

Luke 6:12-49*

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[0 : 0 0] 12 through 49. That's page 862 in the Pew Bible. Go ahead and turn there with me. Luke chapter 6 verses 12 through 49. We're looking this morning at a large block of Jesus's teaching.

People will often acknowledge that Jesus was a great moral or spiritual teacher, but how often have we actually taken a close look at what he actually taught?

Well, that's what we're going to do just here in Luke chapter 6. Since this is a long text, I won't read it all at first like we normally do. Instead, we'll just kind of walk through the text this morning section by section, and we'll see together here what Jesus taught. So let's pray as we turn to God's word, and then we'll pick up in verses 12 through 16. Let's pray.

Our Lord Jesus, indeed you are a good shepherd. You lead us, you feed us, you protect us. And we know that you do that all by your Holy Spirit through your word. So we ask, Lord, that you would indeed teach us and shepherd us and guide us this morning as your church, as your flock, as we gather around your word. Hungry, Lord, to hear a word from you.

Lord, wanting to know what direction our lives as your people should take. God, thank you for the gift of your speaking word, of your speaking voice that continues to be the Lord of the church today.

[1 : 3 4] Lord, we acknowledge you as such. Pray that you would meet with us this morning and guide our thoughts as we walk through this text together. For your sake, amen.

Amen. All right. Luke chapter six. Let's start with verses 12 through 19. In those days, he, Jesus, went out to the mountain to pray. And all night, he continued in prayer to God.

And when day came, he called his disciples and chose from them 12 whom he named apostles. Simon, whom he named Peter and Andrew, his brother, and James and John and Philip and Bartholomew and Matthew and Thomas and James, the son of Alphaeus and Simon, who was called the Zealot and Judas, the son of James and Judas Iscariot, who became a traitor. And he came down with them and stood on a level place with a great crowd of his disciples and a great multitude of people from all Judea and Jerusalem and the sea coast of Tyre and Sidon who came to hear him and to be healed of their diseases.

And those who were troubled with unclean spirits were cured and all the crowd sought to touch him for power came out from him and healed them all. Now, before we dive into the block of Jesus's teaching, starting in verse 20, we have to get this context that we just read because Jesus isn't just going to sort of lay out some general moral and spiritual principles here. No, he's doing something much more specific. And what is that?

Well, think of it this way. One writer put it this way. He said, imagine you're a school teacher and you're out on the playground after school and a large crowd of kids are there and they're throwing a football around, a whole group of them. And then you walk over and you start counting them off. One, two, three, four, five, six, seven, eight, nine, 10, 11. And you gather them in a group.

[3 : 27] Well, what have you just done? What are you doing? Obviously you just counted off a football team, right? There they are. 11 players. You're ready to go. You're organizing a team. You're starting a game time to turn this mess into an actual organized sport.

And you see, when Jesus, when Jesus chooses out 12 of his disciples and gives them a unique role as apostles, you see, it would have been just as clear to his contemporaries, what he was doing as that playground example is to us. Of course, he wasn't sort of putting together a football team or a sports team. No, Jesus was reestablishing and renewing the people of God.

12, of course, wasn't just a nice, even number. It was the number of the ancient tribes of Israel.

Jesus appoints 12 apostles as a sign of what he's come to do, that he's come to renew God's people, that this group of 12 is going to be the seed, the representative start of the new people of God around him and his ministry. And in renewing God's people, Jesus is going to bring God's blessing to the world. And sure enough, in verse 17, that's exactly what happens, isn't it? He brings the 12 down with him and along with a great crowd of his disciples, they minister to the multitude of the people who've come at this point in Luke's gospel from all over, Jews and Gentiles.

Now, as we approach a passage like this, it's sometimes good to ask, who are we? Who are you and I in a passage like this? Where are we in this story? Well, I hope you would agree that we're obviously not Jesus in this story, right? Okay. And you know, we're not even the 12, really. They had a unique role in redemptive history.

[5 : 27] But we are like this large crowd of disciples gathering around Jesus in the 12, ready to hear his instructions to us, asking and learning from Jesus, what does it mean to be his people, to be on mission with him? How are we to be his followers? How are we to be the church that Jesus at this point in his ministry is launching out? That's where we are. Or maybe some of us, maybe we're not quite in the group of disciples yet. Maybe some of us are in the multitude, curious about Jesus. You've heard some rumors about him. Your friends seem to keep talking about him and they keep coming to this weird thing called church. So you've decided to come along and listen in. And you're considering for yourself whether you too will take up his call to follow him, to be a part of his new people.

So the teaching here in Luke six, then when we put it in context, is really about what it means to be the church called by Jesus to head into the world after him on mission, to be the renewed people of God. And so then as we do the same, even today here in New Haven, what does it mean? What does Jesus have to say to us as Trinity Baptist church? What does it look like for us to be the church on mission?

That's what Luke six is about. And the first thing that Jesus has to say to us in this regard, as we think about being the church on mission, following Jesus, our King, the first thing that Jesus says to us is, don't be afraid to lose everything. Lose everything. This is verses 20 through 26. And he lifted up his eyes on his disciples and said, blessed are you who are poor for yours is the kingdom of God. Blessed are you who are hungry now for you shall be satisfied. Blessed are you who weep now for you shall laugh. Blessed are you when people hate you and when they exclude you and revile you and spurn your name as evil on account of the son of man. Rejoice in that day and leap for joy for behold, your reward is great in heaven for so their fathers did to the prophets.

But woe to you who are rich for you have received your consolation. Woe to you who are full now for you shall be hungry. Woe to you who laugh now for you shall mourn and weep. Woe to you when all people speak well of you for so their fathers did to the false prophets.

Not a bad way to grab attention at the beginning of a sermon, is it? Now to understand what Jesus is saying here, notice first his audience. Who is Jesus speaking to?

[8 : 27] Not just anyone who happens to be poor in verse 20. No, he's speaking to his disciples, to those who have already responded to his call to follow him. And notice second in verse 22, why they're in this condition. Why are they poor and hungry and sorrowful and rejected?

Verse 22 says that it's on account of the son of man. So Jesus is painting a picture of discipleship here. That to genuinely follow him, to really be the church, to be his people on mission is going to be genuinely costly.

But Jesus says, if you're poor and hungry, if you become sad and rejected on my account, if you find that following me puts you on the margins, socially excluded, financially strained, emotionally taxed, if that's true of you because you're following me, then in reality, you're blessed. You've got the good life. In other words, if you have me, even though you have nothing else, the reality is you ultimately have everything. Yours is the kingdom of God.

And then Jesus puts it in stark relief for us by flipping it around. Let's say you have everything worldly speaking, wealth, food, laughter, acceptance, and yet to hang on to those things, you forsake him. Instead of him pushing you to the margins of society, you push him to the margins of your life. In that case, Jesus says, woe to you. Which was how the Old Testament prophets would announce the coming disaster of living apart from the living God. Woe to you.

And so you see, friends, the church on mission, you and I, we are meant to have a whole new set of priorities. No longer does financial security or relational comfort or social acceptance drive our decisions. That's not our agenda anymore. We can hold those things with a loose grip. In fact, we can even give those things up for the sake of being faithful to Christ and his kingdom.

[11 : 06] And I hope you see that that means we will treat others very differently. How we treat others will be very different. After all, if worldly status and wealth aren't what matter in God's kingdom, if that's not what drives our agenda, why would we end up then showing favoritism toward those who are more wealthy or socially connected? In fact, Luke's gospel has shown us more often than not that it's the socially marginalized whom God seems most often to call and to use.

Just think of the first two chapters of Luke's gospel. Who does God choose to work through? You ready? A barren woman, a poor virgin, a bunch of working class shepherds out in the fields, an elderly man, an elderly widow. That's just the first two chapters.

Through whom does God's kingdom break into the world? Not exactly the rich and powerful, are they? Friends, God often delights to display his grace and power through human weakness.

Not many of you were wise or powerful or of noble birth when God called you, Paul says in 1 Corinthians chapter 1, so that our boast might not be in ourselves, but in the Lord.

Now, of course, that's not to say that being wealthy or socially connected is a bad thing. Because, friends, we all have to admit that compared to the rest of the world, all of us sitting in this room are fabulously wealthy.

[12 : 58] Are we not? Abraham and Job, Old Testament saints, were both wealthy men. What is Jesus showing us?

He's showing us that these things aren't ultimate. They aren't the driving and deciding factor in God's kingdom. They don't drive our agenda.

And they don't drive who we favor. If following Christ, if being the church means giving up wealth and social status, giving it away so that others can flourish, if being the church means giving up wealth and status for Christ's sake, for others' sake, then so be it.

Blessed are you who are poor, for yours is the kingdom of heaven. But that is much easier said than done, isn't it?

Of course, there are many parts of the world today where allegiance to Christ does result in very obvious poverty and hunger, in being disowned from one's family, fired from your work, even physically persecuted.

[14 : 11] But even for us here in our part of the world, what if your commitment to Christ in your job field, in your workplace, for instance, also means walking a very narrow road?

Maybe there are widespread practices in your particular field that you won't engage in. Maybe you're in the medical field, and you won't perform procedures that compromise the dignity of human life, whether at the beginning or at the end.

Maybe you're in the business world, and you won't round the numbers to make things look just a little bit better at the end of the quarter. These are incredibly hard decisions to face, aren't they?

When everyone around you, supervisor included, is simply expecting certain actions, certain behaviors, certain attitudes, because this is how the world works.

And to go against the grain means not just that your reputation is at stake, and whether people invite you to happy hour after work. To go against the grain could possibly cost you your very job itself.

[15 : 33] And might even come to a crisis point, where we have to decide between faithfulness to Christ and the prospect of rejection, exclusion, maybe even hunger and financial loss.

And friends, it's at moments like these when we need to hear the comforting voice of our Savior saying, blessed are you who are poor, for yours is the kingdom of God.

blessed are you who are poor, and hungry, and sorrowful, and rejected on my account. For you will be full, and you will laugh, and you will be in my kingdom.

Even if you lose it all, you are a part of a kingdom that cannot fail. And whatever you lose here for his sake will be nothing compared to what you gain on that day.

So Jesus' words here are meant to actually be a comfort and an encouragement to us. That even if discipleship is costly, don't be afraid. Don't be afraid. Don't be afraid even to lose everything.

[16 : 53] That's the first thing Jesus is teaching us here. But he doesn't stop there. If following him means rejection or exclusion, how are we going to respond to those who reject and exclude us?

How should we treat those who will inevitably come against us, possibly even hate us on account of Christ? And that's why Jesus continues his second big point in verse 27 with the word, but.

You'll be rejected, but here's how you're going to respond. But I say to you who hear, love your enemies. Do you see what Jesus is saying?

What does it mean to be the church on mission? Not just to lose everything, but then to love those who take it from you. Look at verses 27 through 38.

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 the one who strikes you on the cheek, offer the other also. And from the one who takes away your cloak, do not withhold your tunic either.

[17 : 58] Give to everyone who begs from you. And from one who takes away your goods, do not demand them back. And as you wish that others would do to you, do so to them. If you love those who love you, what benefit is that to you?

For even sinners love those who love them. And if you do good to those who do good to you, what benefit is that to you? For even sinners do the same. And if you lend to those from whom you expect to receive, what credit is that to you?

Even sinners lend to sinners to get back the same amount. But love your enemies and do good and lend, expecting nothing in return. And your reward will be great. And you will be sons of the Most High, for he is kind to the ungrateful and the evil.

Be merciful, be merciful, even as your Father is merciful. Judge not, and you will not be judged. Condemn not, and you will not be condemned. Forgive, and you will be forgiven.

Give, and it will be given to you. Good measure, pressed down, shaken together, running over will be put into your lap. For with the measure you use, it will be measured back to you.

[19 : 01] So this section of Jesus' teaching breaks down into two parts. First, the command. Second, the motivation. The command's obviously found in verse 27 through 31, isn't it?

Love your enemies. And then, lest we're uncertain what that looks like, if it just sort of means having a nice fuzzy feeling in our heart, Jesus immediately gives us some examples.

Think of someone who hates you. Do good to them. Think of someone who's cursing you. Bless them. Who's abusing you?

Pray for them. Who's slapping you on the cheek because they're so offended by you? Who's taking the clothes off your back? Who's greedily demanding your goods, even forcefully taking them from you? How should you respond? Our natural response is to retaliate, isn't it?

You hate me, I'll hate you. You hurt me, I'll hurt you. We pay them back. It's justice, right? But no, Jesus says, that's not how you're going to respond.

[20 : 13] You're not going to be a victim and get sucked down into the cycle of retaliation. You're actually going to break the cycle. In exchange for their evil, you're going to return good.

Now, this doesn't mean that you should never remove yourself from physical harm or abuse. Think of the example of the Apostle Paul. Paul was often secretly snuck out of town to safety, wasn't he, when he was in danger of being harmed or persecuted.

So it's okay to remove yourself from being physically harmed. And it doesn't mean that the right response to someone harming you can't be involving the police or the legal system. Again, the Apostle Paul's a helpful example.

When necessary, Paul used his legal status as a Roman citizen to help fledgling churches to get protection under Roman law. from physical harm and legal persecution. So, physically removing yourself from an abusive relationship, involving the legal authorities when necessary, these are completely legitimate, Christ-like responses.

But, in line with what Jesus is commanding us here, as far as we are able, even if we decide to respond in those ways, it should never be done with a spiteful heart, an attitude that makes the other person want to pay.

[21 : 42] What might that look like? Just this week in small group, someone mentioned how at work, a colleague of hers had been sending text messages around the office, basically maligning her character for no good reason.

And these messages eventually fell into the hands of their mutual supervisor. Oops. And the supervisor was actually ready to fire the person who sent the messages. So, they called our small group member into her office and said, look, what this person done is a terminable offense.

Do you want me to fire her? Now, what would you have done? What would it look like for you to bless those who curse you in this instance?

Well, I think by God's grace, she decided to not recommend the supervisor fire this person. And rather, she showed radical mercy. How about you, friends?

Is there a neighbor or a roommate or a family member, a spouse, maybe even a fellow church member that Jesus is calling you to show this kind of radical mercy toward?

[23 : 07] Of course, at first, this sort of behavior always seems impractical and absurd and weak. And yet, doesn't the 20th century show us examples where the church acting in this kind of weakness is actually true strength?

Martin Luther King Jr. stands up to racism and segregation in America. The truth and reconciliation movement in South Africa responds to apartheid.

Not through violence or retribution, but through actions that stop the downward cycle and even reverse it. We see the power of this sort of response in the earliest days of the church as well.

After Stephen gives his groundbreaking speech in Acts 7, do you remember what happens? Jerusalem doesn't repent and the leaders don't all become Christians.

No, what do they do? They grab him and they drag him out of town and they pick up stones to execute him. And Stephen responds not by cursing them, but by praying.

[24 : 27] Do you remember what he prayed? Lord, do not hold this sin against them. Just as Jesus commands, Stephen prays for those who persecute him.

And what's the result? A young, zealous Pharisee named Saul is present approving Stephen's death.

But in no short time, Jesus will reveal himself to Paul. And what Saul originally witnessed in Stephen, Saul comes to taste for himself when he finally gets a glimpse of the risen Lord.

He comes to a personal knowledge of Christ's mercy and grace. You see, Stephen's radical love became part of what actually converts the church's greatest missionary and theologian, the apostle Paul.

So what's the command? Love your enemies. And what's the motivation?

[25 : 35] Again, Jesus mentions a great reward in verse 35. And in verse 38, that great reward is described with an image from the marketplace. A giant heaping measure of grain that's been shaken and pressed down and it's spilling over and then poured into your lap.

In the ancient world, you would sometimes fold up sort of the front layer of your robe to create a bit of a carrying sack and then they would just dump stuff into it and you could carry it home. That's what Jesus is talking about here.

That's the image he's using. And isn't this a very earthy image for what heavenly reward will be like? Grain spilling over the edges of the cup, weighing down your robe.

It's no surprise that Jesus uses such an earthy image because what do we know about the kingdom of God? The kingdom of God holds out a new creation, friends.

It's not leaving behind this material life but it's God eventually healing it and transforming it and transfiguring it in the way it was always meant to be. You see, living against the grain now is really living with the grain of the age that's coming and cannot be stopped.

[26 : 58] I didn't even intend that to be a pun by the way. The grain of the... Never mind. But in addition to the great reward he had something even more in verse 35.

What does he say? He says, you will be sons of the most high. In other words, your status as the children of God will be confirmed.

Your family likeness will come shining through just as God's kindness extends to the ungrateful and evil so you when you love your enemies will be acting like the children of God that you are.

Of course, Jesus isn't saying that these actions are going to make you sons and daughters of God, right? Only the gracious regenerating work of the Holy Spirit can do that as we respond in faith to Christ's death and resurrection.

However, as those who have been made God's children there's a deep joy that comes in pleasing and in resembling our Heavenly Father.

[28 : 00] What's the motivation to love our enemies in this radical non-reciprocal way? that we get to be like our Heavenly Father.

That we get to be imitators of God. That we get to display His character and mercy to the world. That we get to participate a little more in His being and likeness. That we get to live out the life of the sons and daughters that we are.

So this is Jesus' second point. What does it look like to be the church? Don't be afraid to lose everything. And then even to love those who take it from you.

But Jesus isn't done. There's one more thing we need to get straight. And perhaps you've already started to feel it. I have walking through this passage again this morning.

Listen to what Jesus is saying. Blessed are you who are poor. Love your enemies. Friends, I don't know about you, but hasn't your heart been saying, but I don't want to be poor.

[29 : 14] I don't want to love my enemies. That's a bridge too far. But Jesus' sermon ends without any possibility of letting us off the hook.

He ends with actually three interlocking parables or images that drive us to the very end of ourselves. And that becomes the last point.

Lose everything. Love those who take it. And through it all, humbly acknowledge your need for grace. Let's pick up in verse 39.

Jesus starts bringing things to a conclusion. He says, He also told them a parable. Can a blind man lead a blind man? Will they not both fall into a pit? A disciple's not above his teacher, but everyone, when he's 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, let me take out the speck that is in your eye, when you yourself do not see the log that is in your own eye?

[30 : 18] You hypocrite. First take the log out of your own eye, and then you will see clearly to take the speck out that is in your brother's eye. For no good 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 the 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's like.

He's like a man building a house who dug deep and laid the foundation on the rock, and when a flood arose, a 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 a house on the ground without a foundation.

When the stream broke against it, immediately it fell, and the ruin of that house was great. These images increase in gravity, don't they?

[31 : 28] The first, you have to admit, is a bit comical. It assumes that the disciples will be leading others and teaching others and training others. That's good. And yet there's a problem. Jesus says, how can the blind lead the blind?

How can a student get above their faulty teacher? How are you going to get that speck out of your student's eye when you have a beam swinging around out of yours? I mean, imagine walking around with a giant piece of lumber protruding out of your face.

And it's not just me, it's all of us. Church becomes a pretty dangerous place to hang out. You just might get hit in the head.

Watch out. So we need some help, don't we? We need to do some self-examination. And we need to be open to each other's correction. But the next image is a little more serious.

A good tree doesn't produce bad fruit, Jesus says. How often do we think that my bad actions, that slip of the tongue here, that burst of anger there, that small revenge over here, ah, well, those are just little slip-ups, you see.

[32 : 40] Deep down, I'm really a good person. That's me acting out of character. But friends, if the fruit coming off the tree is bad, then that tells you that something is wrong with the tree, doesn't it?

The evil person out of his evil treasure produces evil. And suddenly, Jesus has stopped being funny. No more beams sticking out of eyes, now we're getting down to the heart.

You need more than just a little push. You need more than just some remediation. What you need is a new heart, Jesus says.

Third image. Two houses, one flood, one house stands, the other comes crashing down in ruin. And that's the image Jesus leaves us with.

A house. Devastated. Utterly in shambles. And why? Because they heard Jesus' words, but didn't actually do what he said.

[33 : 58] By the way, it's quite a claim Jesus makes, isn't it? The only way to avoid utter spiritual ruin is to build your life on his words. anything or anyone else will simply not do shocking.

And yet, how should we respond to this string of images that Jesus ends with? There's really only one way to respond. Humility. Doesn't Jesus remove any ground for spiritual pride in this final movement of the sermon?

This is the most uncomfortable sermon conclusion I've ever heard. Who of us doesn't fall short? Who of us really does love our enemy exactly as we ourselves would like to be loved, as verse 31 says?

This is how you're supposed to love them, exactly like you'd want to be loved. I mean, I can get loving my neighbor as myself, perhaps, but I'm not so sure about loving my enemy as myself.

You see, friends, Jesus is pushing us here, pushing us to acknowledge our need for grace. Because the church on mission ceases to be the church at all when it forgets that it lives solely by and through grace.

[35 : 24] friends, our logs are wide and our hearts are dark and our house is built on sand.

And at the end of the day, we need more than a teacher. We need a redeemer. And that's who Jesus is.

Look at this sermon. Who does it really describe? Whose character is on display here? Blessed are you who are poor.

Jesus Christ was the one who truly became poor, friends. He left heaven to become poor and despised and rejected so that through him, we might gain heaven, though we deserve no part in it.

Love your enemies, Jesus says to his disciples. And on the cross, Jesus died for his enemies. for you and me so that we could become his friends.

[36 : 30] Do you see what he's done for you? Have you let that sink in? Do you see that he's the only one who's lived this sermon perfectly and he lived it perfectly for you?

how are we going to be ultimately the church on mission? Only when we live in humble dependence on grace.

But if we do that by his spirit, if we live in constant dependence on grace, then we won't be afraid to lose anything.

Reputation, wealth, status. Friends, if God did not spare his own son, how will he not graciously with him give us all things? And if we live in Christ's grace, we'll even find the strength to love our enemies.

Because we see that in the light of the cross that I was once an enemy. And he loved me and gave himself for me. Friends, this is the church that the world desperately needs.

[37 : 54] Paul says in Romans 8, the creation is groaning for the revelation of the sons of God. Speaking ultimately about the kingdom coming in fullness. But isn't it true now?

Isn't our city groaning for the church to be the church? Willing to lose, willing to love, and permeated with grace?

That's what it looks like to be the church. church. In just a second, we're going to go to the table and we're going to remember what Jesus did for us on the cross. And this, around the cross of Jesus, is where we find the strength and the power and the resource to actually do this.

So as we do so, let's pray that God makes us into this kind of church. Not so that people think much of us, but so that they think much of Jesus, who's not just our teacher, but who's our redeemer.

Let's pray together. Lord Jesus, what shocking, startling, and seemingly impossible commands you've given us.

[39 : 10] Lord, this way of life we confess in our own strength, in our own power, in our own thinking is beyond our reach. And yet, Lord, and yet, you have given us your own spirit.

You have come, and you've gone before us, becoming poor for us, loving us in our hatred of you, changing our hearts, releasing us from a love of this world.

Lord, you've given us what we need, depending on your grace, dependent on your grace to go forth and live this way. So help us to do it, Lord Jesus. Help us to be your church on mission, for your name's sake.

Amen. I wonder if those who are helping with the Lord's Supper would come up. In 1 Corinthians, Paul says, for you know the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, that though he was rich, yet for your sake he became poor, so that you by his poverty might become rich.

Friends, when we come to the Lord's Supper, we're coming again to remember the cross of Jesus Christ, where he spent literally everything in order to pay your debt in full and to earn for you a righteous record with the Father that is perfect in every way.

[40 : 31] This is what Christ has done and this is why we come to the table, to remember it and to take hold of it again. And to confess sin in ways in which we've fallen short, but to receive again and remember again is grace for us.

So friends, if you're here and you've turned from sin and placed your trust in Christ, then you're welcome to take this bread and take this cup and to remember Christ's death with us together. If you're here and you're not a follower of Jesus, then instead of taking the bread and cup, just pass them by and use this as a time to pray.

What would it look like for you to build your life on the words of Jesus? And not just on the words of Jesus, but on the work of Jesus. What's keeping you from stepping over that line?

Use this time to do some soul searching and take hold of him. So let's take the bread first. James, would you pray first?