

Kind to the Ungrateful

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[0 : 00] All right, well we are continuing on with Jesus' sermon here in Luke chapter 6. Dave's smiling at me because he's already way past me in Luke, but we're not racing, right?

Recap is good. Drill it in deeper, right? For the past two Sundays we've been looking at Jesus' radical instructions about how we are to treat other people. We are to love our enemies. We are to do good to those who hate us.

We are even to pray for those who curse us or mistreat us. We're not to retaliate, either in word or action.

We are to be merciful, not treating others according to how they treat us or according to what we feel they deserve. But according to how we ourselves want to be treated.

And now Jesus wraps up his instruction on this theme by restating it and by reminding us of some motivating realities. Let's look at our passage this morning here in Luke 6 verse 32.

[1 : 14] Jesus says, If you love those who love you, what credit is that to you? Even sinners love those who love them.

And if you do good to those who are good to you, what credit is that to you? Even sinners do that.

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. But love your enemies. Do good to them. And lend to them. And lend to them. Without expecting to get anything back. Then your reward will be great.

And you will be children of the Most High. Because He is kind to the ungrateful and wicked. Be merciful.

[2 : 18] Just as your Father is merciful. We notice in these words of Jesus, these rhetorical questions. If you do such and such, what credit is that to you?

Three times Jesus asked a rhetorical question like this. This is another example of that sort of synonymous parallelism. That's intended to drive home the same point but from three different angles.

And what's the point? Well, we need to translate these rhetorical questions into statements. If you love those who love you, what credit is that to you?

Answer? It's no credit. It's no credit to you if you only love those who love you. And it's no credit to you if you're only good to those who are good to you.

And it's no credit to you if you only lend to people who you think it likely will pay you back. In other words, we should not expect any praise, any well done, any commendation or reward from God for just treating others according to how they treat us.

[3 : 44] There's nothing especially commendable about that. Nothing worthy of reward. After each of these rhetorical statements is this repeated phrase.

Even sinners do that. The self-interested people of the world who are not seeking to live righteously, even they love those who love them.

Even they do good to those who are good to them. Even they lend to those who are likely to pay them back. That's just normal reciprocation.

We talked about the golden rule last week. Do unto others as you would have them do unto you.

But this kind of living that Jesus is talking about is do to others so that they will do good to you.

Or it's if you scratch my back, I'll scratch yours. If you're nice to me, I'll be nice to you. If you help me out, I'll help you out.

[4 : 54] Well, that's not anything special or worthy of honor, says Jesus. Of course you love those who love you. That's not righteousness.

That's not the kind of love that I'm talking about. That's not caring truly and deeply for the needs of others. It's a sort of self-serving, convenient arrangement that even people who don't fear God do all the time.

It's no credit to you to just reciprocate kindness to people. To return good only to those who are good to you. The example of lending in verses 34 and 35 really stands out in this section as something new, something fresh.

Why might someone ask to borrow money from you? Because they have none. Well, our minds start thinking of all the different scenarios that might be.

Apart from addictions and substance abuse or forgetting their wallet at home, it's probably that they are really in need. And it's kind of humiliating to have to ask those around you for a loan, for help to fulfill your obligations.

[6 : 20] And so often people won't ask to borrow until they're truly in need. Until the vehicle's out of commission and the repair bill is too high.

Is more than what there is in the bank account. Often people won't ask until the gas tank is completely empty and they have to get to this appointment. Often people won't ask until the fridge is empty and there's hunger.

until the credit card is already maxed out. Would you be willing to lend me some money? I've got myself into a tough situation and I promise I'll pay you back as soon as I can.

The normal way of the world in moments like this is to assess the situation, to evaluate that person and what you know of them, and then to count the cost to yourself.

How likely am I to be repaid? And if they're quite likely to repay them, well, I'll lend them the money. But notice how that decision is first and foremost based on my interests.

[7 : 36] Whether I will be repaid because it's my money and I want to get it back. Can I spare that money if they don't repay me?

And so with that kind of thinking, if you decide to grant them a small loan, Jesus says, it's no credit to you. There's no praise or reward from God for that.

That's not being especially helpful or generous to them. You're mainly concerned about yourself and whether you'll get the money back. Jesus says, love your enemies.

Do good to them. Lend to them without expecting to get anything back. If we take away that expectation of repayment, why would we lend to them?

Well, because they're in need. Because they need help. Our being willing to lend to them regardless of whether they pay us back is a true act of compassion.

[9 : 11] It's a true act of love and goodness because it's no longer about us and our money. It's about them. And their need. And as we saw with the discussion about retaliation above and turning the other cheek and allowing them to take the shirt as well, it's better to be generous.

It's better to be kind and sometimes taken advantage of and wronged than to be just like the world around us with a hollow love that only shows goodness to those who are good to us.

Now we might wonder in that moment, well, what about me? What about my money? What if I don't get it back?

This is a lot of money. I worked for that money. It was the reward for my labor. How is it right that they should have it for doing nothing?

And maybe that I should lack that money permanently if they don't repay it. Well, Jesus helps us with this too.

[10 : 23] He says in verse 35, 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 children of the Most High.

There are times when living like this may result in us being taken advantage of. Our love toward an enemy may be scorned.

You send a gift and it's thrown in the trash or you send a card and it's returned in the mail. You do good to them but they may continue to be hostile and nasty to you.

You lend to them and they tell you time and time again, yeah, I'm going to repay you but the money never shows itself. Take heart. In those kinds of situations, says Jesus, your reward will be great.

Not from them, not from others, but your reward from God. God sees and keeps track of every single time that we are wronged.

[11 : 43] Every time we're taken advantage of. And when we refuse to retaliate and instead act in love and generosity and kindness, God will see to it that we are honored on the great day.

That we are rewarded for loving and giving the way that He does. there is a day of reward coming for the disciples of Jesus.

Now the precise details on what God's reward to us will be on that day we don't know. It awaits the end when Jesus returns to open up the books and reveal how all of His followers have lived.

but do you believe that God can reward you far beyond the wrong or the loss or the pain that you suffer from others?

Let me ask that again. Do you believe that God can reward you far beyond the wrong or the loss or the pain that you suffered from others?

[13 : 04] I think deep down in our hearts we know that He can. On a very practical note when it comes to borrowing and lending something I personally try to do is to avoid borrowing at all costs of course with the exception of the mortgage on our home it's almost impossible to buy a home without that.

But I think there's true wisdom in the words that God spoke through Solomon long ago. Proverbs chapter 22 verse 7 says the rich rule over the poor and the borrower is slave to the lender.

So what those words mean to me is that I would be wise to avoid borrowing at all costs because to do so is at least in some measure to make myself a slave.

It's to surrender control of my life in some measure to someone else. Now of course with the exception of the basic essentials of food and shelter and clothing it's better to go without and be free than to have and be a slave.

So how do we factor in these words to the words that Jesus gives us when he encourages us to be willing to lend without expecting repayment?

[14 : 38] Well if going into debt is unwise for me because the borrower is slave to the lender then lending to someone else puts them into that same situation where they lose some of their freedom and become in some measure a slave to me obligated to repay me.

And so this is just my own personal understanding of this what I find helpful in this situation is that if anybody asks to borrow from me I choose to think of what I lend to them as a gift rather than a loan. I don't set out terms of repayment if it's a relatively small and manageable amount of money why not just give it to them as a gift from God?

Just tell them this is from the Lord Jesus. Then they can be free of any feeling of obligation to repay you.

Give it as a gift if you can. tell them it's a gift so that they know that they're not burdened by this sense of duty to somehow find the money to repay you. And then at the outset you don't even have to worry about whether they pay you back or not.

[16 : 00] You saw their need and you just gave to help them meet it. Now sometimes it's a larger sum maybe an amount of money that yeah it's difficult to give that amount.

Lend it to them if you're able but leave it to God whether they pay you back. Isn't that what Jesus is saying with these words?

Lend to them without expecting to get anything back. Don't chase them around asking for your money back or hold it over them and let it sour your relationship with them.

Take it on the chin. Turn the other cheek. remember God can repay you for anything that you've lost. He can give more to you if you need it and at the end he will reward those who are generous and lend and give.

Notice who Jesus tells us to lend to. He says love your enemies. Do good to them. Lend to them without expecting to get anything back.

[17 : 19] So already we should be thinking of this as money that's probably not coming back to us. This is an enemy we're lending to. It's a kindness that's probably not going to be returned. Now we also have to remember that this is a general imperative.

This is a general teaching of Jesus. It's a principle. And it's not without exception. Do not lend money to the guy begging you for it next door to the liquor store whose breath smells like alcohol. We are stewards and managers of what God has entrusted to us. We are to be generous but not foolish. Giving money to an addict only enables him to do more damage to himself and to perpetuate his addiction.

Giving money to a chronic gambler is a sure way to squander what the Lord has entrusted to you and it doesn't help him out one bit. Giving a second or a third or a fourth loan to a shopaholic is not meeting their need.

Giving money to someone who is lazy and unwilling to work only perpetuates and reinforces that laziness. The Apostle Paul himself laid down this rule in the churches as he went about as a missionary.

[18 : 44] This is what he wrote to the Thessalonians. 2 Thessalonians 3 verse 10. He said, So there are these situations and what we have to figure out in these situations is what a person's need really is.

And sometimes in situations like these it's not more money. It's okay to say no to the one asking to borrow in these circumstances.

And it has nothing to do with whether they will repay you. It's about whether they're truly in need of what they're asking for and whether the thing that you give or lend is actually meeting that need.

So we're talking specifically about the addict, the gambler, the shopaholic, or the freeloader who's unwilling to work. And here too, we have to be careful with this.

At the end of the day, we can't control how a person spends what we give them or what we lend to them. Maybe they spent it all on groceries, but the kind of stuff that they buy is that really expensive convenience food.

[20 : 05] And the money could have gone a lot further if they had bought some more staple foods and did some cooking. money. But God's not asking us to ensure that every dollar that we give is spent wisely.

Maybe they spend half of it on groceries and the other half on cigarettes. We can't always let that thought of how they will spend it.

We can't let it stop us from being generous and lending to those in need. Back in the day our church was part of the Davidson Interchurch Association and we used to issue vouchers for groceries or gas to people in need.

Anybody who asked for one. And the list of people who took advantage of that and used that every year was relatively small. We had a limit of three vouchers per year that we would give and there was a possibility you could get more in exceptional cases.

I remember one time giving a voucher to a person. It was the third voucher for the year. And as I was there dropping it off I could see on the table the kinds of groceries that they were buying.

[21 : 16] And I was thinking wow. They still managed to find room in their very very tight budget for a 16 pack of carbonated soft drinks and numerous bags of chips and junk food.

I told them that our policy was three vouchers and that this was the last for the year. But that if he was willing to accept help with learning some good financial management skills I'd be happy to help with that.

I'd be happy to look over your expenses for the month and see if we can bring those down. Happy to look at how we can bring your income up. Just brainstorm some ideas. Come up with a monthly budget.

I offered him a free Christian financial management course that he could take online. And of course he expressed his thanks and said he'd think about it. but I didn't hear much from him for a long time after that.

Sometimes not having any money is just a symptom. What's the deeper need? Surprisingly, the loving thing to do in certain situations is not to give more money but to talk with that person.

[22 : 27] Spend time with them. understand what is it that they really need and what are some solutions that can help meet that, that I can provide. Surprisingly, the unloving thing to do might be to just throw a \$20 bill at them and say hope this helps and drive away.

So we have to be wise in how we apply this imperative of Jesus about lending to those who ask. We can't expect that what we give or lend will always be used wisely or well.

But we remember, as Jesus says here, that God is kind to the ungrateful and the wicked. In Matthew's gospel, Matthew 5, verse 45, Jesus says that God causes his sun to rise on the evil and the good.

And he sends rain on the righteous and the unrighteous. He is merciful. He doesn't just deal with us as we deserve. And so as his children, there may be times when we give or we lend at cost to ourselves only to watch it be squandered or misused.

But just like we haven't used all that God has entrusted to us perfectly, then he continues to be generous and giving to us so we should be to others.

[24 : 02] Let's remember again that the day of reward is coming and for every wrong we have suffered, for every unkind thing done or said to us, if we bear it with grace and return only love, our reward will be great on that day.

We'll look back on those moments and think, it's okay. It hurt, it cost, but God has now returned to me far more than they took away.

So we're meant to let that promise of reward motivate us and strengthen us and encourage us when we feel the struggle and pain and loss from others.

There's another thing here that Jesus says to motivate us and we've talked about this already in the past weeks, but you can never hear this too much. God is only asking us to be like him and to do as he does.

He is like a father teaching us, his children, to do what is good and right, to do as he does.

[25 : 23] And what is God like? If someone asks you that question, what's the first thing that comes to mind? What is God like?

The typical words we might use are loving, merciful, gracious, forgiving, and Jesus uses these words, mercy and love, in this passage, throughout this section, but in this entire passage, I love these words of Jesus the most.

What is God like? Let me tell you, says Jesus, he is kind to the ungrateful.

He is kind to the ungrateful. He is kind to the wicked. And it's really just another way of saying that he's merciful, that he doesn't treat us according to what we deserve, but so much better than we deserve.

But I don't know, something about the way this is worded, it just gets to my heart every time I read it. He is a God who is kind to the ungrateful. people. And I think of my own life, and I think, have I been as grateful to God as I should be for all the good things that he has done to me and for me?

[26 : 47] Not even close. Have I been truly wicked? wicked. The Bible convicts me day after day, week after week, of my sins.

So many times I couldn't even hope to keep count. If God was to deal with me as I really deserve, but he hasn't.

And so really what he's saying is, Joshua, be like your father in heaven, even to the ungrateful in your life, even to the wicked, the unkind, to anyone and everyone.

How can we receive such kindness from God? God, and then turn around and withhold that from others? The greatest motivation and power to live like Jesus commands here, I would suggest it comes not from the reward that's promised, but from looking at what God himself is like and just reflecting on how he has loved me.

despite my mistreatment of him. And when we come to that place of gazing on him and seeing his mercy, his grace towards us, his goodness to us who have ignored him, hated him, insulted him, how he has given to us without expecting anything in return, suddenly it's not too hard to love our enemies or to do good to those who hate us or to lend without expecting anything back.

[28 : 49] instead it becomes the most wonderful and beautiful privilege in the world to imitate, even to try to imitate our glorious father.

Let's pray. Lord, these words are hard to live out and we can probably all think of situations where we have been wronged and hurt.

But I pray that you would give us the strength by your Holy Spirit in us to live like this even now in those relationships that are still in this spot.

Help us not to give up on doing what is right and what is good. Fill us with a love that goes beyond that natural gut instinct that we have to retaliate or to ignore or to push away.

Let us bring glory to your name. help us in this we pray. In Jesus name. Amen.