

## **“Are You Living Like a Child of God?”**

### **Luke 6:27-36**

Once again, before we begin to work through this passage I want to draw your attention to the end of verse 35 and verse 36. After giving all the moral instruction found in the earlier verses of this text Jesus said at the end of verse 35, [If you do these things] “ye shall be the children of the Highest, for he is kind unto the unthankful and to the evil. Be ye therefore merciful, as your Father also is merciful.”

This passage doesn't just teach good morals. Jesus wasn't simply teaching the golden rule and then applying that to different circumstances in life. In this passage Jesus taught that this is how we must act toward those around us because this is the nature of God. God is kind to the unthankful and the evil. God is merciful. Are we emulating the kindness demonstrated by our heavenly Father? Are we showing mercy? Are we living like the children of God? God wants us to live like we are his children.

### **I. Context and Review**

Let's first quickly remind ourselves about the wider context of this passage. Jesus was preaching in the countryside of Galilee to a large multitude of people. And this multitude was a mix of both believers and unbelievers in three distinct

groups. There was the general multitude made up of people from throughout Judaea, Jerusalem, and the coast of Tyre and Sidon. There was the group of committed followers of Jesus, his disciples. This was a fairly large group at this time. And finally there were the twelve who had just been chosen and called as apostles. And we noted in the last sermon that there were unbelievers in each one of these groups. The multitudes would ultimately turn on Jesus and demand his crucifixion. Many of the disciples would turn away when the teachings of Jesus became hard to accept. And even among the twelve, one was a traitor. Many of these people were not living like the children of God because they were not God's children.

One application for us from this text is a call to self-examination. Is there spiritual life within me that is responding in obedience to what Jesus taught in this passage? Am I living like a child of God? And if not, then we must examine ourselves on an even deeper level and ask, "Am I a true child of God? Have I ever been born-again by the Spirit of God?" May each one of us take seriously this call to self-examination.

This text is also a call to repentance. None of us can honestly look at this text, plumb the depths of Christ's words found here, and say, "All of this I have done perfectly." Each one of us should be challenged and convicted from this text and be moved to repentance and a renewed desire to walk in obedience to Christ's commands.

And finally, this text indicates the degree of suffering Christians should be willing to endure for the sake of Jesus Christ. Remember when we looked at the “blessed” statements found in verses 20-23 and we saw that those had a first-line application to those who suffered for the “Son of man’s sake,” for Jesus sake. This is not a new sermon. Jesus was still talking to the same group of people. The context has not changed. The suffering and self-denial described in our text should be willingly and even gladly taken up by every believer for the Son of man’s sake. In our flesh, we recoil from some of the things Jesus says in these verses. But we bear this burden out of obedience to Jesus Christ and for His name’s sake.

The last time we were in this text, we focused on the first part of this passage and the command found in verse 31 often referred to as the Golden Rule: “As ye would that men should do to you, do ye also to them likewise.” Jesus laid out this overarching principle that was to guide the lives of his disciples: “As ye would that men should do to you, do ye also to them.” This command from Jesus Christ is unqualified: You are to treat your family, your friends, your neighbors, and even your enemies this way. This command from Jesus is rooted in justice and not in identity. And finally, this command from Jesus requires that we lay down our lives. And as we saw that in all of this, Jesus is our perfect example.

That’s the context and a little review from last time, now let’s continue to work through this passage. In verses 32-34 Jesus taught his disciples that they must have a righteousness greater than sinners.

## **II. A Righteousness Greater Than Sinners (v. 32-34)**

We must have a righteousness greater than sinners. Now, you might think this is rather obvious: Obviously we need a righteousness greater than sinners. But isn't this how we like to measure ourselves? We like to compare ourselves to others who we think are worse sinners than ourselves. Like the self-righteous Pharisee in Luke 18:11 who prayed, "God, I thank thee, that I am not as other men are, extortioners, unjust, adulterers, or even as this publican."

"Look at my righteousness. I love (those that love me). I do good (to those who do good to me). I lend (to those from whom I hope to receive)."

This is exactly how we like to measure our righteousness, we just don't put it as bluntly as Jesus does in this passage. We like to dress up our morality, put it in the best light possible, and pass it off as righteousness. In this passage Jesus challenged this measure of righteousness and showed that it is only the righteousness of sinners.

And there is something else we can glean from this passage: If we do not do these things: If we do not love those that love us. If we do not do good those who do good to us. If we do not lend to those from whom we hope to receive. If we do not do these things we don't even have the righteousness common to sinners. How often do we fall short of even human ideals of righteousness? How often do we fall short of even the righteousness of sinners?

Now let's look at the three examples Jesus gave in this passage. First, sinners love those that love them. Verse 32 says, "For if ye love them which love you, what thank have ye? for sinners also love those that love them." Love! And again, it's that strong word for love: agapao. This love is good. This love is commendable. This love is commanded from us as believers. This is a good thing. We would recognize this sort of love as a good thing. We know we should love.

But Jesus called upon his disciples to examine themselves further. Listen again to what Jesus said: "If you love them which love you, what thank have ye?" This word that is translated as "thank" in the KJV is most often translated elsewhere in the New Testament as "grace." That might help us understand better what Jesus was saying here. When we love those that love us we are often tempted to look upon that as a good thing that we have done. And it is a good thing. We ought to love those that love us.

But Jesus said, "What thank have ye?" What grace do you have? What benefit is this to you? What sort of evidence is this of grace in your hearts?

And then Jesus immediately answered his own question: "Sinners also love those that love them." Sinful men know how to do this and they know that they ought to do this. If you perfectly love those that love you, you have hit par for a sinner. And I know that there is not a single one of you that has done this perfectly. I have not done this perfectly. We don't even have the righteousness of sinners. Where is our righteousness? Our best righteousness is not enough.

Have you ever heard someone say, “Mr. So-and-so is a good man. He really loves his wife and children.” That’s good. That ought to be. A man should love his wife and children. But Jesus says, “That’s not enough. Don’t think that counts in your favor with God. That’s the righteousness of sinners, and it’s not enough.” It’s not enough.

Next, sinners do good to those who do good to them. Look at verse 33, “And if ye do good to them which do good to you, what thank have ye? for sinners also do even the same.” The format of this question is exactly the same as the question in verse 32. The only difference is this verse talks about doing good instead of loving.

To “do good” is a very broad word which carries the idea of doing a favor or duty for the benefit of another.<sup>1</sup> It is a good thing to “do good.” And sometimes we pride ourselves in the good we do.

But again, the words of Jesus Christ challenge us to examine ourselves on a deeper level. To whom do I do good? To those that do good to me? What good is that? What benefit is that to you? What sort of evidence is that of grace in your heart?

Again, Jesus answered this question: “Sinners also do even the same.” If you do good to everyone who does good to you, and you do that perfectly, your whole

---

<sup>1</sup> *Expository Dictionary of New Testament Words Good* D.1. and also *Strong’s*

life, you have achieved the righteousness of sinners. It's not enough. God calls us to a higher righteousness.

Sinners lend to sinners when they expect to get their money or goods back. Look at verse 34, "And if ye lend to them of whom ye hope to receive, what thank have ye? for sinners also lend to sinners, to receive as much again." Again, Jesus used the same pattern for this question as the two verses before.

If you recall, in the Law the Jews were forbidden from exacting usury, high interest rates, from fellow Jews. Now, this was a law frequently disobeyed by the Jews. If you read through the prophets you see many times where God speaks against the rich and their abuse of the poor. The sin that God was condemning was usury. But a practice developed among devout Jews where sometimes they would lend money or goods to fellow Jews and not collect any interest. They would lend with the expectation to only receive back as much as they had lent. And this was seen as a morally good thing because they were forgoing the interest they could have earned if they had given that lone to someone else. And that practice may have been at least a part of what Jesus was referring to here.

But again, Jesus challenged this measure of righteousness. Don't sinners do the same? Sinners sometimes lend to others with the hope of only receiving back what they had lent. There is no righteousness to be found in this lending practice other than the righteousness of sinners. In fact, if you always and only lended this

way, all you would only achieve the righteousness of sinners. That's no good. It's not enough. That's not God's righteousness.

What conclusion did Jesus come to? What did Jesus tell his disciples? Look at the first part of verse 35, "But love ye your enemies, and do good, and lend, hoping for nothing again." Love, do good, and lend. All three of the things Jesus had talked about earlier are repeated in this verse. We are called to love. We are called to do good. We are called to lend, to be generous. But what separates these actions when performed by the disciples of Jesus Christ is their object. Sinners love those that love them, do good to those who do good to them, and lend to those from whom they expect to receive again. Disciples of Jesus Christ are told to love their enemies, to do good to their enemies, and to lend hoping for nothing in return.

Don't confuse man's righteousness with God's righteousness. They may look very similar at a glance, but when closely examined we see that man's righteousness is only a faint shadow of God's righteousness. They are similar in action, but opposite in object. And the righteousness of sinners is worth nothing before God. There is nothing thankworthy in it. It is no evidence of grace. It earns you no favor with God. You must have the righteousness of God.

We must pause here to make application to ourselves. We must answer this question: Where can we get God's righteousness? There is only one place: the cross of Jesus Christ.



Our works are not enough. We don't even perfectly fulfill the righteousness of sinners. If sinful men can find fault in us, how much more can God find?

We need an alien righteousness. A righteousness that's foreign. A righteousness that is not native to us. And it can't be the righteousness of another man. We have already seen that man's righteousness is not enough. It must be God's righteousness, and that can only come from Jesus Christ. Jesus died on the cross to make the substitutionary atonement for our sin. That means He took our place. He was our substitute. Because of the gospel, the life, the death, and the resurrection of Jesus Christ, his righteousness, God's perfect righteousness, is freely available to us. In salvation, our sins are laid upon Jesus Christ and his righteousness is given to us.

We must have God's righteousness, and that righteousness is only available through Jesus Christ. Your righteousness is not enough. Cast it aside. Turn from it. Repent. And turn in faith to Jesus Christ. Ask Him for His righteousness. He will not turn you away. Jesus said in John 6:37, "All that the Father giveth me shall come to me; and him that cometh to me I will in no wise cast out." And once you are in Christ, once you are a Christian, then you are to live as a child of God.

If you are a Christian, don't find any comfort in the righteousness of sinners. In loving only those who love you. In doing good only to those who do good to you. In lending only to those from whom you hope to receive.

As children of our heavenly Father, we are to reflect Him to the world. We are to love our enemies. We are to do good to our enemies. We are to lend, hoping for nothing in return. We are to live like the children of God.

But you say, “If I live like that people might take advantage of me. I’ll be hurt. I’ll suffer.”

Yes. “All that will live godly in Christ Jesus shall suffer persecution.” (II Timothy 3:12) Jesus Christ our Lord suffered, are we better than he? We are called to live as the children of God. There are times when it will be very hard. There are times when we will suffer. But this is the instruction Jesus gave to his disciples. We are to live like the children of God in this world.

How many times have we read these words from Jesus and never plumbed their depths? May the Holy Spirit of God convict us for taking comfort in the righteousness of sinners, drive us to the cross of Jesus Christ for His righteousness, and then enable us by his grace to go out and live as we are called to live: as the children of God. This sort of life gives evidence that we really are God’s children. Look at the second part of verse 35 and verse 36.

### **III. In Evidence that We are Children of God**

In verse 35 we are told: “Your reward shall be great.” What is the reward Jesus promised in this verse? It could be referring to only what comes immediately before it in verse 35, that instruction to lend hoping for nothing again. God takes

note of generosity and sacrificial giving. It's not a promise of any sort of temporal reward, but your Father in heaven sees and He will reward you in His time.

It could also be referring to all the previous instruction: love your enemies, do good, and lend hoping for nothing again. Such sacrifice is promised a heavenly reward. The righteousness of this world, can earn you rewards, but they are the rewards of this world. And like everything else, they are passing away.

But the reward for walking in God's righteousness is an eternal reward. A reward that cannot be lost. A reward that will never pass away. A reward secured and laid up for us by God himself.

Next, verse 35 says, "And ye shall be the children of the highest." This does not mean that living like this *makes* us the children of God, but rather it *marks* us as the children of God. You can only be made a child of God through faith in the finished work of Jesus Christ. But you demonstrate your adoption into God's family, you demonstrate that you are God's child, by your manner of life. This is how a child God ought to live. Why? Because this is God's nature.

Look and be astounded at what is revealed here about the nature of God. In verse 35 God is called "the Highest," or "the Most High." Luke is the only New Testament author who uses this word as a title for God. This a very common title used for God in the Old Testament. And it is often used to demonstrate or draw attention to God's superiority over the false gods of pagan nations. And I wonder if Luke, potentially the only Gentile author of Scripture, writing to Theophilus who

was almost certainly a Gentile, used this title for God: “Highest,” or “Most High” for similar effect. To demonstrate or draw attention to God’s superiority over the false gods of the pagan nations. He is the Most High God and there is none other worthy of worship. He is the Highest. And what does the most high God do from His supreme position? Look at the end of verse 35.

“He is kind unto the unthankful and the evil.” What a description of God and his dealings with man. God is kind. This word is also translated as “good” and “gracious” in other places in the New Testament. Consider this for a moment: the most high God is kind. He is good. He is gracious.

And to whom is God kind? God is kind to the unthankful and evil. I believe this is one of the most astounding revelations found in Scripture, delivered from the mouth of Jesus Christ: God is kind to the unthankful and evil. Every sort of sinner is described here. The unthankful— those who sin by omission, by not doing what they should. And evil— those who sin by commission, by doing what they should not. The Greek word that is used here for evil particularly indicates evil that “causes labor, pain, or sorrow.”<sup>2</sup> The sin of man causes much labor, pain and sorrow for man. But it is also a burden to God. The sin of man grieves God.

All men fall into the categories described here. You are unthankful. You are evil. You might take offense to that. You might say, “No I’m not. I’m a good man.” Are you? How do you know? You might say, “Well, I’m not like this guy.” “I

---

<sup>2</sup> *Expository Dictionary of New Testament Words*, Evil 2.

haven't done the sort of evil things this person has done." That's worthless. That measure of righteousness is no good. If you are perfect in comparison to other men and in the estimation of men, congratulations, you have the righteousness of sinners. And as we have already seen from this passage this morning, that's worthless. And you don't even have that righteousness. You are not perfect in the eyes of man much less in the eyes of God. You are unthankful. You are evil. I am unthankful. I am evil. What hope can we possibly have?

None whatsoever, except for this: the most high God is kind to the unthankful and to the evil. Matthew Henry commented, "It is the glory of God that he is *kind to the unthankful and to the evil*, [that He] bestows the gifts of common providence even upon the worst of men, who are every day provoking him, and rebelling against him, and using those very gifts to his dishonor."<sup>3</sup> God is kind to the unthankful and the evil.

Now look at verse 36: "Be ye therefore merciful as your Father also is merciful." What does this verse tell us about God? The most high God is merciful. God delights in mercy. The mercy of God draws sinners to Him.

Listen to how God described himself in Exodus 34:6-7, "The Lord, The Lord God, merciful and gracious, longsuffering, and abundant in goodness and truth, Keeping mercy for thousands, forgiving iniquity and transgression and sin,

---

<sup>3</sup> Matthew Henry's commentary on this verse.

and that will by no means clear the guilty.” God gave six descriptions of His mercy and only one description of His judgment.

God’s mercy is one of the most eminent facets of His glory. In Exodus 33:18 Moses prayed to God and said, “I beseech thee, shew me thy glory.” And in verse 19 God answered, “I will make all my goodness pass before thee, and I will proclaim the name of the Lord before thee; and will be gracious to whom I will be gracious, and will shew mercy on whom I will shew mercy.” God’s glory is revealed in His mercy.

God’s mercy sweetens all his other attributes. God’s justice separated from His mercy would only be a terror. God’s strength separated from His mercy would only be to crush us. God’s holiness separated from His mercy would only magnify our guilt. But in God’s mercy shown to us His justice becomes our salvation in Jesus Christ, His strength instead of crushing us holds us up, and His holiness is imputed to us. All because of the mercy of God.

Woe to us if we despise the mercy of God.

And woe to us who are called the children of God, who have been shown so much mercy, woe to us if we are not merciful. “Be ye therefore merciful as your Father also is merciful.”

Are you living like a child of God? You may not be living like a child of God because you are not His child. There were many in the multitude who first heard this message from Jesus who were not His children. We have seen in these

verses the sharp contrast between man's righteousness, the righteousness of sinners, and the righteousness of God.

Your righteousness is not enough. You must become a child of God. And there is only one way to be a true child of God: through faith in the finished work of Jesus Christ. In John 14:6 Jesus told his disciples, "I am the way, the truth, and the life: no man cometh unto the Father, but by me." You must turn from yourself, turn from your sin, and turn to Jesus Christ for salvation. When we come in faith and repentance to Jesus Christ for salvation our sins are placed upon Him and His righteousness is given to us. You must become a child of God.

Once you are a Christian, adopted into the family of God, you must live like a child of God. We have new life in Christ. We were dead in trespasses and sins, but now we are alive in Christ. (Eph. 2:1) We are called to walk in newness of life. We are to follow the example of our Heavenly Father. The most high God is kind to the unthankful and evil.

Are you? Don't be satisfied and self-righteous when you show kindness to thankful and good. We are called to a higher life: a life of sacrifice, of self-denial, of suffering, of following Jesus Christ and His example in this world.

The most high God is merciful. Are you? Is mercy one of the guiding principles of your life? God is merciful. God glories in his mercy. "Be ye therefore merciful, as your Father also is merciful."