



# CAPITOL COMMISSION

## For the King and His Kingdom (Luke 6:27-36)

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Luke's narrative continues with Jesus expanding his teaching to his disciples by addressing matters of a practical nature. In our previous account, he began his teaching with a declaration of blessings for all those who were poor and hungry, for those who weep and are abused. In sharp contrast to these blessings, he also pronounced woe on those who in this life find satisfaction in the natural order of this world and in so doing reject God's plan for salvation through the promised Messiah. In announcing blessings to the disciples the prophecy of Isaiah 61 is fulfilled in which liberty and restoration is proclaimed to the poor and the oppressed. It is through Jesus alone that these blessings are found, for these blessing are for those who in their poverty and brokenness see their need before God and in desperation cling to Jesus. However, in addressing their most basis need of restoration to God through the provision of the son, Jesus sets his attention to establishing the expectations of those who would seek after him, those who would be part of his eternal kingdom. In this we understand it is not enough to know Jesus as Savior, but that those who had ears to hear are called to set Jesus as Lord over their life. He is the one who defines what it means to follow him, and it is he who establishes the expectations of those who belong to his kingdom. For Jesus, the recipients of kingdom blessings are to reflect the heart of their king, they are to live in a manner that benefits his kingdom and are to possess lives that declare their noble birthright.

*Luke 6:27-36 - (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 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.*

### THE HEART OF THE KING

*But I say to you who hear* - In the preceding account, Jesus' teaching was specifically addressed to his disciples (Luke 6:20). These disciples were a group of followers who gathered around Jesus and sought to apply his

teachings to their lives. Luke would later describe them as a great crowd and from this contingent the Twelve were selected for special service. We find from this passage, even within the larger group of disciples, Jesus was addressing those who would be willing to hear the words he spoke, in essence, those who would take the foundational principles of the kingdom and follow through in obedience. For Jesus it was not enough to be in his company and taste the benefits of fellowship with the Son of God. His call then and today is the same; one who claims Christ must be willing to lay aside self-interest for the sake of the kingdom. These individuals must strive to reflect the heart of the king by obeying his teaching regardless of the cost.

*Love your enemies* – Jesus jumps right to the heart of the matter and to the very essence of his kingdom. He cuts through the facade of religiosity and proclaims the foundation upon which this new order would be established, it will be established and built upon the love of one has for their enemies. It is easy for us to get caught up into the blessings we will receive, and gain not a little comfort from the impending judgment for those who reject the Son of God. Yet for Jesus, he does not leave those who seek to follow him swept away on the mountaintop of blessings that will be bestowed upon them. He plants their feet firmly into the reality of one's personal commitment to their master. He expects those who long for heavenly blessings to love those who will do them the most harm in this world, those who in the final summary may be cursed because of their rejection of Jesus. This should come as no shock to us because this is the message of the cross, this is what God did when he stooped down and sent his Son to love and die for sinful rebels. God loved us when we were unlovable, and he calls us to be witnesses of the transforming power of the gospel by a life of love toward our enemies.

*And as you wish that others would do to you, do so to them* - Jesus lays out for his disciples seven practical ways for those who hear to love their enemies. They are to do good, bless, pray, turn the other cheek, not withhold their tunic, give when asked, and not demand back what is taken. He concludes this section of practical examples with a principle that has become known as the Golden Rule. This principle should be applied in matters that exist outside these defined parameters. As we consider what is required of us when we face those who are in open opposition to our lives, we must consider how we would want to be treated within the framework of a biblical worldview. This principal is not given so that followers of Christ slip into sentimentality and express a corrupted view of love toward their enemies. Paul reminds us in his epistle to the church in Colossae, we must be wise in our dealings with outsiders, we should make the most of each opportunity, and our conversation must be full of grace seasoned with salt so that as questions are asked, you will know how to answer them (Colossian 4:5-6). As we consider

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the grace of God in our lives through Jesus the Christ, one should consider how they would want to be treated in light of the truth that we are sinners saved by grace. We must reflect on our lives and remember our arrogance toward God and how we once acted as brute beasts toward those who belonged to Christ. With this at the forefront of our thinking we can ask the question, How would I desire to be treated in this situation?

As we seek to apply these practical examples of loving our enemies, do not our hearts cry out against these commands? We ask: Is there not some type of qualification to this teaching? Jesus could not possibly expect us to live in this manner, for the risk is too high that we will be taken advantage of. As we seek to wrestle these concerns to the ground, we must keep this foundational truth at the forefront of our thinking. We serve and seek to emulate the son of God; it is he who emptied himself and died a criminal's death on the cross for a sinful and rebellious people. In Peter's epistle to the scattered believers, he reminds his audience that the suffering of Jesus leaves us an example they we should follow (1 Peter 2:21). Jesus committed no sin. Yet, he was still reviled and suffered at the hands of those who hated him. In the midst of this opposition from his enemies, he did not retaliate or make threats, but he entrusted himself to God who judges justly. May we hear these commands of Jesus, see the example of his life and be compelled to develop a heart like our king, - a heart that loves our enemies regardless of the cost.

### **FOR THE BENEFIT OF THE KINGDOM**

*What benefit is that to you?* - Jesus continues his teaching by pointing out how worldly relationships function on the premise of loving those from whom there is an expected return. This is a matter of simple economics; I give of myself based on the likelihood of a return of this investment of love. As long as the love I give is reciprocated, I continue to love. In our lives there are those who are easy to love, those who are like us in terms of our similar personalities or common interests and readily return the love shown them. It costs us little to invest into these relationships because in the end, there is a benefit in terms of love received, the good done to us, and a repayment of what is invested.

*Your reward will be great* - When Jesus speaks of loving one's enemies, what is this benefit or reward that can be gained by loving those from whom we expect to receive nothing in return? Prior to knowing Christ, when we loved others, the only benefit we received was from the favorable results we experience on the basis of our actions. Yet now, as those who seek to obey Christ, we have the promise of reaping a benefit from loving those who are our enemies. However, if there is not an immediate tangible benefit, our

reward must be spiritual in nature and understood only through the eyes of faith. We find in Paul's second letter to the Corinthians that the love Christ showed us on the cross should compel us to no longer set our own self-interests as our priority (2 Corinthians 5:14). In view of Jesus' death, our response is to live for Christ and his kingdom. Our love for our enemies is an offering laid at the feet of Jesus for the glory and honor of his name and for the benefit of his kingdom. In Christ, we no longer live, but Jesus lives in us. In this way, what benefits Christ is what benefits us, because what matters most for us is that Jesus is exalted through our lives.

### **THE KING AND HIS OFFSPRING**

*He is kind to the ungrateful and evil* - Jesus' teaching has taken us from the blessings we will receive (Luke 6:20-23) to the expectations of those seek after him and would be part of his kingdom (Luke 6:26-31). At this point he pulls the curtain back and reveals the motivational principle for those who hear Jesus' commands and seek to obey this teaching of loving one's enemies. This motivation is found in the statement, "for he, the Most High, is kind to the ungrateful and evil." In loving our enemies we reflect the very heart of God; we are doing what is impossible for those who belong to the world. In the actions of extending a self-sacrificing love and showing mercy to those who reject Jesus, Christ is most glorified. This is when our lives proclaim the heart of our merciful father. Standing in sharp contrast from the world we show ourselves to be sons and daughters of the Most High.<sup>1</sup>

### **APPLICATION**

Jesus' command to love our enemies is a challenge to our thinking, and often elicits a response that seeks to justify our own unloving actions. What is at stake in this matter of loving our enemies is one of worship and begs the question: Who sits on the throne of our heart, and Who will be exalted by our actions? When we obey this command to love our enemies, we understand we receive no benefit, but it is Jesus who is exalted. It is he who sits on the throne of our hearts when we choose to deny self-interest for the benefit of exalting his name and in the advancing of his kingdom. Let us be followers of Jesus, proclaiming with our lives what we announce with our mouths, that Jesus is Lord and we live for the benefit of our king and his kingdom.

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<sup>1</sup> – Robert H. Stein, Luke, electronic ed., Logos Library System; The New American Commentary (Nashville: Broadman & Holman Publishers, 2001). 207