

## Saved by the King

### Luke 6:12-49

When I first came to Grand in 2009, my very first series was teaching through the Sermon on the Mount in Matthew 5-7. We spent several weeks just on those three chapters. This morning we will be studying Luke's version of the Sermon on the Mount, known as, The Sermon on the Plain. It is not three chapters long but only 29 verses.

Yet, the heart of the Sermon on the Mount is found in these 29 verses in Luke. The reason I want to cover it in one sermon is that there is a flow to the sermon that we don't get if we break it up. Also remember, the people heard it as a single sermon.

The passage (vv. 12-49) moves from narrative to teaching ethics to a parable at the end. Jesus is going for the heart in the sermon. He was/is always aiming at the sinner's heart. Jesus drove the arrow of the gospel deep in the sinner's heart and left it there by showing us that only the humble are saved by the King.

#### **1. Only the humble will pray and depend on the King (v. 12)**

As we begin this passage we find Jesus praying. On the heels of his hostile encounter with the scribes and Pharisees and before He calls His disciples and preaches the Sermon on the Plain, He goes out to the mountain to pray. Why would Jesus pray? After all, wasn't He the Son of God? Why would the Son of God need to make time to pray?

I think we see two very important things in Jesus' life in v. 12. First, we see that Jesus was humble. Only humble people pray. Prayer expresses our dependence on God the Father. We realize that we need Him and so in prayer we display our faith in God by calling on God to help us, guide us, help others, give us wisdom, obey God, be faithful to God in all kinds of circumstances, and display the fruit of the Spirit.

Jesus lived His life just like we do—by faith. One of the ways we display our faith is in prayer. It is the humble person who gets on his knees before God.

If we do not pray we are saying we do not need God. We may not say that out loud but because we do not pray indicates we have not humbled ourselves before God. It says we believe we are self-sufficient.

And Philippians 2:5-8 help us understand Jesus' praying, *"Have this mind among yourselves, which is yours in Christ Jesus, <sup>6</sup> who, though he was in the form of God, did not count equality with God a thing to be grasped, <sup>7</sup> but emptied himself, by taking the form of a servant, being born in the likeness of men."*

The second thing we see in v. 12 is closely connected to the first: Jesus modeled a life of humbly depending on God in prayer. Luke showed us that prayer was an essential part of Jesus' dependence on the Father. Luke did not have to include this short sentence but the Holy Spirit wanted it included. Jesus wanted us to see that He was able to live a life of flawless perfection because of humble faith and prayer.

Jesus did nothing without prayer. He modeled for us what humble dependence on God looks like through prayer.

How important is prayer to Jesus? Even now as the risen Son of God at the Father's right hand He prays. He prays for us and mediates for His people.<sup>1</sup>

If Jesus did not function as the Son of God without prayer neither can God's adopted sons and daughters function without prayer.

Brothers and sisters, prayer is our humble dependence on our Father in heaven. Don't allow lazy pride to creep into your life. Repent of your sin by humbling yourself and pray.

Remember, Jesus did not say, *"Apart from Me you can do something."* He said apart from Me you can do nothing. Only the humble will pray and depend on the King.

#### **2. Only the humble will follow the King (vv. 13-16)**

After praying all night, Jesus called all of His disciples together and in vv. 13-16, chose 12 disciples that would become His apostles. They were a motley crew of men that included uneducated men; rough-around-the-edges

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<sup>1</sup> Heb. 4:14-5:10; 7:22-28; 8:1-10:18. To understand Jesus mediation for us we must understand His office as our Great High Priest. As our Great High Priest, He intercedes and mediates for us. So, the amazing thing is the Spirit intercedes for us and Jesus intercedes for us as we pray to the Father. Prayer is Trinitarian and this should be of great comfort to us.

fishermen; a tax collector who was considered a traitor in Jewish society; a zealot who was in armed rebellion against the Romans and therefore he hated tax collectors; and a greedy man who would eventually betray Jesus.

Luke does not give us lots of information about the disciples except they followed Jesus. His point was not about these men. They weren't perfect men. They certainly were not qualified to be disciples. There were just ordinary men with jobs and some of them with wives and yet the call of Christ was so powerful that it humbled them and they left everything to follow Jesus.

Jesus still calls ordinary men and women to humbly follow Him today. Regardless of our abilities or our inabilities the wonderful thing is that His call is powerful and effective. One of the wonderful glories of Christ's call is that our weakness is the opportunity for His power—"our ordinariness makes room for his extraordinariness."<sup>2</sup> As Oswald Chambers said, *"All through history God has chosen and used nobodies, because their unusual dependence on him made possible the unique display of his power and grace. He chose and used somebodies only when they renounced dependence on their natural abilities and resources."*<sup>3</sup>

We must be continually reminded that it is not about us but about the *treasure of Jesus* that has been placed in *jars of clay*. The glorious gospel is committed to common, frail human beings so that the power of the word of Christ will be seen and heard. Clearly then, an awareness of our weakness, our ordinariness, can be an asset in gospel ministry for only the humble will follow Christ.

Think of the Apostle Paul, the one-time Pharisee, murderer, and persecutor of the church when he said in 2 Corinthians 12:9-10, *"But [Jesus] said to me, 'My grace is sufficient for you, for my power is made perfect in weakness.' Therefore I will boast all the more gladly of my weaknesses, so that the power of Christ may rest upon me. <sup>10</sup> For the sake of Christ, then, I am content with weaknesses, insults, hardships, persecutions, and calamities. For when I am weak, then I am strong."*

Friend perhaps Jesus is calling you to Himself for salvation. This is a call too. Humble yourself by turning from your sin of self-dependence to depending on Christ. Jesus will never leave you or forsake you. He proved that when He came and lived the perfect, sinless life you should have lived and then died on the cross for your sin. Then He rose from the dead and is in heaven praying for you even now. Trust Him today!

Christian, where is God calling you to serve? Where is God calling you that perhaps you believe you do not have the ability to serve? It is not your humility that says, *"I am not qualified."* It is your lack of humbly trusting Jesus to accomplish in you what He calls you to do. If God calls you then He will equip you. He calls us when we are unqualified and equips us to do what He has called us to. His word will create what He calls us to do.

People often want to do a high profile ministry or have a platform and be recognized. You have to be a humble person to give your life in an area of ministry where you are rarely seen or perhaps not seen at all. I think of those who carefully hold babies, change diapers, or teach 2-3-year olds. They are quietly and faithfully grinding it out in the out of the way places where not many know what they are doing. You see only the humble will follow the King into these out of the way places and serve without recognition.

### **3. Only the humble will listen to the King (vv. 17-19)**

Verses 17-19 transition the narrative to the Sermon on the Plain. Verse 17 tells us that Jesus is standing on a level place and a great crowd is around Him. Then vv. 18-19 tell us people came from all over to hear Him and to be healed by Him.

What we need to notice is that there are 2 verses given to healing and 29 verses given to teaching. The greatest need of the people is not physical healing but spiritual healing that comes from the good news of the person and work of Christ.

Salvation is for those who humbly listen to the good news of Jesus. These verses tell us that people came to Jesus for all kinds of reasons but what they really needed was to hear the message of the King.

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<sup>2</sup> Kent Hughes, *Preaching the Word: Luke Vol. 1, That You May Know the Truth*, 208-209.

<sup>3</sup> Ibid. 209.

We are just like them. We have our presenting problems that we bring to Jesus but the deeper need is the word of God. We need to listen to the good news of the King.

Only the humble will listen to the King—will you? *Will you listen to the message of the King? Will you by faith receive the good news of salvation from the King?*

#### **4. Only the humble have the King as their reward (vv. 20-23)**

Look in vv. 20-23. Here we see four Beatitudes. They are very similar to the Beatitudes in the Sermon on the Mount. Jesus used the word *Blessed* four times. The word *blessed* means *happy* but it is not happy in the way we think of happy. It is a *happiness* or *joy* from the kingdom of God's perspective. Kingdom happiness is not circumstantial and temporal. It is an eternal happiness and joy that is only found in the Kingdom of God.

What throws us off when we read these verses is that Jesus connected the real experience of being poor, hungry, and grieving to happiness. He says this is what life in the kingdom of God is like. The people probably thought He was crazy because they thought they were oppressed and suffering. He just turned their lives upside down.

Jesus concluded this version of the Beatitudes in vv. 22-23 by saying, "*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! Rejoice in that day, and leap for joy, for behold, your reward is great in heaven.*"

For the Jews the word *reward* was covenant language. For Jesus to say He was their great reward for their persecution was to say he was the God of the covenant. This is language that goes all the way back to Genesis 15.

In Genesis 15:1 God renewed His covenant with Abram. Abram was struggling with his faith in God because he did not have an heir to pass along the promise of God. The New King James Version reads, "*Do not be afraid, Abram. I am your shield, your exceedingly great reward.*" God was Abram's great reward. Then He told Abram to look to the heavens and count the stars. Abram looked at the stars and He believed Yahweh's promise and it was counted to him as righteousness. God wanted Abram to look past his temporal struggles of not having an heir yet and see by faith that God was his exceedingly great reward.

How are the temptations of your temporal circumstances keeping you from seeing Christ as your great reward?

- Only the humble understand that it is a blessing to know that they are spiritually poor, spiritually hungry and spiritually grieve over their sin.
- It is the humble who see Christ as their great reward because they understand that He was ultimate One who was persecuted for them in order to be their great reward.
- It is the humble who look at their humble circumstances and realize that Jesus is their exceedingly great reward.
- In these verses Jesus holds out the joy of having Him as your great reward but if you will not listen to His call to joy then you must listen to the warning of rejecting Him.

#### **5. Only the humble will heed the warnings of the King (vv. 24-26)**

In vv. 24-26, Jesus continues to turn everything upside down. For He flipped the coin over to show us that what the world says brings true joy and happiness is actually a curse.

Jesus used the word *woe* 4 times in three verses. The word *woe* is *an exclamation of grief and horror*. It carries the connotation of a coming *terrible disaster*. In Revelation 8-9, after the angel had poured out the judgment of God on the earth, in Revelation 9:12 he said, "*The first woe has passed; behold, two woes are still to come.*" This word *woe* is a stronger word than "*slow down.*" It means certain disaster is coming if you do not change the direction of your life.

We also need to notice that Jesus set the *woes* in vv. 24-26 opposite the *blessings* in vv. 20-23. We hear Him say *woe* to the rich, *woe* to those who are full now, *woe* to those who are now laughing and *woe* to who seem popular in the world. These are all in contrast to the *blessings*.

What does Jesus mean by the *woes*? Jesus is warning those who idolize this world and all of its pleasures have made this world their god. Unless they repent, they will have received their reward in this life but will know only torment in the next.

These warnings do not mean they have been really bad people. They may have lived very moral lives but they lived their lives without God and by doing so made themselves god. They ignored God nor did they give Him thanks.

What happens to the rich in v. 24? The rich have spent their reward. Their comfort was their money and in eternity there will be no reward or comfort for them. Like the parable Jesus told about the rich man and the beggar Lazarus in Luke 16. Lazarus was a beggar and longed to eat the crumbs from the rich man's table. Yet the rich man never shared with him. Lazarus died and his only possession was his faith in God and the rich man with only his possessions.

In Luke 16:22-26, Jesus says, "*The poor man died and was carried by the angels to Abraham's side. The rich man also died and was buried,* <sup>23</sup>*and in Hades, being in torment, he lifted up his eyes and saw Abraham far off and Lazarus at his side.* <sup>24</sup>*And he called out, 'Father Abraham, have mercy on me, and send Lazarus to dip the end of his finger in water and cool my tongue, for I am in anguish in this flame.'* <sup>25</sup>*But Abraham said, 'Child, remember that you in your lifetime received your good things, and Lazarus in like manner bad things; but now he is comforted here, and you are in anguish.'*"

In v. 25a Jesus addresses those who are full, who are, as we used to say, living large. All of their desires are met now. Like the rich, they lack nothing. It is not just food they desire but their appetite never ceases. They always want more but never come to the One who can satisfy their desires.

Then in v. 25b, Jesus said those who are *now laughing* will not have the last laugh. Those who lived it up in this world and thought everything was a joke will one day wake up to weeping, mourning, and gnashing of teeth. Their lack of humility has led them to the place that is no joke.

It is not that you cannot laugh and enjoy life but the kind of laughing that this verse is talking about is those who arrogantly laugh in the face of God as if He does not exist.

You see, where you will spend eternity is no laughing matter. *The fact is only the humble will by faith heed the warnings of Jesus.*

Finally, in v. 26, Jesus concludes His woes by saying that popularity is not a measure of God's favor. Having the approval of everyone is not evidence of faithfulness. Sometimes it is the curse that kills. Popularity is like a prison that does not easily let us out. God must open the door of the prison with the gift of the key of humility. If He does not then we will perish in it.

Friends, only the humble will heed the warnings of the King. I do not know where you stand with Jesus this morning. If you are ignoring the warnings of the King, beware. God is long suffering but at some point, He will withdraw His calling and turn you over to your sin. Do not wait, today is the day of salvation.

#### **6. Only the humble will show the love and mercy of the King (vv. 27-36)**

In vv. 27-42, Luke moves from the Beatitudes to the ethics that flow from them. Jesus' message is straight ethic with some parables sprinkled in it. Jesus' ethical teaching makes us cry "*Amen!*" and "*Oh my!*" We see how much we need the gospel of grace as we read the ethics in these verses.

However, they are not just *do more and try harder* kind of ethics. These verses are a call for God's people to live a supernatural life. They are very serious verses because eternity hangs in the balance.

First, in vv. 27-31, we see the command to love others supernaturally. Look in vv. 27-29. The love and mercy of God call us to supernaturally love our enemies.

In our western culture it is not common to think of people as enemies but in Jesus' day this was not uncommon. Although we may NOT think about those we do not like as enemies the fact is we will treat people that way.

Then, in v. 30, we are to help those who are hard to love. Most people do not like to see beggars. It makes us uncomfortable when we see the man or woman standing on the corner at the light with a sign that says, "*Help, need food.*" We tend to look the other way or zoom past them because they make us uncomfortable.

But it is not just the beggars, there are those you dread to see coming your way. No, you do not consider them an enemy but when you see them headed your way you are thinking, "*Oh no! I really do not want to speak to this person.*" When we think these thoughts in our hearts, we begin to see the depth of our depravity. We see just how impossible it is to perfectly love others with the supernatural love of God.

Next, in vv. 32-34, Jesus explains the true nature of supernatural love. Jesus calls us to unconditional love as opposed to self-interested or self-rewarding love. There is a kind of love that dictators, politicians, terrorists and gang members all share. When they see members of their tribe, they greet each other with warm embraces, handshakes and pats on the back. Jesus was not talking about this kind of love.

Jesus was talking about a love that expects nothing in return. Jesus was not trying to give business principles in these verses. However, what He says should cause us to stop and think and ask, *“How can I be a blessing to someone who has hurt me? Or How can I show the love of Christ in a way that would cause others to know Jesus loves them? Or Is there a way my business can display the love of Christ and expect nothing in return?”* These are good questions to ask on a personal basis and in our business practices.

Finally, in vv. 35-36, Jesus explains the motivation for supernatural love. The supernatural love of Christ is the culmination of being humbly converted by the mercy of God. It is the culmination of being called, being humbled by our spiritual poverty and now learning how to obey the implications of the gospel.

The Apostle Paul explains our motivation for loving others in Ephesians 4:31-32, *“Let all bitterness and wrath and anger and clamor and slander be put away from you, along with all malice. <sup>32</sup> Be kind to one another, tenderhearted, forgiving one another, as God in Christ forgave you.”*

I don’t know if you have heard the story of missionary Michael Oh. He is a Korean who is a missionary to the people of Japan. He tells how from 1910 to 1945 the Japanese killed some 30 million Koreans, Chinese, Christians, and other Asians. He said the Nazis killed 6 million Jews, Stalin some 20 million Russians and other ethnicities but the Japanese killed 30 million. Asia had its own holocaust but no one seems to know.

Michael Oh says that the Japanese raped hundreds of thousands of young girls, performed medical experiments on live victims with no anesthesia, tortured millions and displaced them from their homeland. He said his father was given a Japanese name and if he ever used his Korean name he was beaten and tortured.

Michael Oh is often asked why he is a missionary to the people who committed such atrocities against him and his people. He says, *“The answer that I give is quite simply, Jesus says, ‘Love your enemies.’”*<sup>4</sup>

Who is it in your life that you need to begin showing the supernatural love of Christ to this week? Perhaps it is this afternoon?

## **7. Only the humble will judge with the wisdom and mercy of the King (vv. 37-45)**

Imagine you were in the crowd that had just heard Jesus call for them to love their enemies. Do you think they would be like us and when they hear Jesus say that they would say, *“Wow! That is great teaching! Let me tweet this out and post it on Instagram and FB. Then we will have some T-shirts made that say, ‘love your enemies’ and ‘Judge not and you will not be judged.’”* No . . . probably not.

I think the people who heard this were offended. They would have admitted that it was impossible to do what Jesus called them to do but they would also say, *“It does not matter whether I can or cannot live like this, the fact is, I don’t want to. I want to hate the Romans and any other foreigner that is in our country.”* Most of the people probably thought Jesus was crazy.

At this point in His sermon, Jesus is getting to the heart of the issue because it is all an issue of the heart. Jesus was/is continuing to layout the kind of humility it requires to live with the wisdom and mercy God when it comes to judging.

Verse 37a is one of the least understood and most often abused sayings of Jesus. Many people want to shuck the responsibility of their sin with this statement. The Greek word of *judge* has in mind to *“act as a judge who has the authority to judge others.”*

What this verse means is that only God has the exclusive right to sit in judgment over people and condemn them. It does not mean we should not exercise judgment to discern right from wrong and making moral judgments.

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<sup>4</sup> [http://cdn.desiringgod.org/pdf/conferences/2009\\_pascon\\_michael\\_oh.pdf](http://cdn.desiringgod.org/pdf/conferences/2009_pascon_michael_oh.pdf).

God is the final Judge and He wants us to be under His authority and make, wise, merciful judgments of what is right and what is wrong.

Everything that follows v. 37a is about how to make wise, merciful judgments. *Jesus gives us four principles for how the humble judge with the wisdom and mercy of the King.*

The first principle is to judge with mercy. Verses 37-38 is basically the Golden Rule. Jesus calls us to treat others how we want to be treated but He adds a little something extra.

Here He says with the measure we judge and forgive others is how we will be treated. In other words, if we avoid judging and condemning others and generously forgive, others *generally* will treat us that way.

You need to know that this verse has nothing to do with money. It has everything to do with forgiveness. It means we should be merciful in our judgments and generous with our forgiveness.

The second principle in vv. 39-40 is that we must judge with wisdom those whom we follow. The parable is somewhat comical when you think about a blind man leading another blind man. The point is that we must be careful about those whom we follow because we will become like them. If you are influenced by a bad leader then you will pick up their bad traits and habits.

Verse 40 is basically saying that you will be like the person who teaches you. In other words, you cannot follow a blind teacher and hope to gain vision. The fact is you will be blind just like he or she is.

I was talking with someone this week and we were lamenting how some of the teachers we respect have not finished their lives well. Also, as I prepared the sermon, I was looking at a book jacket and saw the name of a pastor that I used to hold in high regard but now his teaching has drifted away from the orthodoxy. Some teachers start well but do not finish well. *The humble will judge with the wisdom and mercy of the King those whom they follow.*

The third principle in vv. 41-42: judge yourself before you judge others. Those who have been humbled because they understand in the deepest part of their heart that Jesus died on the cross for their sin, know that they are sinners first and foremost. They have been humbled by the person and work of Christ and therefore judge their own lives first.

Beware if you begin to stand in the place of God by standing in judgment over others. Beware if you begin to be characterized by pointing out the sins of others without dealing with your own.

It is the prideful hypocrite who is a blind guide. He is blind because there is a log in his or her eye. *However, the humble will judge themselves before they judge others.*

The fourth principle is in vv. 43-45: judge the fruit in the lives of others with the wisdom and mercy of the King. So, let's be clear, *"Judge not, and you will not be judged"* does not mean to never make any judgments. This whole passage has been about making wise, merciful judgments. A person who says that Jesus said we should *never judge* is just not being intellectually honest.

Jesus calls us to be compassionate and wise horticulturalist of our own life and the lives of others. We must be able to identify a blind guide when we see one. Likewise, we need to know when a teacher is being faithful to the word of God because he or she teaches the whole counsel of God and affirm that.

We must be able to inspect the fruit of our own lives and realize that fruit comes from the root we call the heart. If thorns are the bad fruit of our lives then we must ask Jesus to do some pruning. If there is good fruit then we must be humbly grateful and ask Jesus to continue to cultivate His mercy in our lives.

*Brothers and sisters, what rules the heart reveals the great reward of the heart.* That which is the great reward of your heart is your treasure. That which is your treasure is what rules your heart. Whatever is your treasure is revealed in good fruit or wicked thorns.

So, do you want to know what the treasure of your heart is, then just listen to how you talk? Do you love your enemies? Do you pray for them? Do you bless those who curse you? Do you give thanks to God for His mercy? Do you judge others? Do you forgive others? Do you criticize others or seek to support them? Do you confess your own sin to God and others? What comes out of your mouth issues forth from your heart.

**8. Only the humble will be saved by the King (vv. 46-49).**

What does the Sermon on the Plain teach you? Ultimately it teaches you what you have built the foundation of your life on. *Jesus calls us to humble ourselves because the humble will listen to His words and those who are not will not listen.*

- If you listen then you are like the man who dug deep in the soil and found the solid Rock on which to build your life. What you realize is that it was the mercy and grace of God that humbled you and called you to dig deep and build on the foundation of Christ.
- If you reject Jesus' words then you are living life on your own and in your own power and pride. Here is what you need to know. Storms in the form of suffering, struggles and tragedy will come into your life. They will beat on the house of your life and they will reveal the foundation of your life.

These little storms are designed to humble you and prepare you for the ultimate storm of God's judgment. The Day of Judgment is the ultimate storm and if your life is not built on the Rock of Jesus Christ then your life will be destroyed.

- Friends only the humble will be saved by the King. The question is, what is the condition of your heart this morning?