

AM Luke 6:24-36

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[0 : 00] It's good to be with you again this morning. It's good to gather together, even if it is virtually. It's good to come together and share God's Word. So let's turn to God's Word as we come this morning.

Let's turn please to Luke chapter 6 and verses 24 through 36. Luke chapter 6 and verses 24 through 36. Continue in our studies and our thoughts on this section of Luke's Gospel.

Luke chapter 6 and verses 24 through 36. But woe to you who are rich, for you have received your consolation. Woe to you who are full now, for you shall be hungry.

Woe to you who laugh now, for you shall mourn and weep. Woe to you when all people speak well of you, for so their fathers did to the false prophets. But I say to you who hear, love your enemies.

Do good to those who hate you. Bless those who curse you. Pray for those who abuse you. To one who strikes you on the cheek, offer the other also. And from one who takes away your tunic, do not withhold your tunic either.

[1 : 08] Give to everyone who begs from you. And from one who takes away your goods, do not demand them back. And as you wish that others would do to you, do so to them.

If you love those who love you, what benefit is that to you? For even sinners love those who love them. And if you do good to those who do good to you, what benefit is that to you?

For even sinners do the same. And if you lend to those from whom you expect to receive, what credit is that to you? Even sinners lend to sinners to get back the same amount. But love your enemies and do good.

And lend expecting nothing in return. And your reward will be great. And you will be sons of the Most High. For he is kind to the ungrateful and the evil. Be merciful, even as your Father is merciful.

Amen. This is a reading of God's inspired and inerrant word. Let's turn to the Lord now in prayer.

Let us pray. Heavenly Father, as we read these words in Luke's Gospel, we are reminded that you are indeed merciful.

[2 : 14] We are reminded that you are the God who is slow to anger. And yet abounds in steadfast love. We thank you as we come this morning that you are the God who is in control of all things.

That you are the God who sees the end from the beginning. And we confess, Father, as we come this morning, we're perhaps perplexed by this continuing situation. We're perhaps perplexed by the continuing spread of the coronavirus.

We're perhaps perplexed as to why we can't meet together. But yet we thank you, Father, that this is what you have ordained. And that you are in no ways the author of sin.

We pray this morning, Father, that you would continue to be with our health workers. Continue to be with the NHS staff who are treating those who are sick. May you continue to grant them health and safety.

May you continue to grant wisdom to those who rule over us and those who lead us. May they know your hand upon them at this time. We pray, Father, for ourselves that as we come to your word now, that you would go before us.

[3 : 17] Help us to understand it. Help us to see the truth that is there, we ask. In Jesus' name. Amen. Amen. Well, let's turn then, please, to Luke's Gospel, Luke chapter 6.

And these verses 24 through 36. Luke chapter 6 and verses 24 through 36. I'm sure most of you have had the experience this morning all following someone in the car.

You know, perhaps you're going to a place and you're not quite sure where it is. And the person says, well, sure, I know where it is. You follow me. And one of the things that you have to adjust to as you're following someone in the car is the way they drive.

Perhaps they drive a little bit faster than you drive and you have to drive a little bit faster to keep up. Perhaps they drive a little bit slower than you do. And so you have to slow down in order to stay behind them.

Or perhaps their indicators don't quite work and you have to make sure that you're keeping a close eye on where they are. You have to mimic the person you're following.

[4 : 44] And you have to copy their style of driving. And as we come to Luke chapter 6, as we come to these verses in Luke chapter 6, who is it that we're called to mimic?

Who is it that we're called to follow? What pattern is set for us? Well, we're told in Luke 6.36, Be merciful, even as your father is merciful.

We're called to follow him. We're called to follow his example. We're called to copy him. We're called to be merciful. Because God is merciful.

You see, this morning again, we're going to continue thinking about what it means to live as part of the kingdom. We're going to think more about what it means to live as a follower of Jesus Christ.

As we've seen before, it's going to be quite counter-cultural. As we've seen before, it's going to be quite radical. It's going to go counter to what the world thinks. It's going to run counter to what the world expects. But that's what Jesus calls us to.

[5 : 46] How can we do that? Why are we called to do that? Well, we're called to do that because, verse 36, our father is merciful. We're called to copy him.

We're called to imitate him. We're called to be merciful because he has shown mercy to us. We want to think about three things this morning.

See, three things together. Firstly, we want to think about kingdom living, that we're called to know the times. Secondly, then, we want to think about kingdom living, how we're called to love our enemies, how that will show the difference.

And thirdly, then, we want to see kingdom living, how we're called to know our father. We're called to know our father. So firstly, then, kingdom living, we're called to know the times.

And we see that in verses 24 through 26. Kingdom living, know the times. Last week, then, last Sunday morning, we thought a little bit about the start of this section.

[6 : 48] We thought a little bit about this sermon that Jesus taught. We saw how similar some of the material is to Matthew's account of the Sermon on the Mount. We saw how ultimately we think this is a different sermon because the material is organized slightly different.

It's a different sermon given on a different occasion. As we started to look at the sermon, we saw how Jesus calls his followers to countercultural living. How the poor were to be considered blessed. How the hungry were to be considered full. And as we come to verse 24, then, this morning, we see how that theme continues, don't we? Because what does Jesus say?

Verse 24, It's almost a polar opposite of what we saw in verse 20.

Blessed are you who are poor, verse 20, for yours is the kingdom of God. Verse 24, Woe to you who are rich, for you have received your consolation. Jesus takes these accepted norms of the day and turns them upside down.

[7 : 51] Jesus takes these accepted norms of the day and completely flips them onto their head. For an early, the people would say, Well, blessed are those who are rich. Because God has blessed them.

God has given them great abundance and increase. But Jesus says, No, woe to those who are rich. But notice why. He gives them a reason.

He tells them why they are worthy of woe. Why? Verse 24, For you have received your consolation. It's a similar idea to what we see in the rich man and Lazarus, isn't it? That great parable that Jesus told, Luke 16. The rich man says, Well, look, send Lazarus to him.

He sent Lazarus so that at least he can dip his finger and quench my thirst. And what does God reply? No. Remember, you received your good things.

[8 : 48] You received your comfort in this life. And Lazarus is receiving his now. Of course, we need to remind ourselves of what we thought about last week.

We need to remind ourselves of what we saw last week. That there's nothing inherently blessed about being poor. There's nothing inherently more spiritual about being poor. There's nothing inherently less spiritual about being rich.

But it's the danger of riches. It's the danger that the attitude of riches bring. You see, the rich have comfort and ease in this life. The rich have all that they want. And therefore are less inclined to think

about the things of God.

Less of a mind to think about the things of eternity. Less of a mind to see that they need salvation. In a real sense, the rich have their comfort in this life.

While the poor look for the life to come. It's good to remind ourselves this morning, friends. Isn't it? That we put our hope, our trust not in riches.

[9 : 52] We put our confidence not in the wealth that we have. But we put our confidence and our hope in God. In the God who saves us. In the God who delivers us.

In the God who frees us from sin. The theme continues in verse 25, doesn't it? Woe to you who are full now. Why?

For you shall be hungry. Woe to you who laugh now. For you shall mourn and weep. It's an upside down kingdom. The values of the kingdom of God.

Are radically different from the values of the kingdom of the world. The conduct of the citizens of the kingdom of God. Is radically different from the conduct of the citizens of the world.

To be full was to be seen as blessed by God. To have joy was obviously a good thing. But they weren't to be the citizens of God's ultimate hope.

[10 : 50] What do I mean by that? We saw it recently in our own land, haven't we? You look at the coronavirus.

And what was the first thing that people did? They went out and they stockpiled food. They went out and they stockpiled toilet roll. They went out and they stockpiled to have enough of everything they think they could ever want.

They put their confidence and their hope and their trust in their stockpile. Think of people who put their confidence and their hope in laughter and joy.

But they never find time for the serious things. The weighty things of life. And when the time of judgment comes they are found to be mourning.

And we come to verse 26. What does Jesus say? Woe to you when all people speak well of you. For so their fathers did to the false prophets. It's quite a challenging statement, isn't it?

[11 : 55] It's quite a challenging thing to think about this morning. Because we have statements elsewhere in the Bible. We have statements, for example, from Paul. That the minister, the elder is to be well thought of by all.

That the minister is to have a good reputation with outsiders. And yet Jesus here says, well, woe to you when all men speak well of you. So how do we tie that up?

How do we square these two things off? How do we tie these two inspired bits of scripture together? That seemingly on the surface are contradictory.

I don't think they would be contradictory. That's the first place we start. That's the first thing that we've got to say. You see, I can have a good reputation with outsiders. And yet not all men speak well of me.

Most outsiders might. Even some within the church might. Not speak well of me. But I can have a good reputation. You can be known as a person of integrity.

[12 : 57] You can be known as a person of faith. You can be known as a person of commitment. And yet not everyone will speak well of you. The difficulty is that if all men speak well of you.

The difficulty is that if everyone says nice things about you all the time. Then there's a chance you're not living a kingdom life. But you're living a life that pleases men. You're not living as part of a God given kingdom.

But living in the kingdom of men. As I was preparing this sermon. The words that came to me were the words of Winston Churchill. He famously said of course, do you have enemies?

Good. That means you stood for something. That means you stood against something. The danger is that we become so preoccupied with being liked.

That we never stand up to people. That we become so preoccupied with being popular. That we never dare say an unpopular thing. That we never dare tell people that they're wrong. That we never disagree with them.

[13 : 59] And it's going to become a danger for the church more and more. As society moves further and further away from the Bible. It's going to become a danger. Especially for Christians. A society becomes more and more and more secular.

It's going to be unpopular today to say that same-sex marriage is wrong. It's going to be unpopular today to say that abortion is wrong. It will cost us friends. It will cost us places of influence in

society.

But remember, woe to you when all men speak well of you. Woe to you when all men speak well of you. Sinful man will want nothing to do with the things of God.

And so if we're living. If we're preaching. If we're living as citizens of the kingdom of God. Then natural man, sinful man will oppose us in that.

So that's the first thing Jesus calls us to. The first aspect of kingdom living then, if you like, is to know the times. To know that our hope isn't in riches or fullness in this life.

[15:03] To know that our hope isn't in reputation in this life. But is in God. Secondly then, he calls them to kingdom living. And what that will mean is loving your enemies.

Loving your enemies. And we see that in verses 27 through 31. Jesus says and further draws out what this kingdom living will look like.

What living as part of his kingdom will look like in verse 27. Look, he says to you. I say, love your enemies and do good to those who hate you.

We know that. It's one of the things that people often quote. It's one of the perhaps little snippets of Jesus' teaching that they actually know. Perhaps along with judge not lest ye be judged.

We know this verse. We know Jesus calls us to love our enemies. But the danger is that we can miss the impact that that would have. Don't forget who Jesus is teaching here.

[16:04] Don't forget who Jesus is speaking to here. A group of largely Jewish people. A group of people who were living under Roman occupation. And Jesus here calls them and says part of being my kingdom will mean loving your enemies.

What do you mean those Romans? We have to do good to those who steal our money. We have to be kind to those who trample all over our rights. We have to be kind to those who trample all over our livestock.

We have to be kind to those who can compel us to do anything at any moment. Yes, Jesus says love your enemies. Do good to those who hate you.

That's part of kingdom living. That's part of what it means to be God's people. He continues verse 28. Bless those who curse you and pray for those who abuse you.

Of course Jesus Christ himself embodied that as he walked on the earth, didn't he? As he was crucified. What is his prayer? Father, forgive them. For they know not what they do.

[17:12] He was praying for his enemies. He was blessing those who cursed him. Verse 29. The one who strikes you on the cheek. Offer up the other.

Also, this idea isn't like a light slap on the cheek. A light tap. Rather, it's a full-blown punch. A full-blown strike on the cheek.

The one who takes away your cloak. The one who steals from you. Let him also have your tunic as well. Now, the danger is this all sounds a bit wet, doesn't it?

We take this teaching to its natural conclusion. Then Christians become essentially doormats. Who never retaliate. Who never stand up for their rights. Who never stand up to anyone. Who never protect themselves.

Who never look after themselves or their family. But lets everyone take everything off them. But is that what Jesus really means here?

[18:14] Is that the application of this passage? That we're to just let anyone take anything they want off us with no recourse? No.

I think Jesus is showing us here. Jesus is showing the people at the time. Jesus is showing his disciples what being part of his kingdom is all about. He's showing them the counter-cultural nature of his kingdom.

You see, the law said what? The law said an eye for an eye. A tooth for a tooth. A strike for a strike. So if someone struck you, you were quite within your rights to strike them back.

Jesus says here, Being my follower won't mean being a doormat. But it will mean that you won't insist on your rights being primary. It will mean that you give people grace rather than law.

It won't insist that the damage done to you will be done to others. Instead, we suffer loss gladly for the sake of the kingdom. We forgo our rights knowing the Lord that we serve.

[19:24] We forgo our rights knowing how. High. In humility, he came down from heaven. Natural man always wants to get his own back, doesn't he?

My hometown has been in the news a lot recently for, sadly, all the wrong reasons. One that stood out for me was a man who had been beaten to death in his home.

He'd had a fight with another man, allegedly, at one point. And then this other man came back and gave him a beating in his home and beat him to death. That's natural man, isn't it?

It's maybe a shock and it's maybe an extreme example, but that's at heart what we're all like. We're all wronged and we want revenge. We all have our rights trampled on and we want to fight back. We lash out and hurt the one who hurt us. Rather, Jesus says, no, part of kingdom living, part of being a follower of me, is that you love your enemies, is that you pray for those who persecute you, is that you don't insist on your rights being primary.

[20 : 39] How are we doing with that this morning? How are we doing at praying for our enemies this morning? How are we doing at not retaliating this morning?

You see, we may not retaliate physically, we may not walk up to someone and punch them. But we can harbor this attitude in our hearts. We can harbor this attitude in ourselves.

Someone says something nasty about us, and as I say, we're not going to walk up and deck them in the street. But deep down inside, we harbor this hatred for them. Deep down inside, we harbor this attitude of wrong against them.

Jesus calls us to put that to death and follow him. To not have that attitude within our heart, to not have that attitude of wanting our rights met, but suffering loss for him.

We see verse 30, Jesus calls us to give to everyone who begs. To those who want something off us, give to them without expecting in return.

[21 : 46] Verse 31, famously, as we know, as you wish that others would do to you, do so to them. So we've been called then to know the times. We've been called, as followers of Jesus, to know where our hope is.

We've been called, as part of our kingdom living, to love our enemies. That shows that we belong to the kingdom of Christ. And then thirdly this morning, we're called to kingdom living, to know our Father.

And we see that in verses 32 through 36. Verse 32 through verse 36. Know your Father. I love this section of scripture.

I've never actually studied it before in any great detail. I wasn't really, overly familiar with it before I started on this. But it's a lovely section. Because Jesus says what? Verse 32, if you love those who love you, what benefit is that to you?

What profit is that to you? Look, even sinners do that. If you do good to those who do good to you, what benefit is that? Even sinners do that. If you lend to someone, and you have a reasonable expectation of return, again, what advantage is that to you?

[22 : 56] Sinners do that. Jesus is showing them here, how different his kingdom is. Jesus is showing them here, how radical his kingdom is.

Even sinners do what you're looking for credit for doing. Even sinners do the things that you think bring you credit. That doesn't show you're part of my kingdom.

That doesn't show you're one of my disciples. Rather, verse 35, love your enemies. Do good. Lend, expecting nothing, in return, and your reward will be great.

Notice please the motivation. Notice please what ties this whole section together. Notice please why this is part of being part of God's kingdom. Notice why this is part of being a follower of Jesus Christ.

Because what does he say, verse 35? Your reward will be great, and you will be sons of the Most High, for he is kind to the ungrateful, and the evil.

[24 : 06] You claim to follow God, you claim to be my disciples, you claim to be part of this new kingdom, you claim to want to be part of the kingdom of God, then show it, by being kind to the ungrateful, and the evil.

That's what it means to live in this new kingdom. That's what it means to be a disciple. That's what it means to be a follower of Christ. That's what it means, to have God as your father. And of course, that's our hope, this morning, isn't it?

That God is kind to the ungrateful, and the evil. Because that's what we are, friends, by birth. We're ungrateful for the mercies of God. We're evil, each one of us, with no thought for God, no thought for the kingdom of God, no thought for others, other than ourselves.

And yet, in his kindness, in his mercy, God sent his son, God in his love, sent his son, so that we might come to know him.

Truly, this morning, friends, God is kind to the ungrateful, and the evil, and that, that is the hope of the gospel. That's the good news, that we have to share.

[25 : 19] As we reach the town of Dumfries, as we reach people, with the gospel, that's the good news, that God is kind, to us. Are you ungrateful, this morning, than trusting the gospel?

It's been brought home to me recently, I was thinking about, some of the sacrifices, that our parents made, as we were growing up. You never appreciated it at the time, you never really fully understood it at the time, you just wanted, a new pair of football boots, you just wanted, a new whatever it was.

You didn't realize, how ungrateful you were, until you had kids of your own. Until you had to spend the money, on your kids, rather than something, that you wanted to do.

Now if that's how ungrateful, we are in nature, imagine how much more, that appears to God, who gave us his son, who gave us this world, who gives us, every good and perfect gift.

Are you ungrateful, this morning, than trusting the gospel, trusting Jesus Christ, and God will forgive you. Why? Because he's kind. Are you evil, this morning, and trusting the gospel, and God will forgive you.

[26 : 37] Trust in Jesus Christ, and God will forgive you, because he is kind. It's a wonderful comfort, this morning to know that, isn't it?

It's a wonderful thought, this morning to know, that God is kind to us, even when we don't deserve it. even when we weren't seeking him, God was making a way for us to come to know him.

what does it mean this morning, to be part of God's kingdom? What does it mean, to live in this kingdom? Well it means, that we know the time.

It means, that we don't put our hope, in the things of this world. It means, that we don't put our hope, and our confidence, in our riches, but in God. It means, that we love, our enemies, that we pray for those, who persecute us.

And why do we do that? Because we know our father. We know that he is kind, even to the ungrateful, and the evil.

[27 : 39] That's what it means, to be part of God's kingdom. That's what kingdom living is. To know the times. To love your enemies.

And to know your father. Let's live then, as citizens of God's kingdom, and not as citizens of the world. Amen.