

Luke 6:27-36 - A New Community: New Ethics

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[0 : 00] Thank you all so much for leading us in worship.

If you'll turn with me this morning to Luke chapter 6, Luke 6, we're in the middle of a sermon Jesus preached to his followers as he began to shape a new community in very unique ways.

Last week we saw that he was calling them to have new values, strange values, very distinctive from those around them. They were going to be very different in what they treasured.

So what would it look like when his followers began to live according to those unique values? You've got to expect at this point that the ethics Jesus calls his followers to will be unique as well if they're going to reflect those unique values.

If you ask anyone in the world, just someone on the street, what Jesus told his followers to do and they could only give you one word to answer, what word do you think they might pick?

[1 : 20] What word would come to mind for you? A lot of them would say love, like I just heard several of you say. Love. Napoleon Bonaparte, the great French general, would agree with that answer.

He reportedly once said, Alexander, Caesar, Charlemagne, and I have founded empires, but upon what did they depend? Force.

Centuries ago, Jesus started an empire that was built on love and even to this day, millions will die for him. An empire built on love.

Love. That's the essence of this new ethic Jesus has for his followers. Well, that doesn't sound real unique, right? I mean, lots of people recommend love, parents, preachers, politicians, singers.

You know, everybody talks about all you need is love, love. I'll stop. Love is all you need, right? Love. Should be easy.

[2 : 29] This should be a happy sermon, a very simple, short, you hope. Jesus does indeed call us to love, but this is unique love. It's shaped by these new values he's given us.

I wouldn't use the word easy for what Jesus is about to call us to. Hear God's word at Luke 6, verse 27. Timeless truth from the God who designed us and this world.

He speaks. Hear his voice. 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 cloak, do not withhold your tunic either.

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.

[3 : 33] 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. Pray with me. Father, we give you thanks for these, your words.

But we struggle with living like this. They convict us even upon the reading of them.

[4 : 36] We do ask that you would give us your heart. Your love. Your eyes to see what it will look like to love others in the ways that you have called us to.

Jesus, we ask that you would do that work in us this morning. That it would be a change of heart that flows out and changes our lives. And impacts many around us.

Would you work by your spirit through your word this morning to change us? We ask in your name. Amen. I am not usually a fan of corny acrostics.

Actually, maybe I am. But I don't want you to think that I am. And I saw one this week that is a little bit helpful, even if corny. Love.

What's love? Love is living our values every day. I think that's helpful to us.

[5 : 43] Because to talk about love here, we need to see the connection between where we were last week in the first part of Jesus' sermon. Talking about our values. What we value. What we value.

And what it looks like now this week to connect that to how we live. To what actually shows up in our lives day in and day out. We said there were these new values Jesus was calling his followers to have.

You may remember some of them. They would value eternity above today. They would treasure Jesus more than the things of this world. They would consider the have-nots more blessed than the haves.

No big deal. That's easy, right? You got those all fixed in your hearts this week. Those of you who were here last time, a few days to straighten that out. Now that you've got the values straight, let's talk about the change that's taking place in our lives.

Having set our hearts in the appropriate direction, what does that look like when we've lived following them? Challenging values and this will be challenging this morning as well.

[6 : 55] Jesus begins to tell his followers what it looks like when we live our values every day. When love is a feeling that flows into action. When the truth of the gospel and the values of the kingdom aren't just theoretical, but they begin to permeate every aspect of our lives.

We're different people. We do different things. What's that going to look like? So I'll describe the love that Jesus is talking about here as being so full in Jesus that you give relentlessly with no need to receive repayment.

Do you see in that the connection to the values? Jesus is the treasure. We have him. Nothing else is needed to make us blessed.

To make us full. And so we share everything with others. We give away. Tangible, intangible. We'll talk about the details. Let me say up front that this is a mindset Jesus is calling us to have.

An approach to all of life. A perspective on every situation we walk into that Jesus is giving us. This is the only disclaimer I'll give this morning.

[8 : 15] It's not a checklist that we go complete. A few things we need to do and be finished with. So there are times when we must love and we must use godly wisdom as to what that love will look like.

It's not a detailed explanation of every particular situation we'll find ourselves in. So love in an abusive relationship for instance may look like getting out.

Finding safety. Getting help for yourself and for the other person. That may be what love looks like. But regardless love is the ethic.

The lens through which we are to approach all of life. What specifically does this love look like that Jesus calls us to? First it is intentionally for those who are against you.

Verse 27. I say to you who hear love your enemies. Do good to those who hate you. Bless those who curse you.

[9 : 28] Pray for those who abuse you. Martin Luther King Jr. was in prison in 1963 when he worked on polishing up his sermon on love your enemies.

He was held against his will by those working against him and against his heart for our country. His enemies were powerful and he was suffering as a result of that.

But it was in that great sermon that he said, Hate cannot drive out hate. Only love can do that. Have we not come to such an impasse in our modern world that we must love our enemies or else?

1963. And King proposed a new path. To our most bitter opponents we say, We shall match your capacity to inflict suffering by our capacity to endure suffering.

We shall meet your physical force with soul force. Do to us what you will and we shall continue to love you.

[10 : 48] To one who strikes you on the cheek, offer the other also. And from one who takes away your cloak, do not withhold your tunic either.

This is revolutionary. In case you hadn't noticed. Love has a target, Jesus says. And it's targeted towards someone.

Perhaps towards someone who's targeted you for ill. And Jesus says, You target them for good. Perhaps the person has betrayed you.

Perhaps the person has excluded you. Perhaps the person has let you down. Failed you. Disappointed you. Caused you great harm.

And Jesus is calling us to move intentionally toward those pushing away from us. To begin demonstrating love toward those who don't deserve it.

[11 : 51] Toward those our hearts are rightfully struggling to have warm feelings towards. See that's part of what agape love means.

That's the word in the Greek for love in this passage. You may know there are several types of love in Greek. This is not the word for romantic love.

This is also not the word for appreciative love. Like, I love Dabo Swinney because I think he's a great coach and I root for his team.

Or like, you love your friend because you think they're a great friend and they like the things that you do. You appreciate that about them. This is not that word either. No, the word Jesus uses for love has in mind, in the word itself, love for the unlovely.

The undeserving. Because it's an enemy you choose to love. Not something you see and appreciate in them. But someone you choose to love.

[12 : 55] Being intentionally for those who are against you. To our most bitter opponents, we say, do to us what you will and we shall continue to love you.

Secondly, when we find those who are against us, love is then actively sacrificial in its generosity. Look at verse 29.

I can't read these verses without picturing the priest in Les Mis.

You may know the story that the thief, Jean Valjean, has taken advantage of his hospitality. Has assaulted the priest and has run off with the valuable silverware.

And then Valjean is caught and dragged back to stand before the priest, guilty and ashamed. And his head is down. And the priest is upset with Valjean.

[14 : 18] But only because he hasn't taken enough. Valjean meets grace when he comes back before the priest. It's agape love.

Why did you leave the candlesticks? They're valuable. Please take them too. Now let him go. A crazy, perhaps seemingly irresponsible love.

A self-giving. That is exactly what this agape love means. It's agape love is the love of someone higher, lifting one who is lower.

Bending to aid one who is in need. And again, just as with the directive to be intentional in seeking out and moving toward our enemies, the passionate and personal nature of agape love is significant here.

Being actively generous with our forgiveness, with our finances, whatever it happens to be. Seeking out the one we would show love to.

[15 : 29] Finding the one who needs, not the one who deserves. I often think to myself when I've been offended, well, I'm willing to forgive.

I'm such a gracious guy. I'm willing to forgive him as soon as he comes groveling back to ask for it. As soon as he realizes what he's done and repents, I'll be here to forgive.

And I feel very gracious and very Christian when I sit back and think I'd be delighted to show forgiveness. Jesus says, no, no, no.

No, no. Don't wait for him. Go to him. Don't sit back and wait for him to ask. Move toward your enemy preemptively.

Don't sit back and wait for him to steal your shirt when he takes your coat. Go ahead and give him the shirt. At the same time. That's love. That's Christian.

[16 : 29] That doesn't make any sense. Unless you've received forgiveness like that from someone who moved toward you. That doesn't make any sense unless you're so full of the treasure of Jesus that giving away the shirt off your back again and again could never make you empty.

That giving away the vengeful thirst for justice against your enemy, giving away the moral high ground against your enemy who's not as good as you, could never make you empty.

When you've been given to like that, so full that nothing could take it away from you, Jesus says you go running around looking for others to give to.

The so-called golden rule right there in verse 31. As you wish that others would do to you, do so to them. Kids, your parents have told you that a hundred times, haven't they?

Treat other people the way you want them to treat you, and it's still hard to do, isn't it? You know why it's so hard? Because they may not treat us back that way.

[17 : 44] You may be kind to them, and they may still be mean back to you, and that's hard. It doesn't guarantee that you'll feel good and that nice things will happen to you.

It actually requires that you think of them first and how you would want them to feel rather than how you feel and what happens to you.

But think for just a second, kids. If you were lonely, would you want someone to come include you? If you had hurt someone or said something mean about them, would you want them to come and forgive you and tell you it was okay?

If you needed help, would you want someone to help you just enough to kind of get you by or help you a whole lot, more than you even thought you needed? What would show you that they really loved you and cared about you?

Kids, we are to love others so much that we have to sacrifice ourselves to give of ourselves, to be so generous to them that it actually costs us something, that we would share something that means something to us.

[19 : 06] Now that's not easy or normal, is it? Parents, let me ask you this. How many arguments have you broken up where both of your kids were insisting on the other one getting to have their way?

Just imagine it. You've had this happen many times. You walk into the room to the argument that starts with, dear sweet sister, I want you to use the doll first.

To which you hear the response, no darling sister, I insist that you play with it first. And the response is, mom, why do we always have to do things the way I want to do them?

She won't play with the doll first. You interrupt those arguments a lot? Happens at our house all the time.

We're very spiritual. That's not natural. That's not usually the way things are, right? Thankfully, we grow out of that me first mentality and we learn to love like Jesus is describing by sometime in early adulthood.

[20 : 19] So kids, now we get to pick on the parents a little. How many kids have overheard their parents saying, whom would you like to have over for dinner tonight, honey?

Is there anyone you're really struggling to get along with right now? Let's get them over here. Spend some time together. Or, you know whom we really need to pray for tonight, y'all?

That family that didn't invite us to the party and then went and told hateful lies about us to everyone who was there. That they seem to be going through some hard things and let's pray that God would meet them there and bless them.

Can't we pray for them together tonight? Is that what happens at your dinner table? Those conversations sound as rare as the kids' argument I made up?

Seem unnatural to you? They are. But I promise they're not exaggerated from what Jesus is calling us to. Not in the slightest. I'm taking it easy, I think, in those examples.

[21 : 24] And that's part of why we know that this kind of love is not natural to any of us. No matter what age we are, it's entirely supernatural.

Look at verse 32. If you love those who love you, what benefit is that to you? Even sinners love those who love them. If you do good to those who do good to you, what benefit is that to you?

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. Listen, it's fine to hang out with friends, to host people for dinner who will invite you over next weekend, to do someone else a favor because they're doing a favor for you.

That's fine. Just don't think it's unusual or particularly Christian. Do you want to be part of something that's not natural?

To be part of something that is world-changing, that shakes the way things work and transforms a city or the world? Do you want to be part of something supernatural?

[22 : 35] Verse 35. Love your enemies. Do good. 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 whom?

To the ungrateful and the evil. Be merciful even as your Father is merciful. When was the last time you loved somebody beyond their capability to love you back?

When was the last time? The last time you had someone in your home who doesn't have enough of a home to invite you back into theirs?

Gave to someone financially who does not have the means to pay you back and probably never will? Spoke well of someone and got them in somewhere when you know they have no intention of ever helping or speaking well of you.

Spent time investing in a relationship with someone who could never benefit you socially. Prayed for God to bless someone that you know isn't praying for you unless it's an imprecatory psalm against you.

[23 : 57] Those are the ones about God please get the wicked. That may be the only thing they'd ever pray for you. Have you prayed for them? Jesus says pray for those who abuse you.

It may be the first step we need to take. Man if several hundred of us took Jesus seriously on this thing it would be so transformative.

I dare say it would change the character of this city if not the broader world if we actually lived like this. day in and day out it's not normal.

It's supernatural. See that's what Jesus says be merciful even as your father is merciful. How's that?

What's the mercy of God his grace his love look like toward us? It's this agape love we've been talking about this morning.

[24 : 55] One last thing about agape love in the Bible agape is most often God's love. Romans 5 gives us one picture of it while we were still weak at the right time Christ died for the ungodly.

God shows his love for us in that while we were still sinners Christ died for us. If while we were enemies we were reconciled to God by the death of his son much more now that we're reconciled shall we be saved by his life.

We were enemies of God attacking him pushing away from him wishing harm on him even at times unknowingly by pursuing our own agendas rather than his wanting what we wanted rather than what he called us to.

And he was for those who were against him loving unlovely enemies. In fact his love was actively sacrificial in its generosity.

He gave of himself the higher bending down to the lower and sending his son for us. He poured himself out sacrificially not just giving until it hurt but even to the point of death and as he died praying father forgive them because we were so lovable he did that.

[26 : 34] Now weak ungodly enemies he did that to make a wretch his treasure in the words of the song we sang earlier.

I know you've heard this before I'm not giving new information to most of you but just stop and marvel at that for a minute God loves you like that that's how merciful your heavenly father had been he could have had anything or anyone he wanted in his entire creation and he chose a wretch to be his treasure that's supernatural love I love the story Corrie Ten Boom tells of the day she met a man who had been a Nazi prison guard at the concentration camp where she had been a prisoner this man is an enemy whose face she could never forget she knew him as soon as she saw him there in Munich at a church where she was speaking on forgiveness and he comes running up to her afterwards and he said I've become a

Christian I know God has forgiven me for all the cruel things I did but I want to hear it from your lips as well Fraulein will you forgive me she struggled she felt nothing warm at first there was no love for him in her then she remembered in that moment that Christ had died for this man how could she demand more payment from him and so she held out her hand with yet no words to say to him and suddenly she felt a love for the man that she never expected to come she writes this I had never known God's love so intensely as I did then so I discovered that it is not on our forgiveness she didn't have any of that in her any more than on our goodness that the world's healing hinges but on him when he tells us to love our enemies he gives along with the command the love itself isn't

God like that doesn't he give exactly what he commands supernatural love that God has poured into us in the person of Jesus so that we are so full that we can give it away to others with no need of repayment there's something else about Corey's story that I really love she explains how dependent she remained on God to give her love for her enemies she writes further having thus in this situation with the prison guard learned to forgive in the hardest of situations I never again had difficulty in forgiving I wish I could say it if there's one thing I've learned at 80 years of age it's that I can't store up good feelings and behavior but only draw them fresh from God each day she confesses as she writes this that as a 65 year old some friends from her church wounded her deeply and that she harbored bitterness against them it became in her heart something that ate her up it caused her to have sleepless nights it caused her to be hateful towards them and she found that forgiving them was as supernatural and as much something she needed

God's love for as forgiving the Nazi prison guard years before you see loving your enemies only comes by drawing fresh from God each day each situation each moment where the truth of God's love for us has to come to bear on that relationship and that conversation it's his supernatural love that we share you know that's what we mean when we talk at Southwood about expressing grace we don't just mean being kind of nice and friendly to nice church people who are nice to you and say nice things about you and so that's expressing the grace that we've received hogwash the grace we've received is so much bigger than that isn't it it's so much more amazing than that the grace we receive is not to a bunch of nice people the grace that's been poured into our lives is the kind of grace where wretches become treasures expressing grace as this self sacrificing enemy pursuing gratuitously generous intentionally self giving love permeating all of our lives in every relationship even the ones we don't want to have it pushes us towards them that's the kind of supernatural love

[31 : 56] Jesus calls all his followers to have it's not just for things I've told stories about this morning like healing racism and reconciling world wars too I think Corey's story reminds us that we all have people in our lives who are hard to love don't we who comes to mind for you who is it in your life that's hard to love for you sometimes it may be a spouse sometimes a child sometimes a parent a boss a homeless beggar a behaviorally challenged kid in your class a socially challenged adult in your neighborhood a fellow church member and Jesus says in all of those situations

I've poured my love into you so that it would overflow from you to them that's how it's supposed to work beyond what they deserve beyond what you can afford that you would love that's what it looks like to walk around in daddy's footsteps like the little boy you know little boys who want to do everything just like their dad I want to be just like dad and they're trying to mimic his every move that's what it looks like to be merciful as your heavenly father is merciful Korean pastor Yang Won son lost his two eldest sons at the hands of communist rebels who murdered them during an uprising in 1948 shortly after the event police apprehended a young man in connection to their murders and pastor son said

I demand to speak to that man who killed my sons when he sat before his great enemy for the first time pastor son said these words to him don't worry I have already forgiven you and God is longing to forgive you too he asked that the young man not be punished but instead that he be forgiven released actually released into his custody to be adopted as his son in place of the two sons he had lost at the hands of this young man years later chai son the former communist rebel wrote to his adopted father not because I want to gain heaven or to escape hell but because of your love

I have come to believe in Christ seem impossible to love like that the father adopts as his own son the one who has killed his son that's the good news of the gospel isn't it that's exactly how God has loved us who've laid our hands on his son only to be welcomed into his family that kind of supernatural love belongs only to God and to those with whom he shares it to those he is remaking in his image to you and to me whom he created for this whom he called to it and whom he is enabling even now to love our enemies just like our heavenly father let's pray father thank you for your love because we so often fashion ourselves as good people we forget that your love is designed to seek out wretches and make them your treasure we'd so much rather love good people than be called to seek out wretches but you're making us to share your heart so would you do that put someone on our minds now bring someone into our path this week give us your eyes as we prayed earlier that we would see and share your love with others we would overlook with those who don't deserve it with those we are certain we can't afford to give it to make us a new community together for the sake of your kingdom we ask in

Jesus name Amen People They