

Two Ways to Live

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Preacher: Andrew Price

[0 : 00] All right, I'm guessing most of you have heard of Sesame Street. Yep, yeah, kids show, teach them educational things. I think it's where the Muppets were first made famous.

But on Sesame Street, they'd often have a number of the day that they would teach the children how to count with. And the Muppet that would help count with the children was, of course, Count Dracula.

Count, count. But he's even got a song now, which I didn't have growing up. I missed out, ripped off. But anyway, have a listen. Here's the song. It's time to get up and stomp your feet to this great foot-stomping Transylvanian beat.

Start nice and slow. One, two. And speed up more. One, two, three, four. And stomp away. One, two, three, four. Because we're about to find out the number of today. What's the number? Stop. Stop.

What's the number? Stop. Stop. What is the number? The number of the day, I present to you. The number of the day is two.

[1 : 07] So that's the number. Stop. Yes, that's the number. Stop. That's the number. Stop. The number of the day. That's the number. Stop. Stop. That's the number of the day.

Two. I bet you never thought you'd be watching Sesame Street in church this morning. Now there is a point to it and the point is the number of our day today is also two.

Because as we'll see there are lots of groups of two in our reading, lots of pairs actually in Jesus' teaching. And importantly he'll finish his teaching with two ways to live.

Either by hearing his word and not doing it or hearing his word and doing it. But given today is the end of his sermon, let me just give two points of context to help wrap it up.

First we saw a couple of weeks ago that the Pharisees rejected Jesus. You might remember Vijay had his cool Pharisee omelet. But Jesus didn't just then teach them how to respond to persecution.

[2 : 19] I think it was actually bigger than that. Jesus was also regathering Israel to himself as their new leader. Since the religious leaders had rejected him and had failed Israel.

That's why, if you remember on the next slide, when Jesus calls his disciples, he chooses some to be apostles. How many does he choose to be apostles?

Twelve. How many tribes of Israel were there? Twelve. It's like he's reinstating the new tribes, the new Israel, as their new leader.

He's rebooting Israel, if you like, around himself. And that's why on the next slide, people gather from everywhere, from all over Judea and Jerusalem, Tyre and Sidon.

This is Israel coming to him, to hear him and to be healed. He's regathering, you see, Israel around himself. And so that's the first point of context to remember.

[3 : 25] Jesus is rebooting Israel. And the second point of context to remember is that he then teaches them what it means to be a true disciple. Part of true, this new true Israel, God's people.

This is Luke's version of the Sermon on the Mount, on a level place on the mountainside. And so if you just go back to the slide, thanks, Tim. As you can see, there's a large crowd of disciples there. And as well as a multitude of people who came to hear and be healed. Both groups, though, were a mixed bag. Just because it says there was disciples doesn't mean they automatically were committed to him.

In fact, the word disciple just means student or learner. And the crowds and the big crowd of disciples had come to learn from Jesus.

But would they really commit to following Jesus? Would they not just hear his word, but do it?

[4 : 27] It's why Jesus includes woes, which we heard two weeks ago. In fact, someone pointed out to me that even Judas, whom Luke calls the traitor, is named among his disciples and apostles.

So it's a mixed bag. And so Jesus is now teaching them what it means to be a true disciple, to follow him as part of the true Israel that he's regathering. And that's why Luke tells us as Jesus speaks, notice at the end there, he speaks looking at his disciples, because he's teaching them what it means to be a true disciple. And so two weeks ago, we saw that it means suffering. And not just in persecution. Again, I think it was bigger than that. It also includes missed opportunities we might face for putting Jesus first. Or it might simply be being poor in the world's eyes. Either way, we are actually blessed. For we are part of God's kingdom now.

[5 : 25] And God promises he will more than make up for it later. And then last week, we heard it means loving our, even our enemies. And it finished with verse 36 on your sheets there.

To be merciful just as your father is merciful. That verse summarizes last week, but it also leads into this week, where Jesus says to be a true disciple means not judging, but showing mercy.

And so that's what's happening here. And in keeping with our number of the day, I have two points, but the first one will be the longest. So hang in there. We will finish. So point one, don't be judgmental, but do show mercy.

Have a look at verse 37 and 38. He says, do not judge and you will not be judged. Do not condemn and you will not be condemned. Forgive and you'll be forgiven.

Give and it will be given to you. Here is our number of the day again. We see two groups of two. Two negatives, don't judge, don't condemn.

[6 : 32] Two positives, do forgive, do give. Now, when people hear don't judge, they often think we shouldn't make any judgments of any kind. But that's not what Jesus is saying here.

You see, there is a right judgment we are all to make that judges between what's good and bad, what's right and wrong, what's wise and unwise. A few years ago, a prison man on the next slide crashed his car into his home after misjudging his garage.

Now, surely that's a judgment he should have made, shouldn't it? And we can call this right judgment discernment. And we should all do that.

We should discern between right and wrong, good and bad, wise and unwise. Rather, the wrong judgment that Jesus is saying we shouldn't do is to be judgmental.

Where we don't just discern someone's actions as wrong, we go further and then condemn them as inferior, as though we would never do that. Or we condemn them as deserving of judgment when we don't know all the facts.

[7 : 39] Or we condemn them without hope of redemption. You know, we write them off in our minds or we hold a grudge against them in our hearts. For example, when we first read that headline about that Brisbane man a moment ago, you know, how many of us thought, what a clown.

He should have his license taken away from him. Now, I don't think you all thought that. But if we did, that's being judgmental, isn't it? For it condemns the man as a clown as though we've never misjudged anything in our lives.

Of course we have. And it condemns the man without hope of redemption. You know, take his license from him. When maybe he had a heart attack and he still deserves to drive once he gets better.

Or when Daniel Andrews passed that conversion bill that makes prayer illegal for certain things, we should discern there are good aspects of that bill. But the part outlawing prayer is not only un-Australian, it contradicts God.

And that's a bad part and we shouldn't submit to it actually. And while we might pray for another premier, we're not then to condemn Dan as inferior when we've all made bad decisions too.

[8 : 46] Or condemning without hope but continue to pray for him, both his healing and his conversion. Or if someone wrongs us at church and we can discern that it's wrong, but we're then not to condemn them by, you know, gossiping about them.

Did you hear what they said? The height of them. I would never do that. Or condemn them without hope by holding a grudge against them as though they're undeserving of our forgiveness.

When we're actually all undeserving, aren't we? You see, there is a difference between being discerning and being judgmental. And to follow Jesus as a true disciple, to be part of God's true Israel, means we're not to be judgmental and condemn.

And we don't know all the facts often. Or are better than they are. Instead, we are to forgive and give. And I take it giving refers not to giving money or food.

The Bible talks about giving to help people in need with those things elsewhere. But because it's paired with forgiving, I take it that giving refers to giving mercy.

[9 : 54] Just as our Father gives mercy. And yet all this, like last week, is much easier said than done, isn't it? Especially when people do such wrong things to us that it's so easy to write them off.

And so Jesus gives us some motivation. Now first he says, the way we treat others determines the way God will treat us. Did you notice that? In verse 37. You know, don't judge or condemn others and God will not judge or condemn us.

Or verse 38. Do forgive others and God will forgive us. In fact, we say this every time we pray the Lord's Prayer. Did you realize?

Remember that line from the Lord's Prayer? Forgive us our sins as we forgive those who sin against us. And if we give mercy to others, God will give mercy to us.

In fact, he'll give an abundance of mercy. See the rest of verse 38. 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.

[11 : 04] When people went to the markets and wanted a good measure for their money, the seller would pour grain into a container. So I've got some grain of rice here. And what they do is, to make sure it's a good measure, you know, they pour it in and then they kind of just shake it down, make sure there's no gaps.

This is my kid's cup, which is why there's crazy animals on it. But anyway, they shake it down. They press it like this. That's what he's talking about. Press down and then piled on top just to make sure it's a good measure.

I'll vacuum later. It's okay. That's what it's talking about. We give mercy, God's going to give us that mercy, an abundance. It's kind of the opposite of McDonald's, really.

You know how when you go to McDonald's and they give you your fries, they actually squeeze the container. They trained me to squeeze the container so that it looks full, but when you get home, it's on the next slide, it's actually containers, wine and they all drop down.

God's promising the opposite. If we give mercy, God will give us mercy. In fact, an abundance.

[12 : 16] And so the end of verse 38 really summarizes his first motivation. The measure you use with others will be measured to you. Now, I don't think we really need any more motivation than that, actually, but Jesus gives it nonetheless.

And so he says, secondly, we're not to be judgmental, but show mercy because being judgmental makes us silly hypocrites. Like the Pharisees we saw a few weeks ago. Here are three groups of two pairs and in each pair, there's one who acts with silly hypocrisy.

So let me show you verse 39. He also told them this parable, can the blind lead the blind? Will they not both fall into a pit? He's our first pair, a pair of blind people.

And one of them, though, acts as though they can see because they lead the other when they're just as blind themselves. It's like a sinner judging another sinner as though they've never sinned themselves.

It's hypocrisy, isn't it? And it's not just hypocrisy, it's silly hypocrisy because it can lead them into a pit. I've got some blindfolds here. Let me show you. I just need two volunteers that I can blindfold.

[13 : 28] And no, I'm only joking. We won't do that. Because you might actually trip over something up here or fall into a pit. It's not just silly, it's dangerous.

And the second pair, verse 40, the student is not above the teacher, but everyone who is fully trained will be like their teacher. Here's student teacher. There's another pair.

And it's silly for the student to think they're above the teacher, even though, let me tell you, many students do think they're above their teacher. We've got some teachers in our congregation today. I'm sure they can attest to that.

I say, at least sometimes teachers give them reason to think so, but generally a student does not know more maths or science than their teacher does. And so to act as though they do when they don't, it's silly hypocrisy, isn't it?

And well, here is Jesus teaching this group of disciples what it means to be a true disciple. And as I said before, the word student is literally disciple.

[14 : 27] And so for us students or disciples to think we're above Jesus, our teacher, or to act as though we don't need to forgive and show mercy when he forgives and shows mercy, it's silly hypocrisy, isn't it?

Rather, we are to be trained by our teacher, Jesus, hear and do his words so that we will practice forgiveness and mercy like him.

And the third pair are two Christian brothers. Verse 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? 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. Here it's one Christian says to another, oh, look, let me point out your sin for you as though they are so much better than themselves, so much superior when they've actually got bigger sins that they need to deal with.

This is perhaps the most silly example of hypocrisy. And to help you understand, here's my plank of wood. So it's like me saying, oh, Barry, I've just noticed you did something slightly wrong, so let me just point, get that speck out of you.

[15 : 53] I'm not going to hit you, am I? It's ludicrous, isn't it? I can't even reach his eye. But more than that, he's got a speck of sawdust. How much do I have?

A whole lot of wood. You get the idea, don't you? Okay. Jesus is saying we're not to act like being judgmental and showing no mercy makes us silly hypocrites.

Now, he's not saying we're never to help each other, not sin. In fact, on the next slide, God says in Galatians that if someone is caught in a sin, you who live by the Spirit should restore that person gently. And even here in our reading, he says, first take the plank out of your eye and then you'll see clearly to remove the speck from your brother's eye.

And so we can help each other. We're just first to acknowledge our own sin and to do it humbly or, as it says up there, gently. When I was a teenager, I could be quite harsh with people because I saw life as being pretty black and white.

But I remember being at uni and a Christian man caught up with me and he said, Andrew, viewing life as black and white often means you're not very compassionate with people and I know that because I struggle with the same thing.

[17 : 06] And then he said, can we help each other? Can you help me and can I help you to remember that life is sometimes grey, that we don't know all the facts so that we both might show compassion to others.

I thought that was really good. He acknowledged his own issues as well and sought to help me humbly, gently. Don't be judgmental, do show mercy. Firstly, first because how we treat others determines how God will treat us and second because it makes us silly hypocrites as all those examples show and then thirdly because it shows our heart.

Verse 43 which starts with the word for or because so it's continuing on he says, for no good tree bears bad fruit nor does a bad tree bear good fruit.

Each tree is recognised by its own fruit. People do not pick figs from thorn bushes or grapes from briars a good man brings good things out of the good stored up in his heart and an evil man brings evil things out of the evil stored up in his heart for the mouth speaks what the heart is full of.

Here's our number again two this time two trees and the point is pretty clear I think just as the type of fruit shows the type of tree so the type of words coming out of our mouth show the type of heart we have whether good or evil see the end of verse 45 it summarises it again the mouth speaks what the heart is full of and so if we utter judgmental and hypocritical words with our mouths then what sort of heart do we have?

[18 : 43] It's not just a judgmental and hypocritical one in fact Jesus uses stronger language than that doesn't he? He says an evil one that's the Pharisees though but true disciples those who believe in Jesus have had a change of heart God has worked in our hearts that we might bear good fruit and so we're to bear it we're to speak words of forgiveness and mercy that we might show our hearts are like our heavenly fathers merciful so don't be judgmental but do show mercy that we might show our hearts to be truly gods that we might show ourselves to be true disciples well Jesus is almost at the end of his sermon now about what it means to be a true disciple part of the true Israel it means blessing despite suffering two weeks ago for our future we're more to make up with it it means loving even our enemies last week and it means forgiving rather than being judgmental

this week but the question now for all those listening is how will we respond at point two and more briefly verse 46 he says why do you call me lord lord and do not do what I say see what the issue is it's not doing his word the true disciple won't just say lord lord with their mouths they'll then live it with their lives

I mean how often has the reputation of Jesus or even the church been ruined by people who claim to be Christians with their mouths but don't live it with their lives sadly far too often now yes Christians never claim to be perfect but a true disciple will mean we at least try and put his words into practice after all just like our words reveal our heart so to our actions if we really believe in Jesus if you really believe in someone you'll not only listen but you'll do what they ask won't you and so to help us Jesus gives some motivation again verse 47 as for everyone who comes to me and hears my words and puts them into practice I will show you what they are like they're like a man building a house who dug down deep and laid the foundation on rock when the flood came the torrent struck that house but could not shake it because it was well built but the one who hears my words and does not put them in the practice is like a man who built a house on the ground without a foundation the moment the torrent struck that house it collapsed and its destruction was complete here again are two builders commonly known as the wise and foolish builders and they represent two ways to live either by hearing Jesus's word and not doing it or hearing Jesus's word and doing it and if we do if we put it into practice it gives us a solid foundation for life both for this life and life eternal and so when the storms or torrents of this life come we can stand firm through them I take the storm of unemployment for example I know several people particularly at the 1030 congregation who have lost jobs and it is really hard and yet instead of falling to pieces with worry and anxiety they've stood firm through that by putting Jesus's words into practice words like on the next slide about not worrying what we need but trusting God who knows and seeking first his kingdom above all else and God has provided often in ways they didn't expect actually or take the storm of suffering as so many in our church have or are experiencing and being knocked around by suffering and yet they have or are standing firm through it how well we're putting Jesus's words into practice and his words as spoken through his apostles like on the next slide from two Corinthians where Paul writes you know we do not lose heart you know even though outwardly we're wasting away lots of us can relate to that inwardly we're being renewed for our light and momentary troubles are achieving for us an eternal glory that far outweighs them all so we fix our eyes not on the suffering that is seen we don't ignore it but we don't fix our eyes and focus on it but what is unseen the glory to come I can't remember if I've told you about a lady who used to be part of our congregation here at nine o'clock she's since passed away but she had such poor health that she wasn't able to walk for several years the last years of her life and she was stuck in a nursing home I visited her and one time I remember vividly she had just been told by the doctor that she would have to have her legs amputated because they'd become infected and the reason I remember this conversation so vividly is because while she really didn't want this to happen she could still make jokes about it like she said I don't have to worry if the staff lose my socks in the wash again Andrew you see she could stand firm through this significant storm because she didn't just hear Jesus's word to her she put it into practice like his word through his apostles to fix her eyes on the glory to come which would give her a new body in fact she even said to me I can't wait Andrew I've always wanted a really nice pair of legs you see hearing and doing Jesus's word gives us a solid foundation to stand firm through the storms of this life now and it gives us a solid foundation to stand firm through the biggest storm of judgment later you see we'll all one day have to appear before God and give an account for how we've treated God and how we've treated others in life but Jesus's word says believe in me and you will be saved from that judgment and so if we hear and do that word if we do believe in him then we'll be able to stand firm on that foundation his word and not fear judgment but look forward to salvation but if we only hear Jesus's words and don't put them in the practice don't believe in him then our life will certainly collapse on that day eternal death is no picnic and so our number of the day is two for we've heard Jesus's word to us and there are two ways to live in response we can either hear his word and not do it or we can hear his word and do it so which way will you choose let's pray our gracious heavenly father we do thank you for this word from the Lord Jesus to us today father we pray that you would help us to show ourselves to be true disciples by the way that we live not being judgmental but showing mercy help us we pray to have a solid foundation for life by not just hearing his word but by doing it we ask it in Jesus name amen finally so I said we could testify to you like fashion as ps as as al so and did that it