

NOTES FROM PASTOR TIM'S SERMON -12th February 2023 am SERIES FROM LUKE'S GOSPEL "God's love for the lowest"

Part 9 "Living an upside down life"

Scripture references from the ESV

Luke 6:20-49 ²⁰ And he lifted up his eyes on his disciples, and said: "Blessed are you who are poor, for yours is the kingdom of God.

²¹ "Blessed are you who are hungry now, for you shall be satisfied. "Blessed are you who weep now, for you shall laugh.

²² "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! ²³ Rejoice in that day, and leap for joy, for behold, your reward is great in heaven; for so their fathers did to the prophets.

²⁴ "But woe to you who are rich, for you have received your consolation. ²⁵ "Woe to you who are full now, for you shall be hungry. "Woe to you who laugh now, for you shall mourn and weep. ²⁶ "Woe to you, when all people speak well of you, for so their fathers did to the false prophets.

²⁷ "But I say to you who hear, Love your enemies, do good to those who hate you, ²⁸ bless those who curse you, pray for those who abuse you. ²⁹ 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 ^[b] either. ³⁰ Give to everyone who begs from you, and from one who takes away your goods do not demand them back. ³¹ And as you wish that others would do to you, do so to them.

³² "If you love those who love you, what benefit is that to you? For even sinners love those who love them. ³³ And if you do good to those who do good to you, what benefit is that to you? For even sinners do the same. ³⁴ 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. ³⁵ 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. ³⁶ Be merciful, even as your Father is merciful.

³⁷ "Judge not, and you will not be judged; condemn not, and you will not be condemned; forgive, and you will be forgiven; ³⁸ 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."

³⁹ He also told them a parable: "Can a blind man lead a blind man? Will they not both fall into a pit? ⁴⁰ A disciple is not above his teacher, but everyone when he is fully trained will be like his teacher. ⁴¹ 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? ⁴² How can you say to your brother, 'Brother, 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? 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.

⁴³ "For no good tree bears bad fruit, nor again does a bad tree bear good fruit, ⁴⁴ for each tree is known by its own fruit. For figs are not gathered from thornbushes, nor are grapes picked from a bramble bush. ⁴⁵ 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.

⁴⁶ "Why do you call me 'Lord, Lord,' and not do what I tell you? ⁴⁷ Everyone who comes to me and hears my words and does them, I will show you what he is like: ⁴⁸ he is like a man building a house, who dug deep and laid the foundation on the rock. And when a flood arose, the stream broke against that house and could not shake it, because it had been well built. ⁴⁹ 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."

Imagine a world where you were never afraid that someone would judge you or condemn you if you expressed an opinion that they didn't like. It would be a world of freedom, where you would be able to explore ideas without fear of upsetting someone. You would be free to open up the deepest issues in your heart without fear of being cancelled, treated like an outcast or being stabbed in the back.

Our culture is not like that. For all the talk about inclusion, freedom of speech, acceptance and love, it has increasingly become a culture that is hostile, tribal, ugly and dismissive. We can respond in one of two ways. We can either despair or we can become part of the solution. As believers, we can live a different life – a life that shows God's mercy and ultimately leads to stability, not just for us as individuals, but also for our culture.

- We can build our lives on a foundation that is more solid than the shifting sands of our culture.
- Those shifting sands are leading to the collapse of our society, an increase in mental health issues and a fear of speaking up for what is right.

Jesus tells us there is a better way (**vv46-49** above). He speaks of two builders:

- One builds his house on a solid foundation and when the storms of life come, his house stands firm. He is a wise builder (**Matt 7:24**)

- The other builds on the ground without digging a foundation and when the storms of life come his house falls to the ground. He is a foolish builder (**Matt 7:26**)

Jesus told that parable to show that ultimately a life of obedience to him is the only life that will stand. (**vv46-48** above).

Wisdom that leads to a well-built life is wisdom that follows the commands of Jesus.

In contrast, **v49** (above) perfectly describes our culture. We live in a world that does not even know what the commands of Jesus are, never mind actually following them, and as a result it is beginning to collapse. Into this culture, Jesus says to us, his followers:

Don't just hear what I say but do it. Live out my commands.

We are to do this because it will show a watching world that the commands of Jesus are relevant to 21st Century culture, because they are the commands of a the eternal God. If we live them out, then we will create the kind of society we are all crying out for. We are to show that there is a better way to live, a way that might seem to be crazy, but is a way of wisdom, because it comes from a God of wisdom and reveals a God of wisdom.

When Jesus teaches what he expects from his followers, he turns our world view upside down, but actually Jesus has come to turn us the right way up.

We see three contrasts in this passage.

1. **The contrast between true and false disciples.** Jesus handpicked twelve men to be his apostles, and having chosen those twelve, he then taught the people what life in the kingdom is to be like.

The congregation who heard him comprised his twelve apostles, his wider group of disciples (those who had committed themselves to him), and a crowd of curious people who had not yet committed themselves to him. (**v17-18** above). As Jesus spoke, he showed that there was a contrast between the latter two groups.

- Those who have truly committed themselves to him are blessed despite their apparently humble circumstances (**vv20-23** above)
- Those who have not yet committed themselves to him are subject to woe (**vv24-26** above)

Jesus is not condemning riches, food, happiness or a good reputation, all of which are seen to be blessings from God.

However, those things must not be pursued at the expense of pursuing Jesus himself.

What Jesus is concerned about is the attitude of our heart towards the things that the world values. A true disciple:

- Treasures Jesus above the material worth that the world craves
- Is more concerned to feed their soul on Christ than to feast on physical food
- Seeks joy in Jesus above the superficial happiness that the world seeks
- Would rather follow Jesus and be hated for it than be loved by the world and not have Jesus.

True disciples have come to see that you could have wealth, food, constant laughter and the approval of people but you are to be pitied, because one day it will all be taken away.

True disciples have a heart that loves Christ above everything and eyes that are set on an eternal future with him.

Ask yourself who or what has your heart?

2. The contrast between true and false love (v27 ff). Jesus shows us how to live in a culture like ours, which tells us to love those who love us, do good to those who do good to us and lend only to those who can repay us, causing the tribalism that we see so much of. People rush to vilify those who do not agree with their views on

same sex marriage, or climate change or veganism or gender issues, but if you agree with them then they will be

your friend and unite with you against those who hold a different view. Jesus gives his judgement on that kind of

culture (vv32-34 above). Loving, doing good and lending to those who agree with us has no virtue at all.

True virtue is seen in loving our enemies

Who are our enemies?

- Our enemies are certainly **not** other believers with whom we worship on a weekly basis. Jesus is calling us to love those who are outside the kingdom of God and therefore

Love for those within the community of God's people is a given.

- Our enemies are not those who we hate – Jesus calls us to love not hate

The reality is that we do, at times, feel hostility and hatred within our hearts towards others. We are not perfect. When we feel that hostility and hatred, we are to deal with it by coming to Jesus and confessing the sin that is in our heart. Then we ask him to fill us with his love for those people so that we can live out this command.

We do not need to live with hostility in our hearts because Christ can change us.

So who are our enemies?

- They are those who hate us because we follow Jesus (v22 above).
- They are those who reject us, in the way that people were rejected from the synagogue (v29 above)
- They are those who defraud us, taking away what is rightfully ours (v29)

Jesus says that when they do these things, we are to love them (vv27-30 above).

- When they hate you, find ways to do them good.
- When they curse you and call you horrible names, speak words of blessing over them
- When they speak evil against you, pray for God to show mercy to them, to forgive them and do them good.
- When they defraud you, suffer the loss and do not seek revenge.

Jesus is calling us to a way of life that is radically different from our culture and it is really hard.

It is not natural to us and seems so upside down.

3. The contrast between true and false concern. (v37ff). It might seem as if Jesus is expecting us to turn a blind eye to sin, but he is not doing that. We should be concerned when people sin, but how do we show that?

- We can show the kind of concern that leads to judgmentalism and condemnation

or

- We can show the kind of concern that leads to seeking to see people restored

False concern over sin shows itself by taking great delight in pointing out the sins of others. When we see something a person is doing wrong, then rather than being grieved for them, and praying for them, we rush to point it out.

False concern over sin shows itself by condemning those caught in sin. We act as judge and treat them as if they are unable to be forgiven either by us or by God.

- We can be more concerned that the rules have been broken than we are to see the rule breaker restored.

Jesus calls us to follow a better way, a way which confronts sin but does so out of genuine love and concern:

- With a desire to see that person restored primarily to God.
- With longing to show forgiveness if the person has sinned against us

When a true and healthy disciple of Jesus sees a person who has sinned, they speak the good news of the gospel and they do not hold grudges.

Why does Jesus make these three contrasts a test of true discipleship?

It is because this is the life he lived on earth as the perfect human.

His heart was **not** set on material wealth, food, superficial laughter or the approval of others.

His heart was set on seeking God's kingdom first. He loved all people, even those who hated and rejected him.

- When they rejected him with a physical slap, he didn't slap them back
- When they stripped him of his clothes, he didn't say that's mine
- When they cursed him, he didn't shout hostile sarcastic comments back
- When they nailed him to a cross, he prayed to his Father to forgive them

The life that Jesus calls us to is his life. It is what being truly human looks like.

It is how we are meant to live. That is why it is not upside down but the right side up.

The only reason we can live this life is because Jesus has come to restore us to this life. The way of wisdom is to hear his words and live them out in the power of the Spirit as we fellowship with him. We cannot do it on our own. One way you can know that you truly belong to him is when you see that you are living his kind of life.

How can we experience Christ doing his work in us? We need to be aware of two truths.

a) We need a healthy awareness of our own sin. When we see another person falling into sin, we need to search our own heart first, to see if we too are guilty of the same or greater sin or are responding sinfully. Nothing will humble us more and give us a generous heart towards others than the awareness of our own sin. That is why we need to pray before launching into judgement and condemnation, asking God to search our own heart.

Humility, love for others and willingness to forgive all come from an honest and healthy awareness of our sin.

b) We need a healthy awareness of God's mercy (v36 above). God is just and must deal justly with sin but at the heart of the Gospel is a God who is a merciful Father. Though justice is essential, his mercy is paramount.

Through the Gospel of his Son, the Lord Jesus Christ, God means to put his mercy on display to sinners

It is in the cross that justice and mercy meet, as Jesus satisfies the justice of God so that we (sinners) can be forgiven and restored to God.

- **A healthy awareness of both our sin and God's mercy to us will lead to a life of hope.**

As we see what God requires of us, we know we have failed to live rightly.

However, we see a God of mercy and so we know there is mercy for us in our sin and our failings. God stands ready to forgive us and to change us. We may feel crushed by the burden of our sin but we look to a God of mercy.

Are you looking to the God of mercy? Have you ever come to see the greatness of your own sin but also the greatness of God's mercy? Have you ever come to a place where you fall before him and cry 'God be merciful to me, a sinner'? If you do that with sincerity, then God will restore you to himself.

- **A healthy awareness of both our sin and God's mercy will lead to a life of mercy toward others.**

When you see how merciful God has been towards you, how can you not show mercy to other? We will be so overwhelmed by God's mercy that we find our hearts treasuring him above the riches of this world, loving those who hate us and extending genuine concern to all.

Imagine if every one of us did that. We might just begin to experience the culture that we long for:

- where we are free of the fear of being cancelled because we said the wrong thing
- where we can be open with our failings because we are only going to be met with love and mercy.

It would be a culture where Christ is displayed as the glorious Christ that he is.

May God help you to put into practice the teaching of Christ so that you are a doer of his word and not just a hearer.