

The Golden Rule

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[0 : 0 0] All right, well this morning as we continue our way through the Gospel of Luke, we're still in the sermon that Jesus was preaching. The Sermon on the Mount possibly are very similar, if not the same sermon. And we come to some words of Jesus this morning that are so famous that probably everyone here can quote it right off the top of your head. The golden rule, which is, do unto others as you would have them do unto you. Luke chapter 6 verse 31, do to others as you would have them do to you. Our tendency when we come to these words in the Bible is to read them quickly, think to ourselves, yep, I know what that means, and then just move on to the next words of Jesus. It's one of those teachings that's become so familiar that we just kind of assume, well I understand that. I've heard that since I was a child, or my parents used to say that all the time to me. I've reminded my own kids of that all the time. And so let's just carry on to the next thing. And probably most of us do understand what it means. But do we live by this golden rule? Martin Lloyd-Jones, an influential pastor and preacher in the 20th century said this about it. He said, we all know how easy it is to read such a statement, or to listen to an exposition of it, or to read an exposition of it in a book, or to see some great picture which conveys it, and to say, yes, wonderful, marvelous, and yet to fail completely to put it into practice in actual life and living.

Amazingly, Lloyd-Jones was one of the only ones I found, I didn't look too hard, but one of the only ones I found who dedicated an entire sermon to this golden rule. And I'm sure there's others out there who have, but many commentators, many pastors and preachers barely mention it in their teaching and writing. Maybe they assume, just like we do, that we already understand it, and so no more comments are needed. But let me ask it this way. What's so golden about this rule if we spend so little time thinking about it? What's so valuable about it, if we're content to skip over it and keep it on the shelf or in the filing cabinet of our minds?

Is it only a saying useful in situations of parenting young, self-centered children? Have we all mastered this a long time ago?

As Christians today, sometimes we don't treat the golden rule as golden. And so I want to start this morning with that very question. What's so golden about the golden rule? Why is it so valuable?

On the screen, we have it recorded the way that Luke recorded it. But I want to start by looking actually at the way that Matthew recorded it in his gospel. And there's some other details kind of nestled around it that really take us to a whole new understanding of this.

[3 : 3 2] Matthew chapter 7, verse 12. Jesus says, So in everything, do to others what you would have them do to you.

For this sums up the law and the prophets. So you notice the differences there in Matthew's account. What else is there?

We notice two things. First, we notice the introduction. So in everything. And we also notice the conclusion statement. This sums up the law and the prophets.

Do you see how Jesus introduces this imperative? So in everything, do to others what you would have them do to you.

In everything, do to others what you would have them do to you. And so this isn't just a helpful tool in a toolbox that we might reach for once in a while.

[4 : 36] This instruction of Jesus, we are meant to live in everything. What does that mean? What does in everything mean? It means that this imperative is to govern our thinking and our doing in all things.

In all of life. In every situation. In all our interactions. Anybody. And with everybody. In everything means that this imperative is for deciding what to say to the lady at the post office.

Whether she's having a good day or a bad day. It means it's for deciding whether to fish or play golf for another hour or go home and help my wife out with stuff around the house.

It means that it's for deciding what to serve for dinner when company is coming. Do to others what you would have them do to you.

It's for deciding how much to give someone who's asking for money. Do to others what you would have them do to you. It's for deciding how much notice to give my employer when I quit my job.

[5 : 51] How to respond to a text message. Whether to respond at all. And if I do, what should I say? Do unto others as you would have them do unto you.

It's for deciding whether to pick up the crumpled beer can on someone else's lawn as you walk by. And there are thousands of situations we could go on and on and on.

How do you want your neighbors to treat you when you're asleep at 2 a.m. in the morning? Go and do likewise says Jesus.

How do you want your children to speak to you when they're upset with you? Go and do likewise to them. How do you want people around town to serve you when you're paying them for that service?

Go and do likewise to them in your service of them in your job the people you serve. Do you want people to go the extra mile for you? Go the extra mile for them.

[7 : 00] Do you want people to be quick to forgive you when you blow it? Well then be quick to forgive others when they blow it. In everything means that this instruction of Jesus should be top of mind all the time in every situation in every interaction that we have with anybody and with everybody.

And this is the first reason why this rule is golden. One simple memorable statement that Jesus gives us is a guide for how to live in every situation in life.

it's not just a wise saying that sometimes applies it's a mission it's a mandate that always applies.

This rule I was trying to think of an analogy here this rule is to living life as a follower of Jesus what a tape measure is to a carpenter. We're to keep this with us always.

It's needed it's useful in everything. Think about how often a carpenter needs to use a tape measure even before you start the project you've got to measure you've got to figure out what am I going to do here how much material do I need when you get your materials from the store is this the right size you've got to measure while you're making your cuts before every cut you've got to measure when spacing every supporting board or beam and deciding how long of fasteners to use you've got to measure all the time in everything in the project and it's the same way with this golden rule in everything do to others what you would have them do to you in any given week we have a thousand opportunities to let these words of Jesus guide our treatment of others whether it's our parents our siblings our children our spouse our friends our neighbors our co-workers our teammates our fellow church members even strangers the guy on the phone the store clerk and as we've been seeing from

[9 : 18] Jesus even our enemies it applies in everything to every interaction with another human being in every relationship we have whether warm or frosty in everything to do to others what you would have them do to you and so that's number one of why it's golden why it's supremely valuable because it's to be our mindset and our action in everything reason number two that it's golden is because of what Jesus says after this he says for this sums up the law and the prophets and a little slightly more word for word translation of this this is the law and the prophets now that phrase the law and the prophets it's an idiom it's a figure of speech for literary junkies synecdoche where you refer to the parts all of them but really what you mean is the whole and that's what this is here in this case the law and the prophets means the entire old testament revelation of God everything he has said and revealed from the very beginning until now about our relationships with others this one statement sums it all up do to others what you would have them do to you it's kind of another way of

Jesus saying the second greatest commandment which we're all familiar with as well love your neighbor as yourself we all know what it means to love ourselves we all love ourselves we care for ourselves we desire good for ourselves we know what it is to be treated kindly by others and so we're to love or to treat others according to that how we want to be treated Jesus says this imperative sums up the entire old testament all of God's revelation from the beginning till now about how we're to relate to one another this one imperative sums it all up Martin Lloyd Jones again he put it so well and so I'm just going to read a paragraph from his message on it it's so good he said the vital thing after all is that you love that man that you understand him and desire the well being of your neighbor even as you desire your own well being that is the law and the prophets it all comes to that all the detailed regulations given in the law in the

Old Testament what it tells you to do for example if you see your neighbor's ox straying how you are to bring it back to him or if you see anything wrong on his farm how you are to inform him at once and do your utmost to help him all the detailed regulations given in the law in the Old Testament are not just meant to lead you to say well the law says that not at all it is rather that you may say to yourself this man is like myself and it will be a grievous matter and a loss to him if he's going to lose that ox well he's a man like myself and how grateful I would be if someone returned my ox to me therefore I will do that for him in other words you are to be interested in your neighbor!

The object of the law is to bring us to that and regulations are nothing but illustrations of that great central principle the moment we cease to realize that that is the spirit of the law and the purpose of the law we go hopelessly astray that's from Lloyd Jones man that should change the way that we read the whole Old Testament right we should see love for our neighbor all over the Old Testament law and the prophets according to Jesus anything and everything that has to do with our treatment of others was written to teach us what it means to love our fellow man and so this is the second reason why this rule really is golden can you imagine if I mean this is kind of ridiculous in our day but if back in the day in school grade 12

I know they don't teach the Bible in school but just imagine that they did and your teacher gave you this assignment I want you to read the entire Old Testament in my Bible it's I think 1300 pages large print single column yours might be a different number but read the entire Old Testament of the Bible and take note of everything God commands about how we're to treat other people and then I want you to come up with one pregnant command that sums all of them up well thankfully we don't have to do that Jesus gives us the one command that sums them all up do to others what you would have them do to you and so do you see how valuable this imperative!

[14 : 56] it's like a hundred percent old testament concentrate it's everything God has said for thousands of years about how we should treat our fellow man distilled into one breath one word one imperative along with the greatest commandment of loving God with all our heart soul mind and strength if we as followers of Jesus just focused on this this golden rule we would be and do exactly what Jesus longs for us to be and do it sums up everything that he's asked of his people for centuries how we should live with regard to our fellow man well let's now go back to Luke let's look at the context a bit here let's deepen our understanding of this imperative what's the context of this command as we see in

Luke we've been working through Jesus has been talking about how we are to live differently than the people of the world as his followers we're to live different from the usual and what's the usual that we see in our world it's that we hate our enemies it's that we only do good to those who are good to us it's that when someone does something mean or unkind to us we return that to them the normal response in our world and what we feel tempted to do because of our sinful nature is to pay back evil for evil it's to get revenge it's to get even if someone insults us insult them back if someone strikes us as we talked about last week hit them back but Jesus has been instructing us instead to do the opposite of the usual as his followers to love our enemies to do good to those who hate us to bless those who curse us even to pray for those who mistreat us to turn to turn the other cheek when someone lashes out at us and then this imperative the golden rule is nestled in all this right at the end do to others as you would have them do to you and so how does that fit how is that different what's the usual not the golden rule but what's the common rule do to others as they do to you treat others as they treat you be good be kind be patient to those who are good and kind and patient to you but

Jesus is saying I want you to live differently as my disciples I don't want you to factor into how you treat them how they have treated you I want to give you a whole different standard how do you want them to treat you treat them that way instead regardless of how they have treated you whether they've been a friend or an enemy whether they've been kind or unkind whether they've been grateful or ungrateful don't think about whether they are deserving of a certain treatment imagine that you were in their shoes how would you want to be treated treat them accordingly this is radical and actually to live like this is far more difficult than just to understand the rule this actually requires a lot of deliberate reflection in every situation it requires pause in each conversation before

I respond to them I need to stop and think if the situation was reversed here what would I hope they would do or say to me and then before I do or say anything to them I need to first figure out what that is and then I need to do that to them that's what it means to love this person we need some tangible concrete examples so here's just a couple from my week I'm sitting at the table with my family eating lunch the meal's basically over except for my three-year-old who's still finishing her food and I've got 20 minutes left before I need to get back to the church office for work I look around the kitchen and the table and I see all the mess that's resulted from the meal and the preparation of the meal and what am I going to do now well I would love to just go sit down on the couch or out on the deck and relax but now if

I was my wife what would I hope that my husband did after finishing his meal well if I was my wife I would hope that my husband would not only put his dishes!

[20 : 31] After all there's the kitchen clean up to do there's the baby to nurse there's his diaper to change he has to be put down for a nap and maybe I should look at the calendar and see what's coming on my wife's schedule that she have some kind of a commitment right after lunch here that helping her with the cleanup would just enable her to be able to!

do that even easier so what should I do relax or help with the kitchen cleanup before I go back to work I think we all know the answer doing unto my wife as I would have her do unto me means helping her out and not leaving it all to her but that doesn't mean that I can't enlist the help of the kids in the kitchen!

Right guys? Oh but all of them except the three year old and the baby are gone they're off playing somewhere either downstairs or around the yard how can I get them to come and help my first instinct is to yell as loudly as I can hoping they will hear it and if not well I guess I'll just yell a little bit louder and louder and louder and I expect of course that they will immediately drop whatever they're doing and just come and do this thing that I would like help with right now but what if I were them is that how I would like to be called to come to the kitchen to help with the cleanup in fact I still remember being a kid myself and I always appreciated the times my parents simply came to me and spoke in a calm voice asking me to come and change the garbages or whatever it was and if

I was in the middle of something I always appreciated just having another minute to finish up what I was doing or just that one last little bit of that thing before I page or can I just finish putting this thing away I am almost done I guess I should probably grant them that too after all they're individuals just like me trying to live their lives trying to do the things that are meaningful and important to them the world doesn't just revolve around me and my priorities they have their hopes and desires and plans as well this is the level that we need to go to with these words of Jesus to live them out and we might be thinking wow that's extreme to dive into every little situation and interaction in life and think through all this every time well in case there's any doubt about this let's just look back to

Matthew's gospel at the context for a second here this is how Jesus starts the section in Matthew's gospel he says which of you if your son asks for bread will give him a stone or if he asks for a fish will give him a snake if you then though you are evil know how to give good gifts to your children how much more will your father in heaven give good gifts to those who ask him so in everything do to others what you would have them do to you notice the examples Jesus gives that lead into this statement of the golden rule if your son asks for bread so yes it applies even in the little day to day stuff of life those moments where you hear those words dad I'm hungry can I have something to eat we're meant to think of this rule do unto others do to him as

[24 : 34] I would want done to me in that situation if I was the one hungry and I hadn't eaten in four hours and I'm just a little guy dad is busy working on something as he always is and he can go a long time without taking a break I would hope that my dad would get me something even just to snack on or to tide me over till we can have supper and so no this golden rule isn't just for the big or difficult decisions and moments in life it really is meant to permeate our lives even down to the little moments the seemingly insignificant moments of life should I change Joseph's poop diaper right now or should I wait 15 minutes till I feel more like it well do you like sitting in your own poo for 15 minutes probably neither does he then maybe that's a significant part of why he's a little cranky and squirmy at the moment and doesn't know what to do with himself the golden rule is so simple that we might be tempted to just call it common sense but as

I said at the beginning the challenge is not with understanding what it means the challenge is with actually living like this it's with wrestling our own sinful desires and selfishness to the ground and then doing the thing that we would like done to us to others but just think for a moment think about how the temperature the atmosphere in your home or in your relationships could improve if everyone in your family by faith tried to live out this golden rule to one another maybe you have a difficult or strained or distant relationship in the family right now this is arguably the best place to start with improving it to start asking that question what would I want done to me in this situation are they a child or teenager in your family why not focus on just deliberately treating them as you would want to be treated were you that kid or you that teenager most of us who are adults still remember what it was like to be a kid or a teenager and now of course this doesn't mean that we just think of what they want and then do that to them or give that to them especially if what they want is wrong if your teen or young adult is in a bad relationship they might want you as a parent to bless that relationship to encourage them to express approval of it but that wouldn't be helpful or loving to them especially if it is indeed a bad relationship the golden rule is not do to others what they want you to do to them that's just people pleasing no the golden rule is do to others what you would have them do to you and deep down inside would you want someone to warn you and tell you about the danger they see in the path that you're taking even if it's maybe not what you want to hear

I think that's the kind of love and friendship that we all desire from others neither should we think of our own unhealthy desires if we have an unhealthy thing that we want we shouldn't expect others to treat us in that way either!

like if I just want to be left alone that's what I want I wish they would leave me alone does that mean I should just leave others in a similar frame of mind alone to struggle of course not that's a misapplication of the golden rule we talked a little bit about how it applies in the parent relationship with kids think of the marriage relationship for those of you who are married sometimes we get ourselves into a place where things are just not as we wish they were in our marriage maybe the intimacy isn't what it has been maybe there's a coldness or a distance what better place to start in improving this golden rule perhaps as your spouse begins to feel the warmth of your love in all kinds of ways little and big as you filter your actions and your words through this imperative it may rekindle what's grown cold in their heart we could talk about the workplace we could talk about teammates we could talk about the playground and school every situation

I hope this is stirring us I hope this is getting us thinking about how we have been living do we have this golden mindset is it really working itself out in our lives in golden living a loving life towards anybody and everybody is there anyone in particular that we have been content to withhold our love from because we feel they don't deserve it as we've been hearing these commands of Christ are not just a matter of obedience they are also in addition to that a way that we can testify to Christ through our living in other words living like this is demonstrating the heart of the gospel to others around us it's showing it's showing the very love of God that we have come to know to others how has

[30 : 26] God dealt with us it says just down the page in Luke chapter 6 that he has been merciful to us that's true he has not treated us as we deserve!

He has not treated us according to how we've treated him he's loved us while we were his enemies he's given us a way to be saved at great cost to himself did we deserve it not at all and yet he has been rich in mercy toward us he's offered us a full pardon for every wrong that we have done to him and he's given us every blessing imaginable in Christ and now Jesus is saying as we see here in verse 36 be merciful just as your father is merciful don't just treat others according to what they deserve based on how they have treated you rather treat them with love kindness compassion in everything just as you would want them to treat you when we live the golden rule we demonstrate the gospel love we show others through our actions and words that the love of

God is real and powerful let's pray and ask the Lord for help to live this out father in heaven we want to begin by confessing all of our countless many failures to live this way to you Lord so many times we have put ourselves first we have done only as we wanted please forgive us please cleanse us please wash us of all those moments all those times where we have not loved others like this we thank you for the cross we thank you that you died Jesus to atone for all of our shortcomings and failures and sins that we don't have to walk around guilty in life thinking back to all the moments where we have fallen short of this

Lord you have cleansed us and forgiven us forever and we want to live like this not just as a matter of obedience but just as a way to bring glory to your name for you are the one who has loved us like this and so we ask for grace we ask for power we ask for your Holy Spirit to work in us and teach us to walk in this way guide our thinking in all these situations that we face in all our relationships help us to know and to we ask this in your name amen I invite the worship team to come and lead us in a closing song