**THE GOSPEL OF LUKE**

**LIVING LIKE JESUS**

**Luke 6:27-49**

**INTRODUCTION**

Please open your Bibles to Luke 6. Today we continue our series called “The Gospel of Luke: Finding Certainty in a World of Doubt.”

I recently returned to Facebook after shutting down my account for the past few years, and it didn’t take long to rediscover its addictive quality. I reopened my account to receive information about an event I was interested in, but quickly found myself regularly visiting the time-sapping, blood-sucking black hole called the “Home” page.

For those who are unfamiliar with Facebook, the “Home” page is a section of your Facebook account that contains all sorts of things posted by your Facebook friends, including photos, videos, and comments. It starts out being kind of fun – that is, until you find that there is no literally no end to them. When you think you’ve reached the bottom, the page magically expands to reveal a whole new set of time-sapping, blood-sucking posts. And because you’re afraid you’ll miss something interesting, you just keep scrolling down. This continues forever and ever until your eyes start burning and you decide to stop for the day.

One day, as I was engaged in this perpetual exercise, I came across a post from an old friend who used to attend our church but moved away a few years ago. This friend was announcing that he had two life-threatening ailments, including cancer. Now, if he were physically with me, this would be devastating news for me to hear. There would be tears, there would be prayer, there would be offers to help. But strangely, I found that, after being briefly disturbed by the news, I just wanted to keep scrolling down to the next post.

Why did I respond like that? Could I really be that heartless? As I reflected on my response, I realized something very important. I realized that I wasn’t just *doing* Facebook. Facebook was *doing* something to me. Facebook wasn’t just giving me information to process. It was changing the way I process information. Information is meant to be something we steward. We’re supposed to *do* something with it. That’s what makes information valuable. But Facebook was training my mind to think that information was valuable not for how I would use it, but for how it would serve my needs. I use Facebook not so that I would have to change the way I live, but so that I would be entertained, informed, and up-to-date.

This is how we’ve been trained to think: receive information, process it, and then discard it. Don’t get me wrong. Most of the information we receive should be processed this way. But the danger here is that we start treating all information like this.

In our text today, Jesus is going to tell us that we can’t treat his words like this. We can’t just hear his words, process them, and discard them. If we do, we’re building our lives on a foundation of sand. We will be prone to topple over and crumble at the first sign of adversity. But if we treat Jesus’ words with the honour and respect that they deserve, not just applying our minds to understand them, but applying the entirety of our lives to obey them, then our lives will be built on the sure and solid foundation of Christ himself, and no trial or temptation will overcome us.

The title of this message is **Living Like Jesus.** My aim today is to show you that **True Disciples of Christ Strive to Imitate Christ**. We will have three points today, with each point being one of the ways that we are to strive to imitate Christ:

1. A Limitless Love
2. A Merciful Heart
3. An Obedient Life

(1) **A LIMITLESS LOVE**

Our text today is found in the middle of what has become known as the “Sermon on the Plain”, which is sort of like the little brother to the more well-known “Sermon on the Mount” in the Gospel of Matthew. In this sermon, Jesus gives us his most comprehensive ethical teaching thus far in the Gospel of Luke, particularly on the topic of how we are to treat other people. And as we will see, Jesus’ ethical standards are so high that even the most righteous person falls far short.

Before we dive in, we need to understand that our performance under Jesus’ ethical standards doesn’t determine our status with him. We heard the first part of the Sermon on the Plain last Sunday when Julian Freeman preached from verses 20-26. In those verses, Jesus said that certain people are “blessed”, which means that they have received God’s blessing and favour. If receiving God’s blessing depended on our moral performance, then Jesus would have said, “Blessed are the obedient; Blessed are the righteous; Blessed are the perfect.” But that’s not what he says. He says, “Blessed are the poor, the hungry, the weeping, the persecuted.”

In other words, the blessed are those who come to God through Christ in weakness and in need. God’s blessing is for the spiritually bankrupt, the broken, the ones who know they need help. Jesus said, “I have not come to call the righteous but sinners to repentance.” (Luke 5:32). Jesus has come to save sinners, which means that he has come to save those who have failed to meet his moral standards.

And so, as we prepare ourselves to look at Jesus’ ethical teaching, we need to recognize that all of us without exception have failed to meet his standards. None of us have done what Jesus requires of us, and none of us can obey him perfectly even if we try our hardest. But that won’t disqualify us from his blessing, so long as our lives are characterized by turning to God in weakness, need, and brokenness. And when we do so, we will find that God will help us obey his commands.

So what does Jesus require of us? We find the first thing in verse 27: “Love your enemies”.

Who are our enemies? I think that many of us probably think that we don’t have any enemies, but if we stop and think about what Jesus says about enemies in verses 27-30, I think we will realize that we have more enemies than we think.

* Our enemies are those who *hate* us, which means that, when they think of us, they become angry.
* Our enemies are those who *curse* us, which means that they want bad things to happen to us.
* Our enemies are those who *abuse* us, which means that they intentionally take advantage of us.
* Our enemies are those who *strike us on the cheek*, which means that they desire to bring us public humiliation.
* Our enemies are those who *take away our cloaks*, which means that they seek to enrich themselves off of us

Do you have any enemies? Perhaps you have colleagues at work who hope you fail so that they will get a promotion instead of you. Perhaps you have family members you don’t trust, and every time they do something nice you suspect that they have a hidden motivation. Perhaps you have a neighbour who has slandered you in front of your other neighbours. What Jesus teaches in these verses is meant to apply to your relationships with these kinds of people.

Sometimes it’s clear who our enemies are, but that’s not always the case. We don’t know people’s thoughts. We don’t always know who’s angry with us, or who wants bad things to happen to us. There’s a kind of “hidden enemy”. They flatter you with their lips but despise you in their hearts. Jesus alludes to this kind of enemy in verse 30, where he says that our enemies may beg from us. How could that be, that an enemy would beg from us? That would only happen if that kind of enemy didn’t think that we knew they were our enemy. Their hatred is concealed. As Proverbs 26:24-25 says,

“Whoever hates disguises himself with his lips and harbours deceit in his heart; when he speaks graciously, believe him not, for there are seven abominations in his heart.”

How are we to respond to our enemies? People say that when we’re threatened, we have two options: fight or flight. We could stand our ground, or we could run away. I think we must all admit that we are naturally inclined to one of these options. For many of us, we fight in our worst moments and we run in our best moments. We say that we’re “taking the moral high ground” when we don’t pay someone back in kind. But Jesus says this isn’t the moral high ground. He presents a third way beyond fight or flight.

We find this in verse 31: “And as you wish that others would do to you, do so to them.” This has become known as “The Golden Rule”, the principle that encompasses all other ethical teaching about how we are to treat other people. Other moral teachers from a variety of religious traditions say something similar. For example, the Chinese philosopher Confucius says “What you do not want done to yourself, do not do to others.” But Jesus takes the Golden Rule a crucial step further. He doesn’t just say “*don’t do* to others what you don’t want done to you.” He says “*do* to others what you want done to you.”

So when enemies insult us, curse us, and take advantage of us, it’s not enough to just ignore them or to refuse to retaliate. That’s not the moral high ground. In Jesus’ eyes, the moral high ground is actively and intentionally finding ways to *do good* to your enemies.

* We are to *love* them, meaning that we are to seek their good even if it harms us;
* We are to *bless* them, meaning that we want their lives to be full of abundance, peace, and joy.
* We are to *pray* for them, meaning that we petition the Lord to care for them, guide them, and save them.
* When they strike us on the cheek and humiliate us, we are to leave ourselves vulnerable to further humiliation
* When they take away our cloaks and deprive us, we are to open ourselves up to further deprivation
* And even when they ask for money, thinking that we’re ignorant of their secret hatred, we are to lend our money freely to them.

Now you may be thinking, “Why should I love my enemies and seek their good when no one is willing to do the same for me? This isn’t fair. No one lives like this.” That’s exactly the point. Jesus is calling all who trust him and follow him to live radically different lives from those who don’t trust him and follow him. This is what he’s saying in verses 32-34: “If you love those who love you, what benefit is that to you? For even sinners love those who love them.”

Jesus is calling us to love more than people typically love. He’s calling us to an extraordinary, unique kind of love, a limitless love that extends beyond the circle of those who love us and breaks into the realm of those who hate us. How is this possible? How can we possess such a limitless love, a love that no one else seems to possess?

The answer is simple: we can possess limitless love by knowing the God of limitless love. Look at 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.”

God is kind to the ungrateful and the evil. God is kind to his enemies. Who are his enemies? We are! Every man and woman who has ever lived or ever will live is an enemy of God. We are rebels in God’s kingdom, because we have rejected his reign over us and placed ourselves on the throne instead. But though we are his enemies and deserve his righteous judgment, God withholds his judgment and shows kindness to us instead. How kind is God to us? God is so kind that he gave us his only son, Jesus Christ, to pay the penalty of our sins by dying on a cross on our behalf, so that anyone who trusts in Christ for salvation will be forgiven and reconciled to God.

The Father gives his Son to die for us so that all who turn to him will be saved from his wrath. And just as the Father lovingly gave his Son, so the Son lovingly gave himself as well. As the Father loved his enemies, so the Son loved his enemies. When he was struck, he turned the other cheek. When his clothes were taken from him, he did not object. When the crowds cursed him and mocked him, he cried out to the Father to forgive them. And when *we* sin against him by ignoring him, breaking his commands, and failing to glorify him, Jesus patiently waits for us to come back to him to receive his love and mercy.

Jesus does not ask us to do anything he was not willing to do himself. He loved us when we were enemies, and if we truly love him, we will do the same for our enemies.

This is why the only way we can love our enemies is by first knowing the love of God for us in Christ. Faith in Christ is the doorway to a life of limitless love, a life in which we are freed from the desire to seek personal vengeance from our enemies, and freed to lovingly seek their good instead. The gospel alone has the power to make us want to be like God in his patience towards sinners. As Jesus states so beautifully in verse 36, “Be merciful, even as your Father is merciful.”

(2) **A MERCIFUL HEART**

Jesus now goes on to show us that being merciful doesn’t just affect how we relate to our enemies. It affects how we relate to everyone. This leads to the second way that we are to strive to imitate Christ: have a merciful heart.

Jesus says this in verses 37-38: “Judge not, and you will not be judged; condemn not, and you will not be condemned; forgive, and you will be forgiven; give, and it will be given to you.” Some interpret this verse as saying that Jesus never wants us to pronounce any moral judgments on anyone. To these people, “Judge not” means that if you think someone’s living wrongly, you’re not supposed to say anything about it.

That’s not what Jesus means here. We know this because of the illustration Jesus uses in verses 41-42: “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? 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.”

There’s two people in this illustration: there’s you, and there’s your brother, and there’s something wrong with both of you. Your brother has a speck in his eye, and you want to get it out. That’s the equivalent of bringing correction to him for his sin. But there’s a greater problem: you have a log in your eye, and therefore you can’t see properly! That means that unless you take care of your own sins, you’re not in a position to see clearly enough to bring correction. That’s the main point of this little illustration, but let’s not miss the necessary implication here. Once we do take care of our sins, we *are* in a position to bring correction to others for their sin, which of course means that we must bring judgment.

So when Jesus says “Judge not” and “condemn not” in verse 37, he’s not saying “Never judge others for their sin”. He’s saying be slow to judge and hesitant to condemn.

There’s a huge difference between judging and being judgmental. A non-judgmental person is merciful. He is slow to judge and quick to forgive. A judgmental person is quick to judge and slow to forgive.

In my former life as a defence lawyer, I had to interact with many courtroom judges in the GTA. It doesn’t take much time to discern which ones are the judgmental judges and which ones are the merciful judges. Judgmental judges stretch the evidence in order to convict. They are reckless with their inferences that lean towards guilt, and they are careless with the evidence that suggests innocence. Merciful judges test the evidence carefully and thoughtfully. They do not take the evidence further than reasonable, they only draw inferences that are fair, and they always give the accused the benefit of a reasonable doubt.

When it comes to judging people, are you a judgmental judge, or are you a merciful judge? Are you quick to judge and slow to forgive, or are you slow to judge and quick to forgive?

I once asked a co-worker of mine why she always read tabloid magazines about the latest scandals surrounding celebrities. She said she reads them because they made her feel better about her own life. She was acting as a judgmental judge. Judgmental judges judge others not to build others up, but to build themselves up.

It’s so easy for us to fall into this kind of thinking, not just with respect to public figures in tabloids, but with respect to our spouses, our kids, our friends. We judge not to build others up, but to build ourselves up. We stretch evidence to condemn, we jump to conclusions to convict, and we see people’s flaws more than we see their strengths, all so that we can tear down others and make ourselves feel more important.

So how do judgmental judges become merciful? Jesus gives us three ways in our text.

The first is an eye-opening warning: God will judge you the way that you judge others. Jesus illustrates this in verse 38: “Good measure, pressed down, shaken together, running over, will be put into your lap.” What’s he saying? Jesus is talking about a farmer using a device to measure grain in order to give his buyer the right amount of grain. The farmer could measure the grain in one of two ways. He could be *careless* and fill up the measure and hand it immediately to his buyer, or he could be *careful* and make room for more grain by repeatedly pressing the grain down and shaking it around so that he could fill it to its maximum capacity.

One who is quick to judge is like the careless farmer. He hands out judgment without carefully weighing his words and conclusions. The one who is slow to judge is like the careful farmer. He ensures that everything is done precisely right before he judges. Now if God were to judge you, which he will, how would you like him to judge you? I don’t think Jesus is talking about eternal judgment here, but about worldly judgment. Eternal judgments rests solely on whether we are saved by grace alone through faith alone in Christ alone. Judgmental people who have put their trust in Christ will be forgiven of their sin and are saved from *eternal* judgment, but they may face more *worldly* judgment as God disciplines them for their sin.

So when it comes to God’s discipline for your sin, would you like him to be quick to judge or slow? Would you like him to discipline you for every sinful thought, every selfish motivation, every careless word, every reckless decision? Or would you like him to show you grace, bearing with your faults, and only disciplining you when he absolutely has to? Jesus says that it’s up to us. If we are quick to judge others, then God will be quick to judge us. If we are slow to judge others, then God will be slow to judge us.

The second way for a judgmental judge to become merciful is found in verses 39: “Can a blind man lead a blind man? Will they not both fall into a pit?” Jesus says that, to become merciful, you need to spend less time looking at the faults of others and more time looking at your own.

Jesus wants us to know that we are blinded by our sin and totally unable to lead others without Jesus teaching us and God helping us. If we try to do it without them, then both we and those who try to lead will be hurt. In verses 41-42 Jesus says our sin is so great that it’s as if we have giant logs sticking out of our eyes that obscure our moral vision, but we’re so blinded by our sin that we don’t even know that the log is there! If we are to become merciful towards sinners, we need to know the depths of our own sin first. Only then will we realize that we are in no position to judge others harshly.

There’s a third way: treasure the mercy of Christ in your heart. Verse 40: “A disciple is not above his teacher, but everyone when he is fully trained will be like his teacher.” Jesus is saying that, before we can lead others, we need Jesus to lead us first. We need to see the mercy of Jesus before we can become merciful people.

This is what Jesus is referring to in verses 43-45. Verse 45 says, “The good person out of the good treasure of his heart produces good.” Knowing and receiving the mercy of Jesus is like receiving good treasure into your heart. It doesn’t just change what you do. It changes who you are. You turn from being a bad tree bearing bad fruit to being a good tree bearing good fruit, and that good fruit is the fruit of being merciful towards others.

Do you want to become a merciful person? Then know Jesus better, for he is abundantly merciful. He has been merciful again and again to sinners in the Gospel of Luke, and he has been merciful again and again to sinners like you and me. We think we know the sins of others, but we don’t. We don’t know their thoughts. We often can’t discern their motives. But Jesus knows everything about us. He knows every sinful thought, every sinful word, every sinful motivation, and still he shows us mercy. We need more of this mercy in our hearts. It is like precious treasure, because it was purchased for us through the infinitely valuable life of the Son of God.

“The good person out of the good treasure of his heart produces good.” Every day, we need more and more of the precious treasure of the mercy of Christ. If we keep one eye on our sin, and one eye on Jesus, then we will find that, slowly but surely, we will become more and more like our merciful Saviour.

(3) **AN OBEDIENT LIFE**

This is what Jesus requires of us. We have heard it, and we understand it. The question for us now is, what will we do with it? Will we receive, process, and discard? Or will we obey? This leads to the third way we are to imitate Christ: an obedient life.

Jesus ends his sermon with a picture of two houses. The first house is found in verses 47-48: “Everyone who comes to me and hears my words and does them, I will show you what he is like: he is like a man building a house, who dug deep and laid the foundation on the rock. And when a flood arose, the stream broke against that house and could not shake it, because it had been well built.”

The second house is found in verse 49: “But the one who hears and does not do them is like a man who built a house on the ground without a foundation. When the stream broke against it, immediately it fell, and the ruin of that house was great.”

What’s the difference between these two pictures? One house is built on a rock, the other on sand, and the house built on a rock survives a storm while the house built on sand does not. What is the builder doing differently to make sure the house stands strong? He’s not using stronger materials. He’s not using a superior building plan. There’s only one thing he’s doing differently, and it’s found in verse 48: he dug down deep.

This is how Jesus chooses to illustrate what it means to not only hear his words, but do them. Obedience is a process of digging down deep. Last summer, I had to help my father-in-law dig six holes for a shed he was building in our backyard. The holes were about six inches in diameter and two feet deep. At the beginning, it was relatively easy because I only had to deal with the soft, crumbly surface dirt. But as I got deeper, it got exponentially harder. The dirt became thicker and heavier. It had the texture of sticky clay and was harder to scoop out. I started running into rocks that I had to dig out. It was extremely hard work! Now imagine having to do that not just for six holes for a little shed, but for an entire house. It would take a lot of sweat, a lot of hard work, and a lot of perseverance.

Obedience is easier said than done. It’s one thing to say you’re going to obey Jesus, and another thing entirely to roll up your sleeves and start digging. Obedience takes hard work. It takes planning. It takes perseverance. We are willing to work hard for so many things in life – for our education, for our careers, for our family’s future – but when it comes to obedience, we’re lazy because we expect it to just come naturally. Obedience doesn’t come naturally. It takes work. All the important things in life take work, and there is nothing more important in life than growing in our obedience to Jesus.

If we don’t grow in our obedience to Jesus, then when the storms of this life start hammering away at us, the house we’ve built won’t stand. Our faith will crumble, our lives will fall apart, and all will seem lost. But if we actively, consistently, and intentionally pursue obedience to Jesus, then we shall not fall. Both the disobedient and the obedient will face the same storms in life, but one will fall and the other will stand.

**CONCLUSION**

Jesus has called us to become loving, merciful people. He commands us to love our enemies and be merciful to all, slow to judge and quick to forgive. But how do start obeying these commands? Let me end this sermon with three practical things you can do to start growing in your obedience to these specific commands.

1. If you have an enemy, spend this week praying for them. Pray that God would bless that person. Pray that God would save that person. Then sit down and start brainstorming good things you can do for that person. It could be sending them a card. It could be buying them a gift. It could simply be telling that person that you’re praying for them. Then go and do it. And every time that person, or another person, does something that makes you feel like they’re against you, like they’re your enemy, then repeat the same process. Spend a week praying for them, and do some kind things for them.
2. If you struggle with being judgmental, then spend this week confessing your sins to God. Confess your sins of pride and selfishness. Confess the wrong things you have done, and confess the right things you have failed to do. Confess your brokenness, your hardened heart, and the weakness of your desire for Christ. When you’re done confessing, then remind yourself of the precious truths of the gospel. Remind yourself that Jesus died for all your sins, washing them away like a cleansing tide. Remind yourself that Jesus knows your sin, and yet loves you anyways. Then go and share with someone how grateful you are for them. Celebrate their gifts, encourage them with evidences of God’s grace in their lives, and pray for them. Then every time you notice yourself falling back into being a judgmental judge, then repeat the same process.
3. Finally, let us all take time this week to cherish the truth that Jesus didn’t just die on our behalf. He lived on our behalf. He lived a perfectly obedient life for us, and has now credited his perfect obedience to anyone who turns to him to save them. Jesus calls us to obedience, but our obedience does not determine our standing with him. Our status as the very children of God rests in his obedience, not ours. And so, let us all pursue obedience resting in the peace of his obedience, for what we could not do ourselves, he has done for us.