

Introduction

Good morning everyone! For those did not hear the announcement at the start of the service and you were expecting Jan Waterschoot to be up here, well, there's a reason for this. Jan was suddenly taken ill and I was called upon at the last minute to fill in for him. Most of you would know that our Pastor Francis and Barbara are away in New Zealand and Jan usually fills in for him when Pastor is away. My name is Hsiang-Ling and I am one of the youth leaders of our church. You don't see me half of the time in "big church" because every other week I am over at the other building trying not to terrorise our youths, some of whom I am glad to see here with us today.

And because I stand here with fear and trembling and really need God's help today, please join me in a word of prayer before I start. [PRAYER] I had no chance to prepare any slides today, so it would be helpful if you have your bibles turned to Luke 6:27 because was is my usual custom, I will be following the text quite closely.

Summary of sermon last week and link to current passage

Last week Jan spoke to you from the "Beatitudes", the series of "blessed are you" teachings of Jesus. Our Luke 6:27-36 passage we read today follows directly from the beatitudes. You may recall that he mentioned that this Luke passage has a parallel in Matthew's gospel. Jan refers to it as the "Sermon on the Plain". Depending on which bible translation you have, you may find it written as the "Sermon on the Mount". Jan mentioned that in this sermon on the mount, things are upside-down. Jesus brings into focus the sharp contrast between how the world sees things and how God's sees things. I call this the "upside-down economy of God" - what the world values, isn't in fact what God values.

I suspect for the most of us, what the world values is also what we value. Seriously who wants to be poor, be hungry, to weep, to be insulted, to be hated, to be excluded? No one. But the promise to us is that if you suffer all these things because of the Son of Man, because of Jesus, you will be blessed. **God will be indebted to no one.**

Jan also gave you the context of this Sermon on the Mount. There was a large crowd of people following Jesus at that time, both Jews and Gentiles. They followed Jesus mostly because, I venture to put it to you, Jesus was the entertainment for the day. Remember, they didn't have Netflix then! Executions were held in public squares and hordes of people came to watch. We know that by the time of the Sermon on the Mount, Jesus was already performing miracles, healings, and casting out evil spirits. People came to watch. And Jesus took this opportunity, first and foremost, to teach his disciples. It is quite clear from the text (both in Matt 5:1-2 and Lk 6:20): looking at his disciples, Jesus said "blessed are you who are poor". But we also know from the bible text that this teaching was not only intended for the ears of his disciples, it was also intended for those who hear him speaking (Lk 6:27, 7:1).

Why am I making this point? In a crowd like what we have today, there will be some who consider themselves followers and disciples of Jesus. And there will be some who like the crowd then, you just came along for the ride. And it's ok. You know what I like about Jesus, he doesn't just say: you are in and you are out. And I only teach those who are my sheep. Jesus' concern was not only for his sheep, his invite was for ALL who hear him. So my invite today is also for all those who hear Jesus' voice today. Take what you heard today, go back to chew on it, go talk to someone about it, discuss it with

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someone whether you think it is just blah-blah words from 2000 years ago, or whether it is still relevant for us today.

But for those who consider themselves disciples, followers of Christ, we need to take it one more level up. Lk 6:36 tells us “Be merciful, **just as** your Father is merciful”. I will be coming to that later. We are to emulate our Father. We take what we hear today, go back to chew on it, have it enter our minds and our hearts, and let it outflow into our hands, so that we actually do something with it.

Exploring our text (Luke 6:27-36)

Plunging into our text today, verse 27 “But I say to you who hear: Love your enemies, do good to those who hate you, bless those who curse you, pray for those who mistreat you.” Who has not heard this verse before? Love your enemies. We all know this. Who can say with all honesty, that you have been able to do that? Those who are a bit cheeky will quickly say: “Ah, I have no enemies, no one hates me! I don’t have love them then!” You don’t get off the hook so quickly. Our enemy encompasses not only those who hate us, it encompasses those who do not treat us right (v.28), who humiliate us (v.29), who take things from us (v.29), who keep on asking us for more, and then some (v.30). Jesus makes the statement to love your enemies, and expands that with examples as to what that entails from verses 28-30. And then he summarises it in verse 31 with what has now come to be known as the Golden Rule: “Do to others as you would have them do to you” (NIV).

Jesus further explains WHY as Christians we should act in this way. From v.32-34, he explains that this kind of love in action, marks us out as believers, as distinctive from the World. When we act in this manner, we reflect the distinctive marks of the sons and

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daughters of the Most High (v.35), and we reflect the characteristics of our heavenly Father (v.36).

Cross referencing our text with Matthew's text

In the parallel passage in Matthew's gospel, we glean the same reasoning. Isn't it cool how Scripture affirms Scripture? In Matt 5:13-14, immediately after the beatitudes, what passage do we get? Also a pretty famous teaching. "You are the salt of the earth, you are the light of the world". We Christians love in this manner because we are to be distinctive from the world, we are to be salt, we are to be light. Matthew goes further, and tells us WHY are we to be distinctive?

Can somebody read Matt 5:16 out loud "In the same way, let your light shine before others, so that they may see your good works and....? **give glory to your Father** who is in heaven." In being distinctive, in acting in a way that is different from how the World acts, we point the way to our Father. We point others the way to God in the way we love and the way we act.

Theology in action

Alright, so this is the theology. How does that look like practically? Are we to take Jesus' suggestions in Luke verses 29-30 literally? Is Jesus really asking us to be someone else's doormat? And if we are not to take it literally, how then do we apply these verses? What did Jesus himself do when he was slapped? There are 2 instances in the bible where it was recorded that Jesus was slapped. In John 18:22 Jesus was slapped by the officer of the High Priest and in Matt 26:67, Matthew was describing the same event of Jesus before the High Priest and there Matthew also records that Jesus was spat on and slapped. In both accounts, we are not told that Jesus turned the other cheek. In fact,

John records that Jesus gave an answer to the officer who slapped him. Bummer, if it was recorded that Jesus turned his other cheek and then gave an answer to the officer, then it would have settled the issue for us because that would have given us good support to say that we should always turn the other cheek regardless of the situation.

So we look to the parallel passage in Matthew to help us. Matthew places Jesus' teaching about retaliation right before this teaching about loving our enemies and turning the other cheek.

I am going to suggest then to you that Jesus in this passage here is not telling us we should comply and allow the evil that is done to us. He is warning us against retaliation. We are not to repay evil with evil. And Jesus in advocating non-retaliation to evil isn't advocating passivity. On the contrary! His method of non-compliance to evil is not staying there and being everyone's doormat. Jesus in fact advocates active action in response to evil but not in the way that the World would act - eye for an eye, tooth for tooth. As Christians, we need to take active steps to overcome evil, but we do that with good. Sometimes, it is indeed by turning the other cheek, sometimes by giving even more to someone who has taken much from you, sometimes by giving without expecting return. So yes we are still not off the hook. Verses 27-31 still very much applies to us. And we are told that in acting so radically in love, we are reflecting to the world the characteristics of our Father and so doing show others the way to God and show ourselves to be sons and daughters of God (v.30).

The impossible made possible

Is God's standard impossible? What do you think? Yes it is. Luke 6:36 tells us "Be merciful just as your Father is merciful". Matt 5:48 puts it even higher "Be perfect, as your

heavenly Father is perfect.” It is impossible to love our enemies, do good to those who hate you, bless those who curse you, pray for those who mistreat you. Our heavenly Father knows that, and that is why He made a way possible for us. Romans 5:10 tells that that similarly while we were enemies of God we were reconciled to him by the death of his Son, Jesus. God isn’t asking us to do more than what He has already done for us. While we were still enemies of God, Jesus paid the ultimate price for us with his blood on the cross of calvary so that through him and in his power we are able to love our enemies. How that works out technically is a mystery to me. But at the very point when we stop trusting in what we can do and have done, and start trusting in what God has done for us, we step into the winning side. What is impossible becomes possible through the resurrection power that now flows in us. God’s not asking us to do what He himself hasn’t done. He has done the same, loved us while we were still his enemies, and not only that, provided us the way, and the means by which we can do the same.

Closing reflection

I remember reading a book by Corrie ten Boom over her experiences during the Second World War. For those who do not know her, she was a Dutch Christian lady whose family helped and hid Jews in their house in Haarlem during the Second War War. Her house is still there in Haarlem and you can still visit it and see the hiding place where they hid the Jews. As with many Dutch people who helped the Jews, her family eventually got caught and were sent to the concentration camp. Her sister didn’t survive the camp. Corrie ten Boom wrote about her time in the concentration camp, seeing her beloved sister wasting away and dying. And she said she hated the Germans. Years later she came face to face with her captor. The guard of her concentration camp. And she wrote that she froze for awhile and she said she couldn’t imagine going up to shake his hand, to say that she forgave him for what he did to her and her family. But she said that God

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worked in her heart and had been working in her heart, and with the strength that only could have come from God, she managed to step up to her hated captor to tell him that he has been forgiven.

I don't know what radical act of love God is asking you to do today. Without the realisation of God's radical love for us, it would be impossible to also extend that radical love to that other. If there is someone whom God has brought up in your mind, and no matter how difficult or painful that memory is, God is saying to you : Come to me, and lay it down at my feet. I'll help you. Let's do it together.

I am going to ask us all to close our eyes and talk silently to God for just awhile. If there is something you need to say to God, say it. Then I will close in prayer. [Prayer]