

Luke 6:27-38 “But I say to you who are listening: Love your enemies. Do good to those who hate you. ²⁸Bless those who curse you. Pray for those who mistreat you. ²⁹If someone strikes you on one cheek, offer the other too. If someone takes away your coat, do not withhold your shirt. ³⁰Give to everyone who asks you, and if anyone takes away your things, do not demand them back. ³¹Treat others just as you would want them to treat you. ³²If you love those who love you, what credit is that to you? To be sure, even the sinners love those who love them. ³³And if you do good to those who do good to you, what credit is that to you? Even the sinners do the same thing. ³⁴If you lend to those from whom you expect to be repaid, what credit is that to you? Even the sinners lend to sinners in order to be paid back in full. ³⁵Instead, love your enemies, do good and lend, expecting nothing in return. Your reward will be great, and you will be sons of the Most High, because he is kind to the unthankful and the evil. ³⁶Be merciful, just as your Father is merciful. ³⁷Do not judge, and you will not be judged. Do not condemn, and you will not be condemned. Forgive, and you will be forgiven. ³⁸Give, and it will be given to you. A good measure pressed down, shaken together, and running over will be poured into your lap. In fact, the measure with which you measure will be measured back to you.”

What does it mean to be Jesus’ disciple? Seems like a good Lutheran question to ask. We don’t tend to use that word very often in our day-to-day conversation. The word basically means to be a follower or a student of some teacher or leader. Sometimes in the Bible that word is used to refer specifically to the Twelve who would later be sent out as apostles.

Thankfully we don’t have to guess what it means to be Jesus’ disciple because he comes right out and tells us in John’s Gospel, **“If you remain in my word, you are really my disciples. ³²You will also know the truth, and the truth will set you free.”** So it doesn’t mean that we will be somewhat familiar with him. We will remain in his Word and the result of that will show in our lives.

This text is a part of Jesus’ Sermon on the Mount. It is basically a masterclass in what being a disciple is going to mean for all of us. He really isn’t demanding things from us. He is showing how blessed our lives can be and will be when we live in his great love for us. Live Like Jesus’ Disciples. Imitate God’s love, love your enemies, and do not be judgmental.

Jesus says, **“³²If you love those who love you, what credit is that to you? To be sure, even the sinners love those who love them. ³³And if you do good to those who do good to you, what credit is that to you? Even the sinners do the same thing.”** Even in our world that is filled with sin, we expect that if someone is nice to you then you should be nice back to them.

I’ve heard people say that if you are going out on a date with someone you don’t know well, watch how they treat the wait staff. If they are being rude, that’s probably how they will be treating you soon. Makes sense, doesn’t it? Although to be honest I would never want to be mean to someone who is going to have access to the food I’m about to eat behind closed doors.

That is the world’s idea of showing love. If someone is nice to you, show that love back. I’m not saying that’s a bad thing, but what I am saying is that it doesn’t even come close to the kind of love that Jesus is talking about in this text. To find out what that love looks like we need to look to God himself. Jesus says, **“he is kind to the unthankful and the evil. ³⁶Be merciful, just as your Father is merciful.”**

Remember what we were once like. When we were born we were not on God’s side. We inherited sin from our parents. That sin would begin to show itself almost immediately when we would pitch a fit whenever we wouldn’t get our way. We didn’t deserve anything good from God. The only thing we deserved was for him to follow through on the threats he makes in his Law. Our lives should have been miserable until we die and then we would end up in Hell eternally. That’s what we deserved.

But that’s not what God gave us, not because we were less unthankful or evil than anyone else, but because of his mercy. Remember that that word means. A good synonym would be pity. Instead of God looking at us and saying, “I really want to punish that person,” he said, “Do you see how helpless they are? I have to do something to save them.” That’s exactly what God did.

He sent Jesus for us. There we see what love means. God loved us so much that he was willing to sacrifice his one and only Son for us. Jesus loved us so much that he thought this was a great idea. He took the weight of our sin and guilt on himself when he went to the cross. He wanted to suffer Hell itself for us, not because we deserved it, but because his great love couldn’t stand the thought of seeing us suffer that way.

God doesn’t just show that kind of love for believers. He shows it for everyone, every day. Jesus didn’t just pay for the sins of those who would eventually acknowledge him as their Savior. He even paid for the sins

of people who will spend their entire lives rejecting everything that he has to say. As long as they are alive, his only goal is that they would turn from their sin and trust in him as the Savior.

Every day God does all kinds of things for people in an attempt to make his great love as obvious as possible. It's not like the homes of believers have plenty of fresh oxygen while the homes of unbelievers are filled with toxic gas. The sun shines on everyone equally. God enables them to live and move and do their job even though they may never give him the credit. That's just a glimpse of the kind of love that God pours out on the whole world each and every day.

Live Like Jesus' Disciples. Imitate God's love and love your enemies.

Remember at the beginning of this section from Jesus' Sermon on the Mount, Luke tells us, "**He lifted up his eyes to his disciples and said.**" So this sermon is not talking about how to become his disciples but what it will mean to live like the disciple you already are. So Jesus says something that is utterly unthinkable to most people, "**But I say to you who are listening: Love your enemies.**"

The way we use the word "love" in the English language trips us up. It does not mean that we love what they are doing. It doesn't mean that we must rush up to them and give them a big hug. God loves the world but he does not love sin or approve of it. What kind of love did God show? He did everything so that all people could be forgiven and live with him forever. So when we love our enemies we want nothing more than for them to know about Jesus and live with him forever.

When Jesus says, "**29 If someone strikes you on one cheek, offer the other too. If someone takes away your coat, do not withhold your shirt**" he is not saying that we must let people beat us senseless and steal whatever they want. The fifth and seventh commandments still stand. His point is that under those conditions our natural response is to get revenge. That's not showing love. Instead of swinging back, be patient.

Jesus goes further, "**Do good to those who hate you. 28 Bless those who curse you. Pray for those who mistreat you.**" That's hard to do, I will admit. Jesus isn't saying these things because they are easy. If they were, he wouldn't have to say anything. But whenever someone does these sort of things to us, it is a sign that they have a far deeper problem. Their problem isn't just with us. It is with God.

If I love them, then I'm going to want to show that love. Being kind to those who hate you and mistreat you will show the whole world how different you are. It's one thing to say we love the world. It's another thing entirely to prove it. We aren't doing that so people will be amazed by how wonderful and patient we are. We're looking for opportunities to point people to their Savior.

Whenever someone is a jerk to me for one reason or the other, I always make sure to pray for that person's spouse, if they have one. I can go away from that person. Their spouse is stuck there. If they are willing to act like that in public just imagine what they are willing to do in private. That sort of behavior can be a sign of some far greater problem. I don't want anyone to have to carry that anger around all the time. It will eat you alive.

Jesus sums it all up with what's come to be known as the Golden Rule, "**31 Treat others just as you would want them to treat you.**" Before we say or do anything, ask, "Would I want someone to do or say that to me?" Everyone has made mistakes. The only person who hasn't is the person who has never done anything. So the next time I mess up, do I want someone else to blow their top at me? Of course not. So why in the world would I ever do that to them?

Maybe you've heard someone say, "Make sure your brain is in gear before your mouth is engaged." If we just react, nine times out of ten it will be our sinful nature reacting. No good comes from that. If we just take a moment to think first, to remind ourselves of God's great love for us in our Savior Jesus, to remember that God loves that person too, then we won't just be reacting. We will be responding in Christian love.

Live Like Jesus' Disciples. Love your enemies and finally do not be judgmental.

There are two passages that people like to quote because they believe that they are basically "get out of jail free" cards. One is from I John, "**God is love.**" They take that to mean that whatever I consider to be loving must therefore also be godly. That's not what John is saying. He is making the same point that Jesus is. If you really want to know what love looks like, look at God and what he has done.

The other one is from this text, "**37 Do not judge.**" They take that to mean that they can do whatever they want and no one can say anything to them. Well, elsewhere Jesus says things like, "**Stop judging by outward appearance. Instead make a right judgment.**" In Matthew 18 he says, "**If your brother sins against you, go and show him his sin just between the two of you.**" That requires me to make a judgment that he has sinned.

That's why whenever people say, "The Bible says, 'Do not judge!'" I always say, "What did Jesus say right after that" because I know that they don't know it. The verses right after this text explain what Jesus is

talking about well. He talks about us pointing out a speck of dust in someone else's eye while we've got a 2x4 in ours. We're pointing out one sin someone else committed while completely ignoring our boatload of sins.

It's very easy to look at someone else's life and say, "I can't believe they would do that!" Why not? All that means is that you underestimate what the sinful nature is capable of. We aren't here to feel superior to everyone else. The proper response would be to say, "That person really needs Jesus" then work to bring Jesus to them. Pointing out the sins in the world is like shooting fish in a barrel. Actually doing something about it requires effort and personal involvement on our parts.

In Matthew 18 Jesus continues, "**If he listens to you, you have regained your brother.**" He echoes those words in this text, "**Forgive, and you will be forgiven.**" That's the goal. Pointing out someone's sin doesn't help unless we show them the solution to that sin. I talk about this with the elders all the time. When we are reaching out to people, the goal is not just to clean up our books. You could do that in a heartbeat. It wouldn't be loving, but you could do it.

We are sinners desperately trying to help out our fellow sinners. If I'm on a boat and someone goes overboard, I'm not going to say, "I don't want them to feel silly about going overboard so I'm not going to help." That's be ridiculous. In the same way, I can't just stand by and let someone get dragged further and further away from their Lord by Satan himself. Jesus' heart went out to them, so ours do too.

Jesus clears things up at the end of this text, "³⁸**Give, and it will be given to you. A good measure pressed down, shaken together, and running over will be poured into your lap. In fact, the measure with which you measure will be measured back to you.**" That teaches us a couple of things. First of all, how can I expect love from God if I am unwilling to show love for anybody else? That's why he warns against judging because we will be judged by the exact same standard.

Secondly it tells us that God's love for us will always far surpass our love for others. Bakers know there is a difference between a cup of brown sugar and a packed cup of brown sugar. A packed cup holds a lot more. We don't have to worry that we are going to miss out on anything in this life because we love our enemies and because we are living in patient, forgiving love for others. God's love will always motivate and equip us to live his love.

Live Like Jesus' Disciples. Imitate God's love, love your enemies, and do not be judgmental. Jesus has given us a tremendous privilege of living like his disciples. God wants nothing more than for us to be lights in this dark world so we can lead lost souls to him. Think about that! God's love for us was so great that not only did he forgive us and make us his children, but he sends us out in the world as his witnesses too. So go in God's comfort to bring that same comfort to the world.