

AM Luke 6:37-49

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[0 : 0 0] Well, good morning friends. It's good to be with you again. I've decided to revert to this format because I think it was the easier way for people to hear. It helped people actually engage with what we were doing. And also secondly, I think theologically it helps remind us that what we're doing isn't church. We're hearing from the Word of God. Yes, of course we are. We're listening to what God has to say to us through His Word. Yes, we are. But fundamentally what we're doing is not church. We're making the best of a bad situation, but one day we will return to church. One day we will return to preaching, but at the moment that day isn't today. And having this perhaps slightly disjointed format perhaps reminds us of that truth. But we are going to hear together from God's Word this morning. We want to listen in Luke chapter 6. Luke chapter 6, continuing our studies in Luke. And we're going to read from verse 37 down to 49 of Luke chapter 6.

He also told them a parable. Can a blind man lead a blind man? Will they not both fall into a pit? A disciple is not above his teacher, but everyone when he is fully trained will be like his teacher. Why do you see the speck that is in your brother's eye, but do not notice the log that is in your own eye? How can you say to your brother, Brother, let me take the speck that is in your eye, when you yourself do not see the log that is in your own eye? You hypocrite. First take the log out of your own eye, and then you will see clearly to take out the speck that is in your brother's eye.

For no tree bears bad fruit, nor again does a bad tree bear good fruit, for each tree is known by its own fruit. For figs are not gathered from thorn bushes, nor are grapes picked from a bramble bush. The good person out of the good treasure of his heart produces good, and the evil person out of his evil treasure produces evil. For out of the abundance of the heart his mouth speaks. Why do you call me Lord, Lord, and not do what I tell you? Everyone who comes to me and hears my words and does them, I will show you what he is like. He is like a man building a house, who dug deep and laid the foundation on the rock. And when a flood arose, the stream broke against that house and could not shake it, because it had been well built. But the one who hears and does not do them is like a man who built his house on the ground without a foundation. When the stream broke against it, immediately it fell, and the ruin of that house was great. Amen.

Now let's turn to the Lord in prayer now. Let us pray. Heavenly Father, we thank you for your word. We thank you for the power that it still has. We thank you for the way that it speaks to us, even in these difficult circumstances. We pray, Father, that you'd be with us this morning as we study it, as we study perhaps words that are familiar to us. May we, Father, feel the impact of them. May we see them with fresh eyes, we ask. Remember all of those who are working with the NHS at the moment. Pray, Father, that you would continue to grant them health. We pray that you would continue to grant them strength as this coronavirus continues to spread. We pray, Father, for all of those who are fearful in our town. May you be near to them. And we pray for all of those who are in the congregation who are sick and suffering that your good hand would be upon them.

[3 : 5 5] And we pray that you'd be with us now as we come to your word, we ask in Jesus' name. Amen. Well, let's have that passage from Luke chapter 6 open in front of us. Luke chapter 6 and verses 37 through 49. Luke 6 verses 37 through 49. When I was at university studying history and politics, one of the modules that I decided to take was entitled Britain and Ireland in comparative perspective. It was about as exciting as it sounds. The idea behind the module, and to be fair, I'd say it was quite a good module as they went, and it was one that I quite enjoyed, that you looked at the electoral system in Britain and Ireland and you compared them, that you looked at both parliaments in Britain and Ireland and compared them. You see what the difference were, you see what the similarities were, you see how they were alike and you saw how they were dislike. So for example, we would consider the number of members of parliament in the UK, 650 as we all know. You compare that to the number of seats in the Dáil, 158 for anyone who's interested. We thought

about the different systems that might be used to elect those representatives, a straight first past the post system in the UK compared to proportional representation in Ireland. We looked at both systems and thought about the question, well what's best for democracy, what's best for local representation, what's best for accountability of local leaders. We compared them to see which was better. We compared them to see which worked well. And as we come to these verses in Luke 6, these verses 37 through 49 this morning, at heart they're all about a comparison, aren't they? There's a contrast being made, there's a contrast being drawn. There's an invitation from Jesus to consider two ways of living and think about which is best, think about which is wisest, think about which looks the best.

We want to see three things this morning, consider three things together. See these three comparisons that Jesus draws. Firstly, we want to think about the speck and the log. Those who are keen to help their brother with a speck in their eye, but haven't noticed a log in their own. Secondly, we want to think about good and bad fruit. See which is produced by which types of tree. And then thirdly, we want to think about founded versus unfounded. We see how all of the people in the parable that Jesus tells, all of the people hear his words. But some found their lives on them, some build their lives on them. While others build their lives on other things that proves fruitless in the long run. Speck v log, good v bad, founded v unfounded.

So firstly, we want to think about the idea of the speck and the log. The speck and the log. And we see that in verses 37 through 42. Verses 37 through 42. So remember where we are in Luke's gospel. We're in the middle of this so-called sermon on the plain. We thought about the similarities. We thought about the differences between this sermon on the plain and the sermon on the mount that's recorded for us in Matthew's gospel. Last week we saw how Jesus taught his disciples what it would mean to follow him. How living as part of his kingdom would be completely counter-cultural. That as Christians, we're called not just to love those who love us, but actually we're called to love even our enemies.

And as we come to verse 37 then, as we come to the start of this section this morning, we come to one of perhaps the most misunderstood verses in scripture. Because what are we told? Jesus says, verse 37, judge not and you will not be judged. It's often trotted out when Christians are calling something wrong. When Christians are standing up against something. You know, a Christian might be arguing that same-sex marriage is wrong and somebody will say, well, Jesus said, judge not lest you be judged.

[7 : 58] It might be brought out when Christians are saying to people, well look, living together before marriage isn't really right. And somebody will say, well look, Jesus said, judge not and you won't be judged.

But is that really what Jesus means here? On one level it would go against everything else that we read in the Bible, wouldn't it?

Jesus himself confronts sin wherever he finds it. He wasn't even afraid to confront sin amongst the religious leaders. More than that, Jesus assures his disciples later on that they are to be those who will judge the world.

So when Jesus says here in verse 37, judge not lest ye be judged. This isn't a blanket ban on judgment per se. It isn't a blanket ban on using our discernment to say what's right and wrong. But rather it is a warning against an overly critical spirit. Jesus is saying to his disciples, saying to his followers here, look, if you judge others, if you lay heavy burdens on them, if you criticize them when they fail, you yourself will be judged by those same standards.

[9 : 11] You yourself will be expected to carry that same burden. We all know this from our own lives, don't we? We all know people who have negative critical spirits. We all know people who expect a lot from people.

People for whom nothing is ever quite good enough. That no one's ever quite as working quite as hard as them. That no one's ever advanced quite as far as them. That no one's ever progressed quite as far as them.

And don't we enjoy it when those people fail? Don't we enjoy it when those people fail? That's what Jesus is getting at here. Look, those people have been judgmental.

Those people have laid heavy burdens on others and they failed. They haven't lived up to those standards and so others are going to be judgmental with them. It's the same idea when it's carried on to this next statement that Jesus makes.

To condemn not and you will not be condemned. To forgive and it will be forgiven. Give and it will be given back to you. And we see the conclusion, don't we then?

[10:14] Why is this? Why does this work the way that it does? Because with the measure you use, it will be measured back to you.

Certainly in this life. What you demand of people will be demanded of you. With the grace that you show to people, grace will be shown to you. To illustrate this truth, to show this truth, Jesus told a parable.

And again, it's a parable that we're all probably quite familiar with. Can the blind lead the blind? If they try, then what's going to happen? If they try, then both of them are going to end up falling into a pit. This was a society before guide dogs.

This was a society before paved tarmac roads. This was a society before Dumfries and Galloway Council pothole repairs such as it is. If a hole in the road developed, if you couldn't see it, then what was going to happen?

Obviously you were going to fall into it. If you had another person walking beside you, obviously they might say, Well look, hold on. Come this way. There's a bit of a hole there. There's a bit of a rut there.

[11:19] Come this way. But if that person's blind as well, then neither of you can see it. You're both going to end up in the hole. Then verse 41.

How come, Jesus says, how come you can see the speck that's in your brother's eye, but you can't see the plank that's in your own eye? How can you see the faults in everyone else and yet miss the faults in your own life?

How quick you are to point out the faults in everyone else's life without seeing the faults in your own. There's an advert on television at the minute for Febreze.

It says, have you gone nose blind? It asks the question, have you gotten so used to the smells of your own house that you don't even smell them any longer? Have you gotten so used to the smell of the dog that you can't even smell it any longer?

Have you gotten so used to the smell of the sweaty gym kit that you can't even smell it any longer? But someone coming in fresh can. Obviously the solution is of course Febreze.

[12:23] Because it eliminates odors, not just masks them. And that's how it can feel with sin in our lives. That we've become so used to the sin in our lives. That the sin in our lives has become so ingrained in us that we don't even really see it as sin anymore.

Or so much a part of us that we don't even recognize it anymore. Our bitter critical spirit is just who we are. Our struggle with anger isn't our problem.

It's all those other idiots that are around us all the time. You get the idea. We miss the plank that's in our own eye. But we can see the speck that's in our brothers.

We can see their bitter critical spirit. The one time they let it slip. We see their anger when it bursts forth under extreme provocation.

And we say to them, well look brother, you really shouldn't have got angry there. We try to remove the speck. We try to deal with the sin in our brother's life.

[13:28] Without ever dealing with the log that's in our own eye. When Jesus says, look, take the log out of your own eye first. Deal with your own sin first. Deal with your own shortcomings first.

And then you'll be able to deal properly with the speck that's in your brother's eye. Then you'll be able to deal properly with the sin of your brother. So what does this section call us to?

Jesus talks about the log and the speck. What does it call us to? What does it demand of us? Well it calls us to examine our hearts, doesn't it?

Do we have that harsh critical spirit? Do we have that judgmental spirit? Do we have that spirit that nothing is ever quite good enough for? Are we constantly judging others?

Are we constantly looking for others to fall? So that we can pounce on them. So that we can prove that they just don't get it. Are we examining our lives?

[14:30] Are we knowing ourselves and knowing our sins? Are we knowing the areas that we feel in, that we need prayer in? Are we making sure that we're taking the log out of our own eye before trying to take the speck out of our brother's eye?

So that's the first comparison Jesus wants to draw. That's the first comparison Jesus presents us with this morning. Those who can see, can't see their sin and have a log in their eye.

But they love to see the sin in others. To try and help them remove their speck. Secondly then, Jesus presents us with this comparison between good and bad fruit.

Between good trees and bad trees. This comparison continues. We see that in verse 43. Jesus says, look, no good tree bears bad fruit.

No bad tree bears good fruit. It makes sense, doesn't it? If the tree is bad and rotten, if the roots are bad and rotten, then the fruit that the tree produces will be bad and rotten.

[15 : 34] If the tree is good and healthy, if the tree is full of life, if the tree has roots that go down deep, if the tree has access to water and light, then the fruit that the tree produces, by all accounts, will be good and healthy and full of life.

But the metaphor changes, doesn't it, slightly in verse 44. Jesus says, look, this is what happens. No tree, no good tree bears bad fruit. No bad tree bears good fruit.

But the metaphor changes slightly in verse 44. What does Jesus say? Well, actually, each tree produces fruit of its own kind. You don't go to a thorn bush and hope to find figs on it.

You don't go to a bramble and try to find grapes on it. No, if you're looking for grapes, where do you go? You go to the vine. If you're looking for fakes, where do you go? You go to the fig tree because that's what you expect to find on a fig tree.

So what's the point? Well, Jesus says, verse 45, it's the same with people. Because the good person, out of the abundance of his heart, out of the goodness of his heart, brings forth good.

[16 : 43] And the evil person, out of the abundance of the heart, the mouth speaks.

Lays us out for us, doesn't it? There are only two types of people in the world. There are only good or bad. Of course, we know our theology.

We know that we're all bad people by nature. We're all by nature sinful. We're all born with that bent towards sin. We're all born with that bias away from God and the things of God.

We're all born as people in sin. So how then can we bring forth good fruit? Well, quite simply, in and of ourselves, we can. We need that regenerating work of the Holy Spirit.

We need that powerful working of the Holy Spirit in our lives. We need to know the atoning death of Christ in our place. We need that vital living connection with him as our Savior.

[17 : 49] Then and only then can we bring forth good fruit in our lives. Then and only then are we truly good people. Then and only then is the heart changed. I assume that if I were to ask most of you this morning, are you good people?

Most of you would say yes. There's very few of us would admit to being a bad person. But what about if I were to ask you, why are you a good person?

Well, I volunteer for charity. I've signed up to be a responder for the NHS in recent days. I was one of the 400,000. I try to be nice to people.

I set up a WhatsApp group in the streets so that I can go and get groceries and things for people who can't get out. Good. I obey the laws of the land and in God's sight. That doesn't make you a good person.

What makes you a good person this morning is that you know Jesus as your Savior. What makes you a good person this morning is that you know the peace of sin is forgiven.

[18 : 55] It's that you know that he and he alone has dealt with your sin. So I ask you again. Are you a good person this morning? As Christians, of course, this passage also forces us to ask, well, what kind of fruit are we producing in our lives?

Are we producing fruit that is bitter? Are we producing fruit that is critical? Are we producing fruit that is good and pleasant? Fruit that is more and more Christ-like?

So that's the second comparison then. The good and bad fruit that each person produces. Thirdly and finally this morning then, we want to see the founded versus the unfounded life.

The person who builds their life on Christ and those who don't. And we see that in verses 46 through 49. And as we come to this section, it's another famous parable.

It's another famous story that Jesus told. Again, it's one that we're perhaps all familiar with. But often I think we put the cart before the horse here. Often I think we get this parable the wrong way around.

[20 : 04] Because when we think about this parable, what's our explanation? Well, we might say, well, are we building our lives in the Lord Jesus Christ? Do we have a good foundation on which to build the rest of our lives?

That, in many senses, is of course a legitimate application. But I think it's even more basic than that. But it's even more fundamental than that.

The question that we need to ask ourselves in this section. The question that we really need to think about in this section. Is are we listening to Jesus and putting his words into practice?

Are we listening to Jesus and doing what he tells us to do? Because we see that in verse 46, don't we? Why do you call me Lord, Lord, and not do what I tell you?

Why do you give me reverence and respect by calling me Lord, and yet completely ignore everything that I say? Why do you say that you're my followers, and yet not do a single thing that I tell you to do?

[21 : 11] Most of you know, I've shared this before. I used to work in Sainsbury's as a checkout team leader. One of my roles at night was to make sure that everything that had been brought to the tills, but not paid for, everything that had been left behind, was put away at the end of the night.

We had to put the non-perishable items away in the shop floor, and the perishable items we had to make sure that they were disposed of correctly. Often the last thing I had to do at night was to go into the manager's office and make sure that all the cash that had been sent through for the day had been accounted for.

So often what I would do is leave the staff in charge of sorting it out. You know, I might say to someone, well, Jimmy, will you put those away for me? I'd come out of the office, having done all that I needed to do in there, and find Jimmy chatting to his mates, and not having done the thing that I'd ask him to do.

The basket full of shopping was still there. Despite the fact that I was in charge, despite the fact that I had a level of authority, Jimmy didn't do what he was told.

And that's what Jesus says here in verse 46. Look, you call me Lord, but you don't follow my teaching. You say that I'm your teacher, and yet you don't do the things that I'm telling you to do.

[22 : 33] Or as Jesus Christ himself put it, many will say to me on the day of judgment, Lord, Lord, did we not cast out demons in your name? Did we not do mighty works in your name? And Jesus will say, depart from me, for I never knew you.

Why do you call me Lord, Lord, and not do what I tell you? Look, I'll show you, Jesus says. I'll show you. Verse 47. People come, and they hear the word of Christ.

People come, and they put the teaching of Jesus Christ into practice. This is what that man's like. This is what the person who builds his life on the teaching of Christ is like. He's like a man who's building a house.

But before he builds, he digs deep. Before he builds, he lays the foundation. Before he builds, he makes sure that the house is secure. He makes sure that the foundations are right.

And when the storms of life come, when the difficulties and problems arise in life, when the rain beats against that house, the house is secure.

[23 : 39] Why? Because the foundations are secure. The house is safe because the foundations have been laid right. His foundations are rooted in obeying Christ.

And this is the point at which I think we, we can slightly miss. It's the point that we, we slightly don't draw out. Verse 49.

Look what happens. Verse 49. But the one who hears. This other man still hears the teaching of Jesus Christ.

This other man still heard what Jesus had to say. This other man listened to the sermons. This other man listened to the teaching. But he doesn't do it.

He doesn't put the words of Jesus into practice. He's like a man who builds a house, but he doesn't do the hard work. He doesn't dig the deep foundations. He doesn't dig deep enough to make the house safe.

[24 : 44] He builds superficially. And he may build a wonderful edifice. He may build a wonderful, beautiful house, but it's not safe. It's not secure.

He builds superficially. And when the storms of life come, when illness strikes, when death strikes, when global pandemics strike, his life is exposed for what it is, without foundation, without hope. We're all in church this morning. We've all heard the word of God this morning. We've all heard what Jesus has to say to us. The question is, are we listening?

The question is, are we putting the words of Jesus into practice? Are we doing what Jesus tells us to do? Or are we just ignoring them? Do not be hearers of the word only, but be doers as well.

You see, we're all building our lives on something this morning. We all have a foundation of some description this morning.

[26 : 03] Things that are fundamental to who we are. Might be our job. Might be our health. Might be our family.

Might be our status. Might be any number of things. But the only sure foundation to build on is Jesus and his teaching. The only sure foundation to build on is doing what Jesus says.

Because that's fundamentally the challenge this morning. That's fundamentally the difference between these two men. One hears the word of Christ and puts it into practice.

Whereas the other doesn't. You've heard the word this morning. But are you putting it into practice? Are you doing what Jesus commands?

Know what Jesus to do about? The other doesn't want to do it before? Because there's a routine here. Let's have a thought. The other Paddy will be chilling with you. Start with the inneruis.

Imagine, what do you know?

[27 : 18] Bye-bye. Bye-bye. Bye-bye. Bye-bye. Bye. Bye-bye. Bye-bye. Bye.

Bye-bye. Bye-bye. Bye-bye. Bye-bye. Bye-bye. Bye-bye. Bye-bye. Bye-bye. Bye-bye. Bye-bye.

Bye-bye. Thank you.

Thank you.

Thank you.