

# Luke 6-27-38

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[ 0 : 0 0 ] Please turn back to Luke chapter 6, the passage that was read for us, 8.6.2 in the Black Church Bible. Towards the end of his life, as his terminal cancer took hold, the American minister, Tim Keller, was talking to his wife about what they knew was imminent.

And he said to her that in all their sadness and all their fear and in all that would come to a couple like that at a time like that, he said, because Jesus rose bodily from the grave, everything's going to be okay.

It is, when you think about it, a remarkable thing to be able to say. When the worst thing that any of us can face has had all of its potency taken away, it actually transforms everything.

You can live without fear. You can live in complete freedom. What is it that we want in life but to live fearlessly and in complete freedom?

Because Jesus rose bodily from the grave, everything is going to be all right. That's what the Christian can say. Because Jesus rose from the dead, death is now just a bump on the road to eternity.

[ 1 : 3 1 ] And last week, if you were here, verses 20 to 23, what we heard there was Jesus bring that future security back into the day-to-day of the lives of his disciples.

He told them that they belonged to God. They were part of his kingdom. And because of that, they were blessed by him. And because of that, whatever opposition they faced, everything was in the end going to be all right.

That is the assurance that the follower of Jesus possesses. If you think about it, that's how it works. If the worst thing at the end of the road has completely been taken out of the picture as something to fear, Oh, death, where is your sting?

The Apostle Paul would say. John MacArthur, another American minister at his memorial service recently, one of his sons recounted the last conversation he had with him. And he said, Death, where is your sting?

I feel no sting. It's a remarkable thing that we can say as Christians. And if that great enemy has been defeated, the security then of that future reaches back into the present and we are blessed.

[ 2 : 5 0 ] We belong to God's kingdom. We are secure. Whatever lies ahead, it's all going to be okay. And our passage this evening, verse 28, can you see?

People can even hate us and revile us. They can curse us and abuse us. But we have the blessing of God. We belong to his kingdom.

It is a kingdom that persists through death. And that changes everything. Now, of course, it's easy to say those things and for it to sound flippant.

Death has lost its sting. Therefore, we don't need to fear. While that may be true, of course, the journey to that point can be painful and difficult and a battle. I'm not meaning to be flippant at all. But if we step back from that and look at the reality, when you belong to God's kingdom, he can eyeball these disciples that are about to face terrible things, terrible opposition, and he can say, you're blessed because you belong to my kingdom.

It is a kingdom that gets through death. And that transforms everything. And when you grasp that, when you get the reality of that to hit your heart, not just to be something you can say intellectually, but to get right down in here, well, then it frees you up.

[ 4 : 0 5 ] It frees you up to live by the values of that kingdom. And those values, according to Jesus' words this evening, are generosity and grace.

Or as one author put it, a glorious, uproarious, and absurd generosity. That is, those are the values of the kingdom that we are to live by.

And that's where we start. Verse 27, the first thing I want us to see is this radical call to a generous life. Now, you might think, I started off with the resurrection. I started off with the security of belonging to God's kingdom and all of that.

What has that got to do with love your enemies? Well, I hope you'll see. It frames everything. See, we're being called, point number one, a radical call to a generous life. Verse 27, but I say to you who hear, he's talking to the same group of disciples that he's been reassuring from verse 20.

He says to them, love your enemies. Do good to those who hate you. Bless those who curse you. Pray for those who abuse you. To the one who strikes you on the cheek, offer the other also.

[ 5 : 09 ] And from one who takes away your cloak, do not withhold your tunic either. Give to everyone who begs from you. And from one who takes away your goods, do not demand them back. And as you wish that others would do to you, do so to them.

We pray and go home. That's it. That's all we need, isn't it? Hang on a second. This sounds ridiculous. Now, it isn't a new law. We need to see that.

Jesus is not providing here a checklist of things, moral imperatives that we are to tick off. He is outlining a heart attitude. He is defining a way of being in the world.

And it's quite a thing to say. Love your enemies. Is that even possible? Now, it's obvious, I think, that love here is not sentimental.

We're not being told to feel warm and affectionate feelings for people who hate us and speak badly of us. But we are to speak and act in a positive and generous way towards them.

[ 6 : 14 ] Someone hates you, do something good for them. Act in a loving way. Someone curses you, bless them in return. Speak in a loving way. Someone mistreats you, well, return their abuse with prayer.

Ask God to do them good. Someone insults you, verse 29, or steals from you or borrows and never returns what they took. Be generous towards them in return.

Just to say, by the way, verse 29, have a look. Verse 29 is describing actually a form of insult in the culture. Turning the other cheek, that whole idea. It's about being slapped on the face.

One commentator says this. The religious context makes it likely that a slap is intended and that an insult is in view. An ancient slap usually involved the back of the hand and may picture public rejection from the synagogue.

In this case, one is not to fight back in kind but remain vulnerable to the insult again. Now, I say that because if someone punches you in the face, don't think on the strength of this verse that you need to get back up the floor, thank them, and turn and allow them to hit you again.

[ 7 : 20 ] You can defend yourself or you can run away or you can call the police. The point is that we are willing to receive insult repeatedly for the sake of Christ.

So the broader principle here is summarized in verse 31. As you wish that others would do to you, do so to them. Now, maybe over years and years of familiarity with this idea, we're not as shocked by this as we should, but the rabbis taught, don't do to others what you wouldn't want done to you. Jesus takes it further. Can you see that? He's saying, as you want other people to treat you, you therefore treat them.

You'd like your bad behavior to be met with generosity, so do that to others. In Christ's kingdom, we are to meet another person's bad behavior with love.

That's it boiled down to its most basic. In Christ's kingdom, we are to meet another person's bad behavior with love.

[ 8 : 32 ] One commentator says this, think of the best thing you can do for the worst person and go ahead and do it. Think of what you'd really like someone to do for you and do it for them.

Think of the people to whom you are tempted to be nasty and lavish generosity on them instead. If that's not radical enough, he doesn't stop there.

We're to do this without any expectation that it will benefit us in the moment. We're to expect nothing in return. Verse 32, if you love those who love you, what benefit is that to you?

For even sinners love those who love them. And if you do good to those who do good to you, what benefit is that to you? For even sinners do the same. 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. There's something of an unwritten code in our culture that says doing good for another person demands payback.

[ 9 : 34 ] There's something hardwired into all of us that thinks that way. If you think about it, when you're out and someone pays for lunch or buys drinks, what do you say? My turn next time.

Oh, or this is the next time you say, no, no, no, let me. I owe you. You got it last time. That's how we operate. And business thrives on this ethic.

You use our firm. We give you perks. We give you perks so that you use our firm. That's the way of the world. There's nothing inherently wrong with that.

It is the way of the world. Now, it can appear very generous, but when the principle that underpins it is, I'll do this so that there's a kickback for me, there is nothing distinctively Christian about it.

Verse 33. Have a look. Verse 33. If you do good to those who do good to you, even sinners do that, he says. That's the way of the world. There's nothing distinctive about that.

[ 10 : 35 ] And Jesus says that in a world that operates along these lines, the Christian is to follow a different path. In the face of criticism, insult, and opposition, we are to do good to our adversary, and we are to expect nothing in return.

This is the kind of generosity that should mark the church of Jesus Christ. It is the kind of generosity that is experienced when there is a lightness of spirit and a joy that comes from the Holy Spirit that kind of flows out of our lives.

It's so countercultural. It's so countercultural.

And the person is in this lane, and they won't let this person get in. And they keep going right up in front so that this person can't get in. And there's always somebody in that outside lane that you know sees the signs perfectly well, and they still keep going up because they want to push in at the front.

They're being selfish. and this person, what's going through their mind as they drive up close to the bumper in front, how dare you think you can get in ahead of me?

[ 12 : 16 ] Who do you think you are? Not letting you in front of me, sunshine. You drive really close to the car in front. They can't get in. You maybe beep your horn, maybe stare at them as you refuse to let them in.

I'm afraid to say that lots of Christians take this approach to life in general. They're angry, surly, feeling hard done by because other people in the world treat them badly or just behave badly in general, and they live with closed hands.

I don't know who holds on to what I've got. These people are trying to take me on. And actually, I think with men, part of this lack of generosity is a competitiveness and an unwillingness to be beaten.

I've kind of kept the rules. I've been in this lane. I've been driving down. Who's this guy think he's going to get in in front of me? I'm not going to let him beat me. I have to be honest.

I see that myself. Tell you a story. A while ago, I got played by a guy on the street near us. He was begging. He gave me a sob story about how he had been in social housing, and there was a delay on his benefits check, and it meant that he got kicked out, and he was on the street.

[ 13 : 38 ] And I hadn't seen him around the area before, and so I sat and listened to him, and I believed him, and he said, oh, I'm just trying to get some money for a hostel.

And I said, okay, how much is the hostel? And he told me, and I said, well, look, here, I got money out of the cash machine. I gave it to him for the hostel, and I said to him, if you meet me on Monday in this cafe here, just beside where he was begging, we can go online, and I'll help you get back into the benefits system, and I'll help you sort that all out.

He was very credible. He's a complete liar. His story was made up. He wasn't homeless. In fact, he still knocks around the streets where I am drinking and doing all the things he told me he didn't do. When I see him, makes me cross. He abused my charity. How dare he? I want him to apologize to me.

But it's also annoying, if I'm honest, because he beat me. And that is exactly the attitude that Jesus is ruling out here. Plus, actually, when I gave him the money, I gave him the money, I told him I was doing it because Jesus had been generous to me, and in that case, I was actually giving the money to the Lord.

[ 14 : 54 ] So what? But I see the guy, and I get cross. I can feel my body get hot. I can feel the resentment. And this is actually one of the reasons why living with this generous spirit is actually better.

It's actually a more liberating way to live. The car pushes in in front of you. Being able to say, Sure, go ahead. I don't mind waiting.

No problem. And not think about it again. It's so freeing. You don't care. You don't think about it. You don't have to fret about the fact that he might be beating you.

To be able to see that guy on the street and say, You took my money. You won. Well played. Or better still, to be able to say to him, Outside the shop, Do you need me to get anything for you?

There's no stress. You can live like that. It's much easier. Don't get wound up. You say, Okay, these are trivial examples.

[ 15 : 59 ] What about when the amount of money isn't an insignificant amount? What about when you get scammed and you lose everything? Or somebody slanders you online and destroys your reputation?

What about when the hatred is personal and the loss is significant? Jesus requires the same radical, shocking kingdom generosity even in those situations.

And you might be saying, Look, that's unrealistic. That is totally unrealistic. I'm not suggesting it's easy. But remember where we started. To be a Christian is to possess the kingdom of God.

We live in the freedom of God's blessing both now and in the future. So even great loss, we have the resources to live in this way. We do. In the gospel of Jesus Christ, we have the resources to live this way.

God has decided in that moment He's completely sovereign over every detail. He has decided that that is what you needed. And because the kingdom cannot be lost, in the end, everything's going to be all right.

[ 17 : 05 ] It is. As well as that, however hard the loss may be, when you think about it, the bigger the loss, the greater the freedom when you can just let it go.

That thing ceases to have a hold over you. You're no longer a slave to the wrong that that person did over you. You're no longer a slave to the thing that you lost.

You can let it go because the kingdom cannot be lost. Now there's a further reason why we should live this way, but before we get there, I want to make two comments.

The first is this. I said these commands aren't like a rule book that we keep in a legalistic way. What I mean by that, I said it's about a heart attitude, a posture in the world.

What I mean by that is this. There is all the difference in the world between looking at this and saying, right, rule number four, give to everyone who begs from you. Okay? Got to go and keep the rules.

[ 18 : 02 ] It's a law. It's in God's Word. I've got to keep it in every case. There's all the difference in the world between that and you are so blessed in the kingdom of God that you should be ridiculously generous.

I mean, give to everyone who begs from you. That's the spirit that Jesus has in mind here, which means we should be generous to those in need, but it doesn't mean that you should give cash to every crack addict on the streets of Ealing.

That might be the least generous thing that you could do for them. The second point I want to make might ask the question, well, how does this relate to justice? Someone steals your car and the police manage to catch them.

Well, do you just let them off on the basis of this? Or if you're woken up in the night because you hear noises downstairs and you go downstairs and there are people helping themselves do your stuff, are you just to hold the door and wish them well?

No. Again, Jesus is not suggesting that you don't pursue justice where a crime has been committed or somebody has wronged you in some way. He's talking about a general spirit of generosity.

[ 19 : 09 ] Now, that spirit will inform how you pursue justice. You might not approach justice thinking, I'm going to squeeze absolutely everything out of what I want to get from this person, but it doesn't mean that you don't pursue justice.

He's not obviously suggesting that you overlook justice. Okay, back to the why question. Why should Christians be so generous? It is a freer and less stressful way to live.

Sure, it's possible to do this because we belong to the kingdom that cannot be shaken, but we're also to heed the radical call to a generous life because, point number two, it reflects the character of a generous God.

It reflects the character of a generous God. Verse 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.

Be merciful even as your Father is merciful. Jesus taught his disciples to be generous because it is a reflection of the character of God.

[ 20 : 24 ] He uses family language to make a connection in this regard. He talks about being sons of the Most High and behaving like our Heavenly Father. Children imitate their parents.

The parents among us here might wish that weren't the case, but all those quirks that my children have come from one source. this guy.

That's the way it is. Children imitate their parents and when Jesus calls us to a life of radical generosity, he does so because this kind of life bears the family resemblance.

When we love our enemies, we show that we are God's children because that is what he is like.

When we show mercy to others, when we don't give them what their behavior deserves, we are imitating our Heavenly Father who is merciful to all who come to him.

He is so generous. I wonder, is this how you think about God? Kind to the ungrateful.

[ 21 : 28 ] Kind to those who are evil. Merciful to those who deserve to be cut off from him forever.

He sees the driver ignoring all the signs in the outside lane and trying to push in at the front.

He sees the selfishness in all of our hearts. He sees those rotten desires, those corrupt motives. He sees the spirit that says, my life, on my terms, you all get out of the way.

And God, if I can say it like this, He doesn't drive up close and shut us out. He invites us not only to join the line but to get into the car with Him and travel with Him.

That is the offer of the gospel. It is not just that God ignores your wickedness. He couldn't do that because He is just but that He covers it.

He forgives it and He brings you into the family. God isn't kind to those who are good and well behaved and play by the highway code.

[ 22 : 33 ] That's what religious people think. That is the metric of a religious mind. Be a good person and God will accept you. But that won't work because none of us can ever be good enough for God.

To use the language of this passage, we have hated God. We have abused His Son. We have insulted Him. We have stolen from His storehouse of gifts and never bothered to thank Him. We are the ungrateful and the evil.

But this is why He sent His Son. As Jesus says these words, He's on His way to His death. He will go to a cross and He will die not for His own sins.

He had none of those. But for people who have behaved like this. People like us. People like you and people like me. So don't think your past, whatever it involved, is too bad for God.

Jesus came for the ungrateful and the evil which means that He came for you. And if you turn to Him in faith, if you say sorry for living that way and if you give yourself to Him, He will respond with kindness.

[ 23 : 42 ] He will respond to your saying sorry, turning from your sin and giving yourself to Him with kindness. It is an astonishing thing.

He will be kind to you. He will be merciful to you. He will forgive you. He will make you His own. He is so generous. And it is this generosity that we as His disciples are called to imitate.

Did you notice the motivation that He slips in? Do you see that? It is of course surely a privilege. It's a great privilege to be able to reflect even in a tiny, tiny way the God of eternity to the world.

That privilege in itself should be enough. But as well as that, verse 37, when we do this, we receive even more blessing. Judge not and you will not be judged.

Condemn not and you will not be condemned. Forgiven, you will be forgiven. That's the summary of the point that He's just made. Don't behave towards your enemies the way the world would. The world would judge them. The world would condemn them.

[ 24 : 51 ] Don't do that. Not you. Leave that work to God. You can leave all of that to God. Instead, verse 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. God's generosity continues and it's overflowing. The picture here is of the grain market where the seller would take the measure into his lap and he'd fill it up to a point and then he'd stop and he'd bang it in order that it all settled and

there was more space.

He'd put it back. He'd fill it again. He'd do it again. He'd then squeeze it down on top to make sure that he was filling it to the absolute brim and the person would get the fullness of that measure. For those who live like their Father in heaven, there isn't simply a full measure of blessing but so much blessing that it runs over into our lap.

He fills it up, bangs it down, fills it again, bangs it down, fills it again and just keeps going and the blessing overflows. He is so generous. Do you see in 32 and 34, Jesus says there is no benefit for a kind of love that you would see anywhere else in the world.

If you're going into it for yourself, you're not going to get anything back but here he is saying that there is overflowing benefit from God for those who live with the open-handed generosity that he's calling them to and they do it for God's sake.

[ 26 : 20 ] That distinction is really, really important. If you are generous because you want to reflect your heavenly Father and trust that he will bless you his way in his time, that is very different from pursuing a generosity that will bring you material blessing in the here and now.

One of those is heavenward, the other one is all about you. In fact, that second one is using God to get what you want in your time. Do you see that? That is blasphemy.

Secondly, I'm doing this in order to put God in my debt so that he gives me what I really want. The first one is I want God and I'm going to do this and live this way because I get to reflect his character of the world and I want the blessing that he promises in his time.

One is Godward, the other is all about you. That's the heresy actually of the prosperity gospel. They use this verse to make this point. It is desperate, terrible, leads all kinds of people into all kinds of destruction.

However, just because prosperity preachers use this verse falsely doesn't mean that we shouldn't take it seriously. God will abundantly bless those who reflect his character by living generously.

[ 27 : 40 ] So there we are. whatever comes your way this week or in the weeks ahead from the hands or the lips of your enemies or those who oppose you, meet their hostility with generosity.

Do to them as you would wish that they would do to you and be merciful as your Father is merciful. You can do this. It's not a fantasy.

You can do this because you're secure in Christ's kingdom. Whatever comes your way in the end it's going to be okay. You cannot lose the kingdom. The kingdom cannot be shaken.

You have the promise of the Father's blessing and you get the privilege of reflecting the family likeness. Those are the three reasons why you can live this way. With this radical counter-cultural generosity you're secure, secure, secure in Christ's kingdom.

You have the promise of the blessing of God and what a privilege it is to live reflecting the family likeness. Let's pray.