

## **“Why Call Me Lord”**

### **Luke 6:37-48**

As we come to the end of this message from Jesus we have a series of shorter teachings, parables, and illustrations. Everything that is recorded here is also found in Matthew’s gospel, some in Matthew 7, and some in other parts of that gospel account. Jesus gave these last few instructions on this occasion and then He challenged His hearers to obey.

This morning we are going to look at the teachings, parables, and illustrations found in this text, but I want our focus to be on this issue of obedience. Our title is taken from the words of Jesus in verse 46, “Why call me Lord, and do not the things which I say?” God wants us to hear His Word, receive it in faith, and then walk in obedience to Him.

#### **I. Christian Judgment (v. 37-38)**

“Judge not.” It may very well be that this verse, and particularly these first couple of words, have overtaken John 3:16 as the most well-known passage of Scripture in America. People might not know the reference, but they know these words are in the Bible: “Judge not.” Some people will use these words from Jesus as if they prohibit Christians from judging or exercising discernment or speaking

against sin on any level, but when we look at Scripture as a whole, we know that isn't true.

A great example is in I Corinthians 5. The church in Corinth actually thought they were doing good by not dealing with a very public and heinous sin in the church body. Paul spoke very firmly and directly on the issue. In I Corinthians 5:5-6 Paul wrote, "Deliver such an one unto Satan for the destruction of the flesh, that the spirit may be saved in the day of the Lord Jesus. Your glorying is not good. Know ye not that a little leaven leaveneth the whole lump?" And then in verses 11-13 Paul wrote, "I have written unto you not to keep company, if any man that is called a brother be a fornicator, or covetous, or an idolater, or a railer, or a drunkard, or an extortioner; with such an one no not to eat. For what have I to do to judge them also that are without? do not ye judge them that are within? But them that are without God judgeth. Therefore put away from among yourselves that wicked person."

There are many churches today that glory in not dealing with sin in the church. Like the church in Corinth, they think they are doing a good thing by not dealing with sin in the local church body That's not a good thing. That's the opposite of a good thing. Don't twist the words of Jesus to make an excuse for sin: your sin or the sin of someone else.

Some people take these words from Jesus, "Judge not," and say, "Don't you judge me. Only God can judge me." It has always puzzled me how anyone would

find any comfort in that thought. In an ultimate sense it is true, God is our Judge. And on the day of judgment no sin will be overlooked. There will be no mercy shown. If you think men are harsh in their judgments, imagine what it will be like to stand before the perfectly Holy God and given an account for your life. Apart from Jesus Christ there will be no hope in that day of judgment. But that's not what this verse is talking about.

People often miss-use or abuse this passage, but what is Jesus actually talking about in this verse? It ties in directly with what comes before it in this passage. Jesus was telling his disciples how they were to live. He said in verse 31, "As ye would that men should do to you, do ye also to them likewise." In verse 35, "But love ye your enemies, and do good, and lend, hoping for nothing again." In verse 36, "Be ye therefore merciful." And now, in verses 37 and 38 we see Jesus instructed his disciples to not judge or condemn and to have a forgiving and giving disposition. This is the same principle as was laid out in verse 32: Do unto others as you would have them do unto you.

How often do we need mercy from others? Very often. Then show that mercy to them. Judge not, and you will not be judged. Condemn not, and you will not be condemned. It's a two-way street. The principle laid out here is that if we are merciful to others we can better expect them to be merciful to us.

Now, where people often go wrong here is they say, "Oh, then I had better not talk about sin, because it is not my place to judge someone else." That is

correct, it is not your place to judge them. It is God's place, and all sinners are already under His condemnation. (Romans 5:18) When we warn against sin we are not judging that person, we are simply warning that this is the judgment that God has already pronounced. As a sinner, apart from the grace of God, I am under that same judgment. Flee from the wrath to come. Flee from God's judgment against sin to God's mercy which is found in the cross of Jesus Christ. When we speak against sin we are in no way violating the principles that Jesus laid down for his disciples in this passage.

These verses also talk about having a forgiving and giving disposition. If we forgive when we have suffered wrong or been injured by others, then we can better expect others to forgive us when we have wronged them.

And again, Jesus is laying out principles not rules. You may always forgive people, and you should, but that does not mean that you will always be forgiven by others. Generally, this is a true, but it is not a rule. But even if you do not receive the forgiveness that you show to others, you still benefit from following this principle. You benefit from walking in obedience to Jesus. And you benefit by being free from an un-forgiving spirit, free from bitterness

Next, Jesus called his disciples to generosity: "Give, and it shall be given unto you." If we are generous toward others, we can better expect others to be generous toward us. And like forgiving, we are to do this out of obedience to God and for his glory. That would be enough, but God has ordained the principle of

sowing and reaping. There is a general principle that you can expect to receive what you give. As a follow of Jesus Christ you are called to be generous to others as you would desire them to be generous to you.

The end of verse 38 says, “For with the same measure that ye mete withal it shall be measured to you again.” Once again, the same principle is repeated in slightly different language. Do unto others as you would have them do unto you. Judge not, and you shall not be judged. Condemn not, and you shall not be condemned. Forgive, and you shall be forgiven. Give, and it shall be given unto you.

And God has given us these principles for our benefit in guarding against sin and encouraging good works. Matthew Henry wrote, “Providence does not always go by this rule, because the full and exact retributions are reserved for another world, yet, ordinarily, it observes a proportion sufficient to deter us from all acts of rigor and to encourage us in all [good works].”<sup>1</sup>

After this exhortation on Christian judgment there is a series of three parables and illustrations.

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<sup>1</sup> Matthew Henry’s commentary on this passage.

## **II. Parables and Illustrations (v. 39-45)**

The first is the parable of the blind. Verse 39 says, “And he spake a parable unto them, Can the blind lead the blind? shall they not both fall into the ditch?” In this context it isn’t immediately clear who this parable was in reference to, but Jesus used the same parable in Matthew 15:14 where it is clear He was talking about the Pharisees.

Now let’s look at the parable itself: Can the blind lead the blind? Certainly, but it is dangerous. If you are blind and you are relying on a blind leader, you are liable to follow them as they fall. And that’s what Jesus says, “Both shall fall into the ditch.”

Now, Jesus was not commenting about physical blindness. He was illustrating the danger of following spiritually blind leaders. The Pharisees were spiritually blind, and if blind, could they be relied upon to lead the people into the light? No, of course not. They will lead the people to stumble in the same areas where they had stumbled.

And where did they stumble? Ultimately, in a rejection of Jesus Christ. They depended, and led the people to depend, on an outward morality. Such morality, as we saw last week, can often appear to us as righteousness. We like to mistakenly identify our good works as righteousness that pleases God. But our best morality is nothing more than the righteousness of sinners. And it’s no good in God’s eyes.

The Pharisees, as an organized religious group, are long gone, but the world is still full of blind leaders. Beware of following the blind lest you fall where they fall. When we use the opinions, standards, customs, and traditions of this world as our guide, we are following the blind. Turn from such folly lest you meet the same end to which this world is destined: destruction.

When I was studying this I thought of Justin Martyr who was a prominent Christian and apologist in the second century. When he was a young man, before he was saved, he was a student of philosophy. He travelled around visiting different schools of philosophy, but he was never satisfied with what he learned. And in the providential grace of God one day when he was walking along the seashore he met an old man and had a conversation with him. After hearing his story, the old man said to him, “The truth you wish to know about Creation, yourself, and God is found in Scripture and not in the schools of philosophers.”

And by the grace of God young Justin listened to this old man, was convinced of the truth of Scripture, was converted, and went on to be used by God in service to the church. He stopped following the blind, because someone who could see told him of the light.

We don't know the name of the old man. As far as we know, Justin Martyr never spoke to him again. All that he did was talk to a burdened young man and point him to the light. May God help us to be faithful with the spiritual light that has been given to us.

In verse 40 Jesus said, “The disciple is not above his master: but every one that is perfect shall be as his master.” Jesus used very similar language in Matthew 10:24. And in that context it is clear that Jesus was talking about Himself and his disciples. Disciples of Jesus Christ should not expect to receive better treatment in this world than Jesus Himself received.

But in our text it seems to tie in with the parable in verse 39. A disciple will not rise to a level above his master. If you are following the spiritually dead you will never be led to life. If you learn all you can from your master, you can only attain the level of your master. If your master is blind, the best you can be is blind. And so this illustrates the truth taught in verse 39.

This also is excellent reminder for Christians when applied to leaders in the church and in Christianity as a whole. Sometimes we get very attached to different people: pastors, teachers, writers, or other believers who have disciples us and invested in our lives. And there is nothing wrong with benefitting from other Christians in our time or those who have come before us. But there is always a danger of making an idol out of even a good thing. If we follow some other person, we will be prone to all the same faults, blindspots, and weaknesses they are prone to. We must always remember that we have only one Master, one Head of the Church, one ultimate authority: Jesus Christ. We benefit from fellow pilgrims as they walk with us and before us. In certain contexts we submit to the authority of other believers. We are called to respect and submit to spiritual authority which



God has ordained. But we follow Christ. Jesus Christ is who we strive to follow. And if we follow Him, we will not be led astray.

Next, Jesus gives the parable or example of the mote and plank (v. 41-42). In these verses Jesus taught his disciples that there must be humility and careful self-examination and correction before we try to rebuke or reform others. First, we are warned to be mindful of our own faults before we try to correct others. In verse 41 Jesus gives this exaggerated example of someone who is aware of a mote, or a speck, in his brother's eye, but is not aware of the beam in his own eye. And the word there for beam indicates a support beam, like one that would hold up the roof of a structure. So the image here is of a man walking along with a huge piece of lumber in his own eye, but what he sees and is concerned about is the speck in the eye of his brother. And Jesus asked, "Why do you behold the mote in his eye and not perceive the beam in your own eye?" Why are you concerned with your brother's relatively small problem when you have a major one yourself? Examine yourself carefully and recognize your own faults and your own needs before you try to correct your brother.

Next, we are reminded that we are not fit to help others if we have the same [or even worse] problem. Jesus asked, "How can you say to your brother, 'Let me help you.' When you have an even worse problem?" Jesus used very strong language here. He said, "You hypocrite." The Greek word for hypocrite refers to an actor who is playing the part of someone else. And so Jesus said, "You play-actor.

You pretender.” You are not genuine. You are not authentic. You are a fake. You hypocrite. We should not try to correct a problem in someone else that we have not corrected in our own life first.

And finally, if we want to help others, we must avail ourselves of the same help. What did Jesus say? “Take the beam out of your own eye, and then shalt thou see clearly to pull out the mote that is in thy brother's eye.” Take the beam out of your own eye first. Now, a lot of people will take this passage from Jesus use it to deflect correction from a brother or sister in Christ. They might say, “I know you’ve done this sin or that sin in your past. I know some of the problems you have had. Don’t you try to take the mote out of my life when you have a beam in your life.”

But is that what Jesus was saying here? Was Jesus teaching that because we are all sinners we cannot help correct each other? No.

Was Jesus teaching that we should not be concerned about our brother? No.

Jesus was teaching: don’t be a hypocrite. Don’t try to hold others to a standard that you don’t hold yourself.

Once again, we need to be very careful that we don’t twist the words of Jesus to excuse our sin or to excuse our apathy or to silence a brother or sister in Christ who is trying to help us. Sometimes we need a brother or sister in Christ who is willing to come to us and help us see an area where we are wrong and where we need correction.

I experienced that this week. This past week I said something that violated the principles that I stood up here and preached about last week. I said it thoughtlessly and I didn't think about it again until a brother came to me and said, "I don't know if this is what you meant, but this is what it sounded like to me and I think it was wrong." And he was Correct. It was what I meant, and it was wrong.

And I thought, "What's wrong with me? Why did I say that? I know better." And yet I still did it. It took a brother who was willing to come and talk to me for me to see it and to repent of it. This is one of the reasons it is so important to be involved in a local church body. We need other believers around us, who are involved in our lives, who can help us see areas where we need correction.

Next, Jesus taught that the true nature of a person is know by the fruit their lives produce (v. 43-45). Once again we see the principle of sowing and reaping that God has ordained in this world, in both the natural and spiritual realm. In verse 43 Jesus used an example from the natural world. A good tree does not produce corrupt fruit and a corrupt tree does not produce good fruit.

Jesus pointed out that this is how we judge trees. At the beginning of verse 44 Jesus said, "Every tree is know by his own fruit." Verse 44 continues this natural illustration. Trees are known by their fruit. Men do not go to a thorn tree for figs or a bramble to gather grapes. We know that it is not the nature of these plants to produce these fruits. We know these trees by the fruits they produce.

Then Jesus took this illustration from nature and made a spiritual application. In verse 45 Jesus indicates that this principle is true of men as well. Good men, out of the good that is in their hearts, produce good. Evil men, out of the evil that is in their hearts, produce evil. This is true as an overarching principle. Good men will, as a rule, produce good. Evil men will, as a rule, produce evil. As we saw last week, sometimes evil men can appear to do good. And as we know from personal experience, though saved and redeemed by the grace of God, sometimes we can produce evil. But the trajectory of the evil man trends only to evil and the trajectory of the good man, by the grace of God, trends to good.

This is an important principle because we have a problem when it comes to evaluating other people. We cannot see anyone else's heart. I can't see what is in your heart. You cannot see what is in my heart. How then can we recognize a good man, a man that has been transformed by the grace of God, and an evil man, a man still in his natural state, unregenerate and dead in sin? We can only evaluate them by the fruit their lives produce.

And this principle is also true in daily Christian living. The end of verse 45 has been especially convicting to me this week: "Of the abundance of the heart his mouth speaketh." What is in our hearts will come out of our mouths. What we fill our hearts with will come out in our lives.

As believers we need to ask ourselves, "What am I storing up in my heart?" If I'm filling myself with the things of this world in music, in media, in

entertainment, in the news, in what I read. If I'm filling myself with the world, worldly things are what will come out. If I'm filling my heart and mind with good, God-honoring things: godly music, good books, the Word of God, then good, God-honoring things are what will come out.

Remember the words of the Psalmist in Psalm 119:9-11, "Wherewithal shall a young man cleanse his way? by taking heed thereto according to thy word. With my whole heart have I sought thee: O let me not wander from thy commandments. Thy word have I hid in mine heart, that I might not sin against thee." We need to be careful with what we put into our hearts.

We have spent a lot of time talking about things Jesus instructed his disciples to do, not only in this sermon, but in the three previous sermons as well as we have gone through this message Jesus delivered beginning in Luke 6:20. Now we reach the end of this message from Jesus and we see He pressed home this issue of obedience. Knowledge alone is worthless. All the knowledge in the world does us no good if we will not obey.

You can hear all this instruction from Jesus, nod your head, and say, "Yes. This is true. This is good." You can call Jesus "Lord." But it is worthless if you will not obey what He says. At the end of this message, Jesus taught his disciples: "If you call Me Lord, do as I say."

### **III. If You Call Me Lord, Do As I Say (v. 46-49)**

To call Jesus “Lord, Lord” is a high confession. These words indicate supreme authority. To call Jesus “Lord” is to acknowledge His authority over you. To acknowledge that He has the right to command you as He wills, and that you are responsible to obey Him. It is a good thing to call Jesus Lord, but then Jesus continued.

“Why call ye me, Lord, Lord, and do not the things which I say?” This is strange indeed. Why acknowledge Jesus as Lord if you will not do as He says? The beautiful confession of “Lord, Lord” is worthless if it is not followed with actual submission and obedience to Jesus.

And Jesus went on to illustrate the difference between those who heard His words and obeyed Him, and those who heard His words, but did not obey. The last two verses describe two men who each built a house. When the houses were built, from the outside, they would have been indistinguishable. What separated these two houses were their foundations. One man dug down deep and laid his foundation on bedrock. The other man didn't bother with a foundation, he just built his house. And the difference between these two houses was shown when a storm came. The storm could not shake the house built upon the rock. But the house without a foundation fell immediately. It could not stand in the storm.

Remember who Jesus is talking to. There is a large multitude present. Crowds of people had come from Judea, Jerusalem, and the coast of Tyre and

Sidon. There was a large group of disciples, people who considered themselves committed followers of Jesus. And there were the 12 apostles who had just been called by Jesus before He began this sermon.

And Jesus knew what the future held. Jesus knew He was headed to the cross. Jesus knew there was a storm approaching that would shake the faith of people who were in that multitude. And Jesus knew that the majority of that crowd who gladly called Him “Lord, Lord,” would immediately be swept away. They would not stand in the storm. What was Jesus’ solution? What did Jesus tell them to do? Jesus told them, “If you call Me Lord, do as I say.”

I’m afraid that churches today are filled with people not unlike the multitude we read about in this text. Many people call Jesus “Lord,” when they have no intention and no desire to obey Him. That’s mockery. That’s no different than what the Roman soldiers did when they beat Jesus, then clothed Him in purple, crowned Him with thorns, and said, “Hail, King of the Jews!” (Mark 15:18)

There are many people who are glad to sit and listen to the words of Jesus, but who leave every week unchanged. Don’t be like that. Be like the wise man described in verse 48. Dig deeply into spiritual things. Labour hard in seeking the Lord and don’t stop until you find the Rock: Jesus Christ, the only firm foundation.

Don’t waste your time building a faith that looks fine on the outside but has no foundation. It’s worthless. It won’t last. The first storm that comes along will blow it down. Build your faith on Jesus Christ.

Call him Lord. Recognize and submit to His authority. Turn from any other master and kneel before Jesus in faith and repentance. Call him Lord.

Then listen to his Words. If you would know Christ, you must know His word. The word of God is where the will of God is revealed for us. Spend time in personal study of the Word of God. Spend time sitting under faithful teaching and preaching of the Word of God. Dig deeply into the Word of God. Listen to the words of Jesus.

And then obey. We are to think, speak, and act in obedience to the revealed will of God. We are to obey God in thought. We are to obey God in word. And we are to obey God in deed. Jesus calls His disciples, His followers, to obedience.

You may be listening to this and you are not a follow of Jesus Christ. You have never been born again. I would warn you: Take no comfort in merely hearing about Jesus. That will do you no good. That will not protect you in the day of judgment. That will do nothing to cleanse you of your sins.

It is not enough to simply hear the words of Jesus. You must receive Him. Not as a good teacher. Not as a historical figure. Not as a friend or buddy. But as Lord.

The way of salvation is not found simply in hearing about Jesus, but in looking to Him in faith and repentance. Repent and believe, and you will be saved, and then obey Jesus Christ as Lord.

“Why [do ye] call me, Lord, Lord, and do not the things which I say?”