

A Study in Luke

Week Ten

Luke 6:17-42

Day One

17 He went down with them and stood on a level place. A large crowd of his disciples was there and a great number of people from all over Judea, from Jerusalem, and from the coast of Tyre and Sidon, 18 who had come to hear him and to be healed of their diseases. Those troubled by evil spirits were cured, 19 and the people all tried to touch him, because power was coming from him and healing them all.

v. 17 – Jesus always made Himself available to the people, even if it meant that He had to stay up night to get His “prayer time” fulfilled. Here He came down to a level place where He could maximize His effectiveness. This is why I encourage people to be aggressive in fulfilling their purpose: Your purpose will help a lot of people and that is the will of God. I don’t quite understand a passive attitude when it comes to the things of God.

I have been to Israel on five occasions and I have been impressed with how far the people came to see Jesus and how long they stayed when they came. Travel wasn’t easy, so they didn’t come to see Him for one meeting and then go home. They stayed with Him at great discomfort and personal sacrifice. What price are you willing to pay to spend time with Jesus? How much time are you willing to invest? I suppose that depends on what you sense your needs are. So, how needy are you for a touch from Jesus?

v. 18 – I have been impressed during this study with the healing power that surrounded Jesus’ teaching ministry. Jesus’ crusades weren’t healing crusades, they were teaching missions. Yet His teaching released healing and deliverance. Since I do a lot of teaching, I am seeing that I could have the same results around what I do if I was open to it. That means that I must make some changes in how I minister, for too often I speak or teach and then depart without really “touching” the people. Jesus didn’t do that.

v. 19 – When people touched Jesus, a transaction took place. They received something. I want people to receive something from me when they “touch” me, whether it is actual touching or just an encounter where we speak or they hear me teach. Can you imagine what a mob scene it must have been for all the people to try and touch Jesus? But Jesus didn’t try to stop it. How accessible are you to people in your ministry? Can they “touch” you; are you available and vulnerable to them and their needs? Who can you touch today and what will they receive when you do? How can you increase the power in your life so that when people touch you they receive something in return? Real power is released when you function in your purpose. Do you know what your purpose is?

Day Two

20 Looking at his disciples, he said: "Blessed are you who are poor, for yours is the kingdom of God. 21 Blessed are you who hunger now, for you will be satisfied. Blessed are you who weep now, for you will laugh. 22 Blessed are you when men hate you, when they exclude you and insult you and reject your name as evil, because of the Son of Man.

v. 20 – Jesus then preached a sermon that we know today as “The Beatitudes.” You may want to read this same sermon in Matthew 6. As you read, you may ask, “Why are there differences in the two accounts?” First of all, Jesus was a traveling speaker. He could have given the same message in different towns and varied His presentation in each location. Second, the listeners could have heard different aspects of the message. Have you ever gone to a meeting with a group of people and afterward discussed what you heard? You will find that everyone heard something different, according to their needs or the work of the Holy Spirit in their lives at that particular point in time. The variations in no way call into question the inspired word of God as the Bible’s enemies try to point out.

v. 21 – When you are needy and desperate, you will find God—or rather, God will allow you to find Him. It is only when we recognize our deep need for God that we cry out to Him with all our hearts, and it is then that He reveals Himself to us. How hungry are you for God?

And **if** you *call out* for insight and *cry aloud* for understanding, and **if** you *look for it as for silver and search for it as for hidden treasure*, **then** you will understand the fear of the LORD and find the knowledge of God (Proverbs 2:3-5 emphasis added).

You cannot be passive and expect to find the answers from God that you need. The above verses from Proverbs talk about aggressively seeking God for what you need, like you were hunting for hidden treasure that you were guaranteed was somewhere in the vicinity of where you were searching.

v. 22 – I have been too concerned at times with what others have thought of me. The fact remains that I am *blessed* if people, even church people, say bad things about me because I am doing or saying what Jesus wants. But not only will men say bad things, they will also exclude and reject me. Jesus also said in John’s gospel:

"I do not accept praise from men, but I know you. I know that you do not have the love of God in your hearts. I have come in my Father's name, and you do not accept me; but if someone else comes in his own name, you will accept him. How can you believe if you accept praise from one another, yet make no effort to obtain the praise that comes from the only God?" (John 5:41-44).

Peter also wrote:

Who is going to harm you if you are eager to do good? But even if you should suffer for what is right, you are blessed. "Do not fear what they fear; do not be frightened." But in your hearts set apart Christ as Lord. Always be prepared to give an answer to everyone who asks you to give the reason for the hope that you have. But do this with gentleness and respect, keeping a clear conscience, so that those who speak maliciously against your good behavior in Christ may be ashamed of their slander. It is better, if it is God's will, to suffer for doing good than for doing evil (1 Peter 3:13-17).

Do you see it as a blessing to be rejected or criticized for Jesus' sake? Are you "holding back" something from God because you are afraid of what your family, friends or close associates will think or say? Are you bound up with fear or anxiety about doing the will of God? This may be a good day to "take stock" of whether or not you are more concerned with what men, even your pastor, may say instead of what God will say.

Day Three

23 "Rejoice in that day and leap for joy, because great is your reward in heaven. For that is how their fathers treated the prophets. 24 But woe to you who are rich, for you have already received your comfort. 25 Woe to you who are well fed now, for you will go hungry. Woe to you who laugh now, for you will mourn and weep. 26 Woe to you when all men speak well of you, for that is how their fathers treated the false prophets."

v. 23- Jesus instructed us to leap for joy when we are treated badly for God's sake. Perhaps you need to be reminded that suffering is part of following Jesus:

To this you were called, because Christ suffered for you, leaving you an example, that you should follow in his steps. "He committed no sin, and no deceit was found in his mouth." When they hurled their insults at him, he did not retaliate; when he suffered, he made no threats. Instead, he entrusted himself to him who judges justly. He himself bore our sins in his body on the tree, so that we might die to sins and live for righteousness; by his wounds you have been healed. For you were like sheep going astray, but now you have returned to the Shepherd and Overseer of your souls (1 Peter 2:21-25).

vs. 24-25 – We must not forget that there is another age to come when all accounts will be settled and eternal rewards be distributed. If everything doesn't get "evened out" in this age, God promises to do it in the age to come. Are you uptight that you were wronged and it doesn't look like the situation will ever be rectified? The good news is that it will be, but maybe not in this life. Can you trust the Lord for that? I hope you can, for otherwise you run the risk of losing your joy and peace as you focus on the inequities and injustice of the present age.

v. 26 – Some people think that I am against prophets or what's called the prophetic movement. I am not. But I think there are too many un-judged prophetic words and too many words that are impossible to judge for accuracy. If you are speaking for God, someone will get mad at you. If not, you are a false prophet, in danger of seeking praise from men.

“I am not seeking glory for myself; but there is one who seeks it, and he is the judge” (John 8:50).

Jesus replied, "If I glorify myself, my glory means nothing. My Father, whom you claim as your God, is the one who glorifies me" (John 8:54-55).

“He who speaks on his own does so to gain honor for himself, but he who works for the honor of the one who sent him is a man of truth; there is nothing false about him” (John 7:18-19).

How willing are you to be criticized, to take an unpopular stand for Jesus? It is never easy to do, especially among those we know and love.

Day Four

27 "But I tell you who hear me: Love your enemies, do good to those who hate you, 28 bless those who curse you, pray for those who mistreat you. 29 If someone strikes you on one cheek, turn to him the other also. If someone takes your cloak, do not stop him from taking your tunic. 30 Give to everyone who asks you, and if anyone takes what belongs to you, do not demand it back. 31 Do to others as you would have them do to you."

v. 27 – This is a straightforward command: do good to your enemies! Why? The answer is found below in verse 35—because that's what God does. He is kind and gracious to His enemies and He wants us to be the same. We don't know anyone's heart like God. Someone may be doing cruel things, but we don't know why. They may actually be closer to repentance than we realize. A reaction from us could turn them away from God and ruin the work that grace was doing in their life. Your kindness to your enemies will do one of two things: Win them to Christ or confirm the judgment they are under for their sins. But whatever happens, you must leave those two options in God's hands and not take matters into your own. Vengeance belongs to God, for He alone can judge righteously.

v. 28 – A lot of discipline is required not to respond in kind to someone who mistreats us. Our un-Godlike behavior is never justified by the behavior of someone else toward us. We must not react to their cruelty; we must respond to their need for God. I have known the Lord for 31 years and I still struggle with a proper response to those who mistreat me. Help me, Lord. Make me like Jesus.

v. 29 – I think Martin Luther King understood these principles very well as he led the American civil rights movement in the 60's. He advocated passive resistance to violence and worked through peaceful means, even when people abused and even killed his followers (and eventually him as well). The power of his non-resistance brought down a wicked segregationist system. Even those whom Dr. King helped at various times criticized him, yet he seldom responded. And today he is hailed as a great leader. Why? Because he carried out what Jesus said to do. God's ways work!

v. 30 – I am trying to get through these verses quickly, because I am so pitiful in carrying them out myself. I am hardly qualified to teach others. I don't always give to those who ask me and I can be very attached to my "stuff," especially if someone borrows something and doesn't return it, or returns it in worse shape than when I gave it to them. I get angry when the dry cleaner ruins a shirt or when someone opens their car door into my car, leaving a dent. Why? Because my stuff has a hold on me. Deliver me, Lord, from the tyranny of ownership. Jesus owned nothing, yet He served the Father with great success. Why can't I see that and follow His example more fully?

I know one thing I will do as a result of reading this: I will be more diligent to give to those who ask me. The other night a man came up to me as I was pumping gas to ask for money. I gave him \$5. I think I needed to give it more than he needed to receive it. I have determined that I must do this more.

v. 31 – There would be no need for reconciliation or arbitration if we could all follow this rule: Do to others as you would have them do to you. How would I want others to treat me? I would want them to give me the benefit of the doubt when I am cranky? I would want them to thank me for work done. I would want them to do kind things to help me without me asking. I would want others to understand my needs and meet them. Having said all that, I have just outlined what my own behavior should be toward others, whether they are worthy or not.

Someone once said that we treat ourselves subjectively—we justify our behavior and excuse our failures—and treat others objectively—using the letter of the law to judge their failures and sins. Jesus wanted us to reverse that—to be harder on ourselves than we are on others.

Day Five

32 "If you love those who love you, what credit is that to you? Even 'sinners' love those who love them. 33 And if you do good to those who are good to you, what credit is that to you? Even 'sinners' do that. 34 And 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. 35 But love your enemies, do good to them, and lend to them without expecting to get anything back. Then your reward will be great, and you will be sons of the Most High, because he is kind to the ungrateful and wicked. 36 Be merciful, just as your Father is merciful.

vs. 32-34 – Jesus did not expect behavior as good as could be found among the best of sinners. Jesus wants behavior from His followers that is exceptional. You cannot compare yourself to others when you evaluate your behavior. You must compare yourself to Jesus and to the highest ideal behavior that you could exhibit if you obeyed Jesus to the letter of His commandments. Anything less is unacceptable and there can be no excuses.

v. 35 – As stated earlier in this study, God is good to the wicked and He expects His followers to be the same. Someone who does evil to me actually gives me a chance to put my Christianity to good use; they play an important role in helping to prove the reality of what God has done in my life.

I think this is the best-known phrase of Jesus' entire ministry—love your enemies. When the heathen don't see that truth present in a believer's life, they usually dismiss that person's faith as bogus. They may be right. If a Christian can't behave better than a heathen, who does good to those who do good and loves those who love, then what difference has Christ made in that person's life? What difference has Christ made in your life?

v. 36 – Mercy is never deserved, but once it is given, it must be given away. Mercy is not to be an event, but a way of life. And when you extend mercy, there is no guarantee that the recipient won't take advantage of your goodness to try and exercise more bad behavior. Mercy cannot be given to manipulate others into doing what you want them to do. Mercy must be given without any strings or expectations attached. Give someone mercy today, not because they deserve, but because you didn't either, yet you have received it. Let's let people know why we're so happy by treating them the way God has treated us.

Day Six

37 "Do not judge, and you will not be judged. Do not condemn, and you will not be condemned. Forgive, and you will be forgiven. 38 Give, and it will be given to you. A good measure, pressed down, shaken together and running over, will be poured into your lap. For with the measure you use, it will be measured to you."

v. 37 – We are not to usurp the role that only God can assume—that of judging the heart and intent of others. But obviously we must make judgments regularly of what is beneficial and what is not. For instance, consider how harshly the Pharisees judged the sinners of their day. They judged them so cruelly that they resented Jesus spending any time with them, for they judged them as unworthy of grace and incapable of change. That is wrong. That they were sinners was probably a correct “judgment”—could a prostitute be any less? But that wasn't what Jesus referring to; their harshness in cutting them off from God's grace was.

v. 38 – This verse has always been quoted in terms of giving. One means by which we are to interpret a verse, however, is its context. The context for this verse doesn't appear

to be giving money, but giving forgiveness and grace. So if we are generous with our mercy and grace, then God will reciprocate and give us all the grace that we need. Jesus confronts the hard hearts of the Pharisees throughout Luke's gospel, so here Jesus was appealing for the leaders of Israel to be sources of grace, not sources of condemnation.

How generous are you with grace and mercy? Are you quick to make judgments of people's motives and worthiness of God's mercy? To whom can you give mercy today? Whom must you forgive? What measure are you using to dispense mercy—a teaspoon or a large scoop? I know I need to increase the size of my mercy dispenser, for I need large scoops of mercy myself.

Day Seven

39 He also told them this parable: "Can a blind man lead a blind man? Will they not both fall into a pit? 40 A student is not above his teacher, but everyone who is fully trained will be like his teacher. 41 "Why do you look at the speck of sawdust in your brother's eye and pay no attention to the plank in your own eye? 42 How can you say to your brother, 'Brother, let me take the speck out of your eye,' when you yourself fail to see the plank in your own eye? You hypocrite, first take the plank out of your eye, and then you will see clearly to remove the speck from your brother's eye.

vs. 39&40 – It appears that Jesus was addressing the leaders of Israel, pointing out that their hardness toward others was being reproduced as they disciplined others. A teacher cannot lead someone where they have not gone themselves. At the same time, Jesus was indicating that He was qualified to teach about mercy and grace because He was a source of mercy and grace. The Lord has never permitted me to teach theory, but only what He was working into my life. While not perfect, I attempt to teach reality and not what I have heard from someone else.

If you want to teach others God's ways, then you must be ready for God to lead you into what He wants you to teach. You must be willing to allow God to do a work in you so that you will have firsthand stories and examples to share with others. If you are teaching others, do you have fresh material based on your own experience, or are you dishing out someone else's leftovers?

v. 41 – Jesus did not say *not* to address the speck that is in your brother's eye. First, a teacher or leader must address the much bigger issues (the plank) in his or her own life. I must be willing to deal with my own problems before I am qualified to help others address theirs. This is the price of leadership.

v. 42 – The word hypocrite is derived from the Greek word *hypocritas* and refers to the masks that Greek actors wore on stage that represented happiness, sadness, anger and the like. In this context, a hypocrite would wear a mask to pretend that they are something when they are not. If I confront your anger yet I have a bad temper, I am a hypocrite. Someone once said that God won't change you into the person you are already pretending

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to be. Are you qualified to help others spiritually? One of the qualifiers is to confront the sins (planks) in your own life. When you do, you will automatically be gentler and more empathetic as you help others. Paul wrote:

Brothers, if someone is caught in a sin, you who are spiritual should restore him gently. But watch yourself, or you also may be tempted. Carry each other's burdens, and in this way you will fulfill the law of Christ. If anyone thinks he is something when he is nothing, he deceives himself. Each one should test his own actions. Then he can take pride in himself, without comparing himself to somebody else, for each one should carry his own load (Galatians 6:1-5).

Are you ready to restore your brother? You can get ready by having a handle on your own spiritual needs and problems.