

Christs Radical Teaching

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[0 : 00] Let's turn again to this chapter, chapter 6, in the Gospel of Luke, Luke chapter 6, and reading from, well, we're going to look at that section from verse 27 to the end of the chapter.

But I say to you who hear, love your enemies, do good to those who hate you. So, bless those who curse you, pray for those who abuse you, and so on.

Now, as we know, Jesus' teaching was radical. It kind of blew away so many of the ideas and notions that people have about life.

And in a sense, Jesus is setting out for us rules for living. In fact, they're very radical rules for living. Now, of course, we need rules for life.

If we don't have rules, everything descends into chaos and into anarchy. And that is part of the problem, I suppose, with modern Britain, is that so many people are living in absolute fear because there is a total breakdown in so many parts of the inner cities where there is people live in total defiance of authority.

[1 : 24] And often, those who are trying to maintain law and order are almost powerless to deal with these things. And when we see chaos and anarchy, it really is awful because we need rules for living.

I know when we were young, maybe when we were in school, our dream would be a school with no rules. But actually, nobody would really want that because if you had life with no rules, it would become awful.

It would go into absolute chaos where anybody could do anything they wanted to anybody and with anything that belonged to anybody. It doesn't bear thinking.

And so the Lord has set out rules for us that are certain absolutes in life, things that don't change. And that is true of what the Lord has set out for us.

There are people who talk about, they say that there are no absolutes. There are people who talk even in the whole realm of ethics and morals. They talk about situational ethics and situational morals.

[2 : 30] In other words, that you can chop and change things according to where you are in the situation that you are in. That it's all right in one situation, but it changes in another situation.

And there are people who live in this kind of fluid way. But God doesn't deal like that. He's a God of order and a God who has set out for us a particular way in which we ought to live.

And in these fixed absolutes we know that we are all sinners because that's just the way it is. We are born in sin. We also know that every breach of the law of God is wrong.

And that we are constantly breaking God's law. But it is also true, God has set out that any person who comes to him by faith, repenting of their sin, will be saved.

And so God has set out these wonderful things for us in his word. But Jesus here is showing us a new way of living.

[3 : 38] And it's the way that he lived. Jesus isn't asking us here to do and to live in a different way, in a different manner to the way that he lived.

This was the way, as he sets out before us, is the way that he lived in this world. God is concerned about our character. And God is in the business of building up our character in this world.

And God's great aim for every Christian is to make and to build his people so that they will become more and more like Jesus in this world.

And when we read there, what we find before us is a thousand miles removed from the attitude, the spirit, the manner, the expectations of this world.

Because when you look at it, you say, well, this almost flies in the very face of the way that naturally we think. It's really quite radical when you look at it.

[4 : 43] And Jesus is setting before us and he's showing us quite clearly what we're to do. And we're not going to go through this in detail, but just very, very briefly look at it. Jesus is saying, love your enemies.

The person who makes life difficult for you. The person who is opposed to you. Love him. Love them. Love him. Love her. Love your enemies. And I suppose, it could be argued either way, you love your enemies by doing good to those who hate you.

You love your enemies by blessing those who curse you. You love your enemies by praying for those who abuse you. It's all tied in together. So really, it's quite extraordinary when you look at what Jesus is saying here.

And when you look at the others, I suppose if we were just to sum it up, it's saying, give freely. Don't withhold giving. Don't retaliate.

Don't. Now, when you look at these kind of things, you say to yourself, this is really quite extraordinary. Just take, for instance, homing in on one thing. Retaliation.

[5 : 50] Retaliation is something that is so natural to us. You watch two children, young children in that playground. And supposing they're playing with something, and then one of them pushes the other.

Nine times out of ten, not always, nine times out of ten, you won't find the child who has been pushed saying to the one who pushed, go on, push me again, or that was all right.

Very often, you will see young children, the reaction will be to push back. There's this instant, it's like almost lashing out. Now, they weren't taught to do that.

Their parents didn't sit down with them and say, now, see if anybody pushes you. You make sure you push them harder. If anybody punches you in the nose, you make sure that you punch them harder in the nose.

Parents don't sit down and teach. If somebody tears a page in your book, you get their book and tear a few pages. Parents aren't instilling that kind of philosophy into their children.

[6 : 55] It just happens naturally. That's the way we are. There is this spirit of retaliation, this spirit of getting even. That's the way it works.

But Jesus is saying, that's not the way we're to operate. Again, Jesus is saying, don't be a grabber. Don't try and grab everything. That's really what he is saying. And Jesus is really saying to us, in the way that we're to live, this is the way that I lived.

You look at the life of Jesus, Jesus never retaliated. When you think of what Jesus put up with in this world, he was verbally abused so often.

Scandal. Scandal. Scandal. Scandal. He was scandalized in the sense that often vicious, untrue rumors were spoken about him. Wherever he went, people were gossiping about him.

Things that were completely untrue. And we don't find Jesus going around, going around trying to sort it out and getting his own back on people. And we find it all the way to the cross.

[8 : 07] That even there, where they rained blows down upon him, he never said a word. And again, with the whole area of giving, we find that Jesus gave.

His whole life was one of giving. He couldn't give more. He blessed those who cursed him. He prayed for those who abused him. See that? What Jesus is saying here, love your enemies.

Do good to those who hate you. Bless those who curse you. Pray for those who abuse you. He said all these things. And he lived these things. Even in his death, he was living it to the very last.

You find Jesus on the cross praying for those who were abusing him. As they hammered the nails into his hands and his feet. We read that he prayed for them.

Father, forgive them. For they know not what they do. Jesus isn't telling us to live in a way that he himself didn't live. This is the way he lived.

[9 : 10] And he's saying, if you are to follow me, you're to live in the same way as I lived. And it's difficult. Not for one moment are we saying, oh, that's fine.

And you know something? We can't live like this in our own strength. No way. If we try and do this in our own strength, we will fail. Just in the very same way as if we try and resist temptation in our own strength, we cannot.

Every time we try to, we'll fail. If we try and live according to our own strength in this way, we will fail. We need his help. We need his grace.

We need his strength. You see, every time, and this is why I'm saying it's so important to take hold of what we've got here.

Here are the rules. Here is Christ, his commands to us, according to this new and living way. It's our way of love. At the very heart of Christ's ministry and life was love.

[10:16] You know, people say, oh, we want to live a life of love. This is a life of love. And it's not easy. Sometimes people think a life of love is just feeling nice.

Feeling nice all the time. Living a life of love is tough. And Jesus is showing us just how tough it is. Because all these things fly right in the face of how naturally we are and of how we want to live. But the thing is, we do not have the option, once we have challenged by this word, of putting it aside and saying, oh, that's what it says, but it doesn't matter.

The Lord will understand. I'm not going to live like that. We don't have that option. Because when we do that, we are sinning against light.

It's the very same as when we come to the other commands. And it says, do not steal. We say to us, oh, I know what that says. Oh, well, I mustn't steal. And we have that built up in our thinking.

[11:25] And we say, oh, if anybody steals, that's awful. And so it is. But it is equally awful when we defy deliberately and put aside what the new commands that the Lord has set out for us in the word.

We are not. We have to have our whole mindset changed. And then Jesus goes on to show us that life is lived by the law of return.

That you reap what you sow. And that really goes on to say these sort of things that whatever you sow and plant, you will reap and you will get. If you judge, you're going to be judged in return.

If you condemn, you'll be condemned. But if you forgive, you'll be forgiven. If you give, you'll get.

And in other words, Jesus is saying in the long term, nobody is going to be a loser by living in this way.

Now, there may be times when, as I say, it will be tough. And there will be times you will be misunderstood. And there will be times your goodness will be trampled on. And there will be times that people will take advantage.

[12:37] Just as they took advantage of Jesus. But in the long run, in the big picture, at the end of the day, it will be victorious.

There will be times, and the word will make this clear, there will be times, even in this world, where the Lord will make an open display of his people who are living according to his word.

But most certainly, in that great day, the Lord will make a very open acknowledgement of those who live in this way.

And then, we're just looking at this very briefly. And the Lord, again, as Jesus is showing us, this, love your enemies and do good and lend, expecting nothing in return.

He says, you've got to remember that the Most High God, he is kind to those who are ungrateful and evil. Be merciful, even as your Father is merciful.

[13:40] Jesus is turning it and saying, look, you remember my Father in heaven. Every day, he is sending goodness upon those who are evil and ungrateful.

Those who deny his very existence. Those people who are pushing atheism in this world. God is being merciful to them.

He is bringing good things into their life. Isn't it quite extraordinary? And Jesus is saying, just as my Father is doing that, that is the way that I want you to live in this world as well.

And then Jesus goes on. He tells this parable. And we're just looking at this very briefly. Can a blind man lead a blind? Will they not both fall into the pit? Now, I believe that Jesus is here speaking about the Pharisees.

So many of them were spiritually blind. And he was saying, a blind person cannot lead somebody who is blind. Because they'll both fall into a pit.

[14:42] And Jesus is showing a very solemn and sobering truth. That in order to lead anybody, you need to know where you're going. You need to have sight yourself.

And he's talking about that spiritually here. And what a responsibility it is put upon those who are leaders in the church.

Spiritual vision. In a sense. And it's a very challenging and sobering thought. You cannot take anybody where you haven't been yourself. In a sense.

That's kind of what he is saying. Although the Lord can take, the Lord can deal with people. And that doesn't mean, Jesus isn't saying here, that you will never find in the church people maybe who aren't in office.

You will never find them with a greater measure of faith or greater spirituality than those who are in office. That is not true. Because we know that some great people of God.

[15:44] In fact, I would even go as far as to say sometimes there might be people who have never even professed they should have their faith in the Lord publicly. Who display in their life great spirituality and great faith.

Mary of Bethany had a greater understanding and had greater faith than even Peter, James, and John. Because Mary anointed Jesus' feet in light of his burial when they didn't even understand it. But the fact is that we must have this spiritual enlightenment, spiritual understanding. Looking very briefly here. And then from verses 41 and 42, we see the importance of not being judgmental and critical.

You see, it's so easy to see faults in other people's lives. It's terrible the way that people live their lives, isn't it? You know, sometimes we've got that attitude.

Where we look at other people and we're busy condemning them. We're busy criticizing them. We're tut-tutting about this and tut-tutting about that.

[16:59] And Jesus says, hold on. Hold on. And he uses a picture that has always grabbed the imagination. And here's a person. And he's looking at his brother.

And he's saying, oh, you know, it's terrible. See that speck that's in his eye. Oh, you know, terrible, terrible. Have God to deal with that speck that's in his eye.

But it's not a speck that's in his eye. It's a whole log. Huge plank of wood. Now, Jesus is using, obviously, huge, exaggerated language in the sense to display something absolutely ridiculous. But Jesus is saying that those who are themselves full of faults and failings, and often the same faults and failings that they're criticizing in others, are actually hypocrites.

Now, it's a horrible word, a hypocrite. But that's what Jesus says. 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.

[18:07] A hypocrite is an awful word. And yet, that's what Jesus says of those who are busy condemning others when they are guilty of exactly the same things themselves.

And do you know what the problem is? Those who are busy condemning and criticizing others who have the same sin within themselves, do you know why they're doing that?

It's because they've never seen their own sin properly. The Holy Spirit is not opening up their heart. And you've got to ask the question, why?

Because if you see yourself, if you see yourself in the light of God, you will not be pointing the finger at anybody other than yourself.

And I'm sure all of us in here know times when you have seen something of yourself. And you have had the, Oh, woe is me, for I am undone.

[19:13] I am a man of unclean lips. And you see your own heart. Are you, when you see that, are you in the spirit of condemnation of other people?

Not at all. Most certainly, you are not. You are seeing your own uncleanness. And you cannot, see the Pharisee and the publican.

The publican never looked at the Pharisee. The publican didn't see any fault in the Pharisee. He could only see fault with himself. And he's saying, Lord, be merciful to me, a sinner.

But the Pharisee, on the other hand, oh, he was seeing fault in the publican. I thank you. I thank you, Lord. I'm not like that man over there in the corner. That's what Jesus is condemning.

He says, that is hypocrisy. And we've got to take this to heart. It's serious business. And the Lord is saying, if you're going to be a critic, if you're going to be judgmental, you, in turn, are going to be condemned and criticized and judged.

[20:28] Lord takes our judgments of one another very, very seriously. Many occasions, he says, do not judge.

Because normally, we don't know what we're judging anyway. We're always making the wrong assessment of things. And so, there's this clear, stark warning set out before us.

And then, Jesus goes on, move very quickly, in verse 43, he talks later, for no good tree bears bad fruit, nor again does a bad tree bear good fruit, and so on.

Now, in other words, a tree will bear its own fruit. An apple tree will bear apples, and so on. And, that is so true.

In other words, Jesus is saying, my people will bear fruit to my glory. That is really what is being said here.

[21 : 29] And what we've got to remember is this, that the Lord is looking for fruit in your life. What is the Lord looking for today in you?

He is looking for fruit. Jesus often uses this picture of the vineyard owner coming to look for fruit. fruit. Is the tree bearing fruit?

If not, cut it down. Remember the story where Jesus and the owner of the vineyard said to him, oh, give it, please, or the husbandman, the gardener, says, oh, give it another year.

Give it another couple of years. Give it a wee while. I'll dig round it. I'll fertilize it. I'll try to get some fruit from it. And the owner says, well, I'll give it a wee while longer.

But if not, I'm going to come and cut it down. You see, we are in this world to bring fruit to the glory of God. That's it. That is it.

[22 : 31] What is our life doing? Is it bringing, is it fruit bearing to the glory of God? Because if not, it's going to be cut down. It's going to be cast aside.

What is the fruit? Well, there are many things that we could say. But, if we're talking of fruit, what is a Christian?

A Christian is somebody who has Christ in their heart. Through the Holy Spirit, the Holy Spirit has come to live within our heart.

If we go to Galatians, we are told what the fruit of the Spirit is. And when we go there, we see that our lives ought to be producing love, joy, peace, goodness.

There's a list there. Now, that doesn't mean that for every single moment of every day, that that is what we'll always be. We're sinners. We fail.

[23 : 38] But the main thrust of our life ought to be in this way. You look at the lives of the people of God. They all had their faults and their failings.

David was a man after God's own heart. An exceptional believer. And yet, he had his faults and his failings. But it's the main thrust.

It's the thrust of the life. It's the main way of the life towards bearing fruit to the glory of God. That is what Jesus is talking about here.

And then he says at the end, 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.

Something very solemn there. A person's character. The person's character, their attitude, their manner in life will often become evident by their words.

[24 : 45] The Bible, it's maybe something we don't pay too much attention to, but the Bible speaks an awful lot about their words. Because, as it says here, for out of the abundance of the heart, his mouth speaks.

In other words, your Christianity will be known by the way you speak, by your manner, by your attitude in life.

You know, it's a solemn and a sobering thought. Our words will reveal an awful lot about us. And you know, at the end of the day, Jesus tells us we're even going to be judged by our words.

Remember what he says. Every idle word that men shall speak, they shall give account thereof in the day of judgment. For by your words you will be justified, and by your words you will be condemned.

Isn't that a sobering, solemn thought? That's what Jesus tells us. Our words are no little thing. Our attitudes are no little thing. And then Jesus, summing it all up, he finishes by, and we won't spend any time on this, we know it so well, the house built on the rock and the house built here, it's on the ground or as Matthew on the sand.

[26 : 08] And Jesus is saying, see all these words of mine. These words that have gone before. You know, you know this building of the house, the two houses.

Jesus tells us that, see what he says, everyone who comes to me and hears my words and does them, I will show you what he is like.

He's like a man building a house. Everyone who hears my words and does them. What words? All these words that have gone before. All these words that have gone before.

Isn't that solemn? These words that have gone before are so challenging, they're so radical. And Jesus is saying, what are you building your life on?

If you're building your life on me, then you have to live your life as I lived it. And if you live your life built on me and your life begins to display it, then you are built upon a true foundation.

[27 : 20] Because one day that foundation is going to be tested. If you are on me, on the rock that is me, then you will be safe for time and eternity.

If not, everything is going to collapse. And as you know, the building, it was all to do with the foundation. It was nothing to do, maybe, in these two buildings, the joinery could be the same, the electrical work is the same, the plumbing is the same, the brick work is the same, the slating is the same, everything is the same apart from one thing, the foundation.

My dear friends, what foundation is your life being built on? Because the Bible tells us that there is no other foundation that people can build on but upon the Lord Jesus Christ.

For other foundation can no man lay than that is laid which is Jesus Christ. What about you? What about me today? This is solemn, it is challenging, but it is vital, it's important that we are established upon Jesus Christ and that we are seeking to live according to Jesus Christ.

Jesus says that, why do you call me Lord, Lord and not do what I tell you? Because Jesus elsewhere tells us that on that great day there's people going to come and they're going to call him Lord and Lord.

[29 : 00] They're going to say, Lord, we did this, we did that, we did the next thing in your name and Jesus has said, sorry, I don't know you, depart from me. I find these some of the most challenging and solemn words in scripture.

Jesus says the proof of being built upon me is seeking to live according to how I have said and that is a challenge for every one of us and that is why we need his grace, we need his strength, we need his help because we cannot do it ourselves.

Let us pray. O Lord, our God, as we close the Bible just now, we pray that we do not close these thoughts out of our mind because they are challenging, they are powerful and they are our future, they are our life.

We pray, Lord, to help us because there are times when we come face to face with what God's word requires. We have to say who is sufficient for these things.

We ask thee, O Lord, to forgive us for our own lives, for how often we are inconsistent to what we believe.

[30 : 25] O Lord, help us to follow the Lord with all our heart. Do us good and take away from us our sin. Take us all home safely. In Jesus' name we ask all. Amen.

Amen.