



CAPITOL COMMISSION

Choose Your Teacher Carefully (Luke 6:37-42)

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We arrive at a section of teaching from Jesus which at first glance seems challenging to pinpoint a cohesive theme. It appears as if Luke has compiled a random collection of disconnected topics with some concluding general parables before this sermon ends. However, as we seek to understand the author's intention for choosing each of these topics, we must consider the context of our passage. Jesus has just finished sharing about the promised reward for loving, doing good and lending while expecting nothing in return. He then admonishes those who have listening ears to be merciful as their Father is merciful. With this as our anchor for this section of Scripture, we will begin to see the thread through which this passage can be unraveled and understood. For Luke has specifically chosen these teachings to highlight to his readers the importance placed by Jesus in showing the mercy of the father for one's enemies in the building and establishment of his kingdom. For without the mercy of God there would be no love for his enemies, and none of us could be restored in their relationship to God or be recipients of his eternal kingdom. In the following section of Scripture, Luke seeks to elaborate on this abundant reward promised for those who love their enemies through their commitment to Jesus as their teacher, and so become his fully-trained disciples who see the depth of their sin and seek to extend the mercy of the father to both brother and enemy alike. A life that reflects Christ is promised to those who make an intentional commitment to set Jesus as one's teacher in each and every area of one's life.

Luke 6:37-42 - (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.

AN ABUNDANT REWARD

Judge not...condemn not..., give..., forgive - Jesus continues to expand upon the theme of how an individual demonstrates the mercy of God in his presentation of the next four commands. He lays out two negative and two positive commands which communicate both the practical implication of

being merciful along with the corresponding reward for each action. For example, in Luke 6:37 Jesus' commands those who seek him to not judge, the reward for not judging is found in not being judged. In considering the commands given by Jesus, the mercy of God is often spoken in terms of his lack of judgment and condemnation, and is frequently coupled with his willingness to give of himself and forgive the repentant sinner. These commands are not speaking to the exercise of justice in our courts of law, but Jesus is seeking to address the critical nature in which redeemed sinners easily judge and condemn the motives of others. For the Christ follower, he is forbidding this behavior of self-exaltation through the criticism of other's faults and foibles. From Jesus' perspective, a person who has received the lavish blessing of the kingdom of God in spite of their own poverty are not to be judgmental toward others who are also poor, hungry, and sorrowful. Those who seek after Jesus must remember that his teaching of the Father's mercy is not an abstract concept, but the basis upon which any individual is able to come before a holy God. In our relationship with God we are not judged or condemned because of our arrogance and rebellion, but we believe that God gave to us and forgave our sin through what Jesus accomplished on the cross. The judgment and condemnation which we rightfully deserve was poured out upon him. How can those who acknowledge their own poverty and receive the mercy of God that is lavished upon them not reflect the heart of their king in their actions and attitudes toward their fellow man?

You will not be judged - The commands to judge not, condemn not, give, and forgive find their origin in the directive to be merciful as the Father is merciful. In similar fashion, the rewards associated with each of these commands are traced back to the promise of Jesus in Luke 6:35 in which a great reward will be given to those who love their enemies. As we consider the rewards mentioned, we are forced to grapple with understanding how a person secures these promises made by Jesus. For each of these promised rewards seems unbreakably tied by Jesus to an action on our part. For example, we will not be judged on the basis of not judging others. Is Jesus teaching the concept of quid pro quo where we receive back from God on the basis of what we give? If so, this flies in the face of a salvation that is by grace through faith and only accessible because it is a gift of God, not of works to prevent man's boasting (Ephesians 2:9-10). A clue to a correct understanding can be gleaned from two short parables in Luke 6:39-40.

BECOMING LIKE OUR TEACHER

Everyone when fully trained will be like his teacher - Jesus concludes the section on the seemingly mechanical nature of the promised rewards by telling two short parables. The first is about the dangers of being blind and having as

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your guide someone who is burden with the same handicap. This section teaching is on the heels of Jesus' break from the religious establishment by choosing his own hand-picked leaders for the establishing of his kingdom. The implication is clear; the religious leaders in their spiritually blind condition have rejected the promised Messiah. They and those who follow them will remain on this path of disaster as long as they refuse to go to the one who can truly see, Jesus the son of God. With this warning in place, Jesus emphasizes the importance of selecting the correct teacher because he promises the outcome of an individual's life is irrevocably tied to that choice. For the one who commits to Jesus as his teacher, the result will be a life that reflects the heart, character, and actions of his Savior and Lord. Once again we are back to seeing the importance of coming to Jesus and setting him as the focus and goal of our lives.

For with the measure you use it will be measured back to you. - As we jump back to the promised rewards in the earlier section of this passage we understand that it is impossible for those who are blind to exemplify the Christ-like qualities that Jesus speaks about. It is impossible for fallen man to judge not, condemn not, and forgive apart from having Jesus as their teacher. However for those who have come to Jesus in their need and commit to him as their teacher, they have been promised that by becoming his fully-trained followers the life they reflect will be that of Christ. So in loving their enemies or forgiving those who have abused them they will only be doing what they have been trained to do by their teacher. As a Christ-followers forgives they are not earning for themselves salvation, they are proclaiming with their Christ-shaped life the commitment of their heart, namely, that Jesus is Lord. The Lord's brother says it this way in James 1:18, "Show me your faith apart from you works, and I will show you my faith by what I do." He is speaking to the same principle; the expression of our faith through our action provides the objective reality of who reigns on the throne of our heart. We received the rewards promised by Jesus on the basis of coming to Jesus as Lord. However, along with these promised rewards, Jesus promises to produce a life which proclaims the assurance of these future promises.

SEEING OUR SIN

Why do you see the speck in your brother's eye – Jesus began his practical instruction in Luke 6:27 by commanding his disciples to love their enemies. Having arrived at the other bookend to this section of teaching, Jesus addresses the importance of extending mercy to those within the family of God. For this injunction is not limited to one's enemies, but must be applied equally to all God's people. Jesus begins by questioning the purpose of the individual who easily spots the depravity in the lives of others while

being utterly blind to the wickedness of their own heart. What he is seeking to address is the issue of focus and speaks to the very heart of our fallen nature which is seen in Adam's rebellion toward God. In the fall, the creature sought to be God and expected both the creator and the rest of creation to revolve around him. From this skewed vantage point, man analyzes every relationship from a selfish perspective and has a disconnected view of reality because they eliminate God from his rightful position as creator and Lord over his creation. Apart from Christ, we function from this disconnected paradigm; by focusing on other's sin we are blind to the truth of our condition as rebellious sinners. However those who commit themselves to Jesus as their teacher are called to change their focus. They are forced to accept responsibility for their sin when confronting with the necessity of Jesus death that secures for them both forgiveness and victory over sin.

First take the log out of your own eye - We walk through this life with our egregious sin on full-display for both God and the world to see. Jesus calls his followers to not only gain an awareness of their sin, but they must make its removal a matter of first importance before they consider addressing sin in the lives of their brothers and sisters. As one seeks to obey Jesus, the ease in which this task is to be accomplished shall prove far more challenging than one might have imagined. In this process it will require them to rely often on the grace and mercy found in the cross of Christ. It will also afford them the opportunity to gain a fresh perspective that should be permeated with grace as they seek to minister to others who are themselves entangled by a similar sin.

APPLICATION

We conclude by asking an important question: "Is Jesus our teacher?" Do we trust him to guide us through this life, does he instruct us in our thinking and actions? In our lives there are many voices that seek to claim this role, yet Jesus tells the disciples that they have but one teacher, the Christ (Matthew 23:10). He demands an exclusive place in our life, for any other voice that does not point to him must be eliminated. For Jesus reminds us, we will all become like our teachers. We will either reflect the nature of the world or that of Christ, there is no other option. Our decision in this matter is critical, for our life will proclaim the choice that was made in our heart. Jesus calls us to make him Lord not only in word but also in deed, by seeking to be influenced by him in every area of life.
