



God tells us that Ezra read from the book of the Law,
day after day and that the people of God
were filled with joy!

Friday - Luke 6:37-38 - Give and receive.

V38. Many Bible verses are encouraging, but this has to be one of the most encouraging. It follows on from what we saw yesterday about the necessity for us to take care not to be quick to judge others, but to be quick to forgive them when they do wrong to us.

Jesus not only tells us that when we are quick to forgive, we also will be forgiven by God but he also describes the nature or extent of God's forgiveness. Jesus says it will be marked by being of "good measure, pressed down, shaken together, running over into your lap."

'Good measure' is a metaphor from measuring out grain in such a way that the full volume, and more, is given out into the 'lap' that is the fold in the outer garment created as it hangs over the belt. It was like a large pocket.

'Pressed down' and 'shaken together' speak of getting as much as possible into the 'lap'. We're not talking about a cereal box here, which when you open it, you have to peer into the box to see where the cereal is, in the bottom half or third of the box. The idea of pressed down and shaken together is that it is so packed in that you couldn't, even if you tried, get another piece of cereal into it. It's packing it so full, that when you take the lid off, it bursts out like soda when you shake the bottle or can. It is more than an abundance. It is like the fish filling Simon's boat in Luke 5:6-7. There are so many fish that the boat is beginning to sink. Do you want your life to be drowning in the blessings of God? Of course you do! Then think about, take to heart, and then practice what Jesus tells you here. Because the wonderful thing about this is that it's not the person you forgive who will bless you in these astonishing ways, it is God. God who sees and knows all things. It is God, who sees when you might have cause to question another's behaviour, but you speak a word of encouragement instead. It is God who sees and acts for your good, when you have mercy and forgive the person whose words and actions have genuinely aggrieved you. It is God who causes all things to overflow in blessing toward you.

Produced by Ottawa RPC to help family worship.
These notes have been prepared by Rev. Dr Andrew Quigley.

Thursday - Luke 6:37-38 - Can we judge?

V37. This is one of those great misquoted verses in the Bible. How many times have you heard, “God says, ‘Don't judge me’, so back off.” It's even become a common tattoo, indelibly marked usually on the arm or neck. But it's not only the godless who have adopted this as a much lauded statement. It is commonly said by people in the church. So let's consider what Jesus is actually saying here, and begin with what he is not saying. Jesus is not teaching that it's wrong to judge; there are clearly times when judgement is necessary, see John 7:24, 1 John 4:1. Jesus is not rejecting due legal process for civil crime. Jesus is not saying that members of the church should not be brought before the church courts for sin that is public, Matthew 18:17, John 20:23, 1 Corinthians 5:12.

So, what is Jesus saying? He is saying that we need to be very careful when we interact with others, not to be too quick to assess their words and behaviour. If you are given to ‘jumping in’ with our view, then we need to take care, for that can easily lead to a condemnatory attitude. We've got to remember that we are dealing with people that are creatures made in the image of God, and are therefore principally accountable to Him, not to us, for their thoughts, words, and deeds. The fact that we are too often given to intervening in that process, without justified cause, just to make ourselves either feel or look better, is not acceptable to God. Yes, by all means, if someone is breaking the law of the land or contravening the law of God publicly, then they have to be brought to face due process. Yes, by all means, if they are a member of the church who is wandering from the faith, we are at liberty, in fact we are encouraged, to seek their restoration; for it is a good thing, James 4:19,20. However, there can be no place for our mental haranguing of individuals' day-to-day life choices. It really is best if we start with ourselves and dwell on the fact that we are accountable to God for what we think, say, and do, before seeking to address those things in the life of another. ‘Speck and beam’ in the eye comes to mind, Matthew 7:3.

If we want to be quick to do anything, Jesus says be quick to forgive. Don't hold onto the wrongs that others do to us. Expedite their release from whatever wrong they have committed against us. We have been forgiven and we are being forgiven on a daily basis when we ask for it from God, so how can we not forgive those who wrong us or others.

Monday - Read Luke 6:27-31 – Give to those who beg.

V30. Last week we read how Jesus tells us that we are to respond to someone who hits us, or steals from us. In this verse, Jesus tells us what we are to do when someone begs from us. But what is the difference between someone striking us or stealing from us, and the person who begs? It is the use of force. When someone hits us, physical violence is involved, and when someone steals, there may be an element of force either verbal or physical. Here, there is no force implied, and since because of that we are ‘free’ to choose to give or not, Jesus is highlighting the lack of concern when we choose not to.

Jesus' point is that we are to respond positively when asked. The verb Luke uses is interesting, because it conveys continuous giving. So this is not about a one-off gift. It's about ongoing giving to those who are in need. I am reluctant to insert a caveat, and do so with real hesitancy. One needs to be wise when giving money to those who are in need because of a lifestyle of wanton idleness. Dealing with such people requires more than simply handing over money, although sometimes that is necessary.

V31. Here we have a commonly used phrase. It is interesting to see the number of things which Jesus said that we still use today. Even if most of them are now used in a way that is far removed from what Jesus meant. Nonetheless, it does speak to a time when the Word of God was taught and understood in the nation. What is particularly interesting is that the saying existed in a negative form before Jesus transposed it into this positive form. Many cultures had a saying along the lines of, 'what is hateful to you, do not do to your neighbour'. In taking this and changing it into the positive statement, “as you wish that others would do to you, do so to them”, Jesus tells us a lot about the goal of his life, namely to restore man to a positive way of thinking and living. The world's mantra is that Christianity has a backward outlook on life and a negative way of expressing it. That is a lie. Christianity is genuinely progressive and positive. Christianity is all about seeing dead men and women made alive. It is all about enabling those alive men and women to become conformed to the perfect image of Jesus Christ, the risen, glorified, Son of God. It is all about those men and women being prepared for their glorious eternal dwelling in heaven. The alternative the world presents is what? Chaff that the wind drives away!

Tuesday - Read Luke 6:32-36 – It is about loving others.

V32. Jesus continues with the issue of biblical love, and addresses three issues relating to practical love. Central to each issue, Jesus asks the same question - namely, you've got to ask 'what's in it for you?' It may seem a very selfish question for Jesus to be drawing our attention to, but it's not, it's a question consistent with our human nature. We are image-bearers of God, and since God is jealous for His own glory, and does what pleases Him, it is appropriate for us to ask ourselves truthfully, when we do something, why are we doing it? But there is more to it than that. Jesus is actually asking us to deal with others in a way that will be to our own benefit. Do I hear you say, 'But I thought that Jesus was talking here about selfless, sacrificial love?' Yes, he is; but, in doing so, he is steering our God-given appetite to seek benefit for ourselves, towards its proper end. The issue is not our seeking of benefit for ourselves, it's the goal to which that benefit is directed. Don't be confused by the fact that sin has so disastrously misdirected our God-given desire to seek benefit for ourselves, that we lose sight of what Jesus is saying. Yes, sin distorts this truth of seeking benefit to the point where it becomes solely about personal self-fulfilment, apart from God, but that doesn't mean we should then disregard the teaching of Jesus out of fear of applying it incorrectly.

Jesus' point is straightforward; if you are going to restrict your love, your doing good, your lending to those who will love you back, who will be good to you, and who will give you back in return for what you've lent them; then what really is the benefit? The godless do that and more, so that they can feel good about themselves. We are to ask, 'what is the benefit to us', in terms of how it will reveal and magnify the glory of God in our lives. As we are; loving, doing good, lending, and being merciful to others, so we are manifesting the glorious work of God in our lives.

So, what is in it for you when you love those who are your enemies? What is in it for you when you do good and lend to those who will never be in a position to repay? It's the knowledge that you are declaring the astonishing mercy of your Father in Heaven toward you, and incredibly, in addition, God says that He will reward us with a great reward when we do so. That reward is promised, even though you and I live our lives marked by phenomenal ingratitude toward Him most of the time.

Wednesday - Luke 6:32-36 – It's about mercy.

V36. I know I am returning to what we looked at yesterday but there is no harm in that, especially when there is good reason to do so.

In terms of our relationships with other people, there is the command of Jesus, "Be merciful, even as your Father is merciful." That says it all. There are many people, individuals, who the world sees as 'good' people; people who spend their lives helping others. They are kind, generous, and self-sacrificing with their lives. Are these people being merciful in God's eyes? Well, that depends on whether or not they have experienced His mercy and are living their lives for His glory. If they haven't, then all their 'good' works, whilst humanly beneficial, are not fulfilling what Jesus says here. Why not? Because the ultimate goal of their doing it, harsh as it may sound, is their own self-satisfaction. But it doesn't seem like it. Are the nurses who leave Canada to go and help people in African nations doing it because they are being self centred? Yes, they are as long as they reject the love of Christ in their lives. Touch their lives in the wrong place and their heart of kindness evaporates, and their true nature as a rejector of God is quickly revealed. I have met some incredibly kind, gentle people; people who have given their lives to helping others; but speak to them of their need of a Saviour, and that mild, calm, affable demeanour dissipates in an instant, if pressed. Yes, the response may be courteous, but their steely resolve in telling you to 'back off' is unmissable.

In the Old Testament, several words are translated as mercy: 'ahavah' which refers to God's enduring love for Israel; 'rachamin' comes from the root word 'womb' and speaks of the care for the unborn in that context; and 'chesed' is a beautiful word meaning loving-kindness and steadfast loyalty. These words speak of God's compassion, care, and loving-kindness for His people, Israel, throughout all their dealings with Him, whether good or bad. This mercy is still alive today. It is evident in God's dealings with us. We who say that we love Him, yet say and do things that are contrary to that statement of intense love. The fact that God does not destroy us for our duplicitous thinking, speaking, and acting, but rather lovingly does good to us, is to be our approach when dealing with others.

Remember also what we saw yesterday; God will reward us with a great reward when we do so.