*” You see, the Christian should remember that God will sort out all of the judgments and rewards in the great Day of Judgment to come. He has promised that He will do just that, and I need to leave room for Him to do what He has promised.

Moreover, this verse assures us that we have been rescued from selfish impulse to vindicate ourselves, and we have been freed to say “I praise You, Lord, that this relationship with my enemy is not about me!” By God’s grace, we have been empowered to be selfless, even toward our enemies. How, then, am I really able to love my enemies? By remembering that my relationship with them is ultimately not about me. Rather, it is about God bringing glory to Himself and to His kingdom through the Christlike love He is inspiring in me.

Next, in verses 30-35, we hear Christ’s commands about sacrificial giving. These instructions call us to selflessness by urging us to remember that people are always more important than things. Of course, there is nothing inherently wrong with most of the things that we have. However, we have not been left here on earth as Christ’s servants for the purpose of accumulating stuff on earth or clinging to it with all our might. No, as we have said, our two greatest purposes are to love God supremely with all that we are, and to love others selflessly. Consequently, we are called by God to use our worldly wealth to fulfill the two Great Commandments.

Thus, we see in Christ’s words here strict admonishment against elevating stuff above relationships. In verse 30 He says, “*Give to everyone who asks you, and if anyone takes what belongs to you, do not demand it back,*” and in verses 34 and 35, we hear Christ’s call to lend to others without demanding repayment. Now, this doesn’t mean that we should constantly engage in transactions in which we

know we know we will be swindled. However, it does mean that our love for other people, even for our enemies, must always surpass our attachment to things. It means that we should use whatever we have to bless others for God's glory, and that we prayerfully avoid regarding people according to what we think we can get out of them.

As God's people, we must remember that we have been granted an *eternal* home filled with *everlasting* riches in God's perfect kingdom. Not only that, but God has already promised to give us more good things than we could ever even think to ask or imagine. Knowing this, do we really need to get ahead in this world at the expense of others?

You see, these truths from God's Word give us the power and the position to say selflessly, "This life is not about me! This situation is not ultimately about me! Not even my stuff is really about me!" Christ's commands to love our enemies and to be willing to give sacrificially powerfully remind us that God has left us here to be a blessing other people, not to bow down to every selfish whim. As Christ's servants we are made gloriously free to say, "How can I be a blessing to you today," and He calls us to carry such an attitude forward in all of our relationships, even with those who set their faces against us. People will live forever, our stuff won't. Thus, let us always heed Christ's call to value that which is eternal—people—over that which will spoil and perish—the things of this world. We have already been given all things in Christ; let us, then, act like it!

Allow me to close this morning with this thought of application: These commands of Christ imply more than a mere *attitude* of selflessness; they demand that we intentionally engage in selfless *actions*. We are all blessed to notice that Christ's directive in verse 31, which we call "The Golden Rule" is not passive, but active. It does not say, "Do *not* do to others as you would *not* have them do to you." Rather, Jesus says, "**Do** to others as you would have them do to you." Thus, Jesus' command does not mean that we should avoid doing wrong as much as it means we should actively engage in doing what is good. In other words, we cannot love our neighbor on accident. A lifestyle of Christlike love can only be lived on purpose.

Not only that, but Christ's call in these verses summons us to go the extra mile. In verse 32, Jesus says, "*If you love those who love you, what credit is that to you? Even 'sinners' love those who love them,*" and in verse 34, He says, "*If you lend to those from whom you expect repayment, what credit is that to you? Even 'sinners' lend to 'sinners,' expecting to be repaid in full.*" True Christian love, you see, is

based upon doing the extra thing, for it is not our neighbors by whom we must gauge our conduct. We may very well compare very favorably in that regard. However, it is the Lord Jesus Christ by whom we must evaluate ourselves; and that comparison reveals a very challenging life of love that is only possible through His life at work in you and me.

With all of this in mind, let me ask you: To whom do you need to show the love of Christ in your life? Is there an enemy you need to reach out to and bless? // What evidence is there in your life that people are more important to you than things? // Is there someone to whom you need to give sacrificially today? It is not enough to think good thoughts for others. The command of Christ calls us to bless them with actions as well as thoughts. Do your thoughts and actions toward others reveal Christ at work in you?