

“LOVELY ADVICE”
Luke 6:27-38
Holiday Island Presbyterian Church
February 24, 2019

²⁷“But to you who are listening I say: Love your enemies, do good to those who hate you, ²⁸bless those who curse you, pray for those who mistreat you. ²⁹If someone slaps you on one cheek, turn to them the other also. If someone takes your coat, do not withhold your shirt from them. ³⁰Give to everyone who asks you, and if anyone takes what belongs to you, do not demand it back. ³¹Do to others as you would have them do to you.

³²“If you love those who love you, what credit is that to you? Even sinners love those who love them. ³³And if you do good to those who are good to you, what credit is that to you? Even sinners do that. ³⁴And if you lend to those from whom you expect repayment, what credit is that to you? Even sinners lend to sinners, expecting to be repaid in full.³⁵But love your enemies, do good to them, and lend to them without expecting to get anything back. Then your reward will be great, and you will be children of the Most High, because he is kind to the ungrateful and wicked. ³⁶Be merciful, just as your Father is merciful.

³⁷“Do not judge, and you will not be judged. Do not condemn, and you will not be condemned. Forgive, and you will be forgiven. ³⁸Give, and it will be given to you. A good measure, pressed down, shaken together and running over, will be poured into your lap. For with the measure you use, it will be measured to you.”

INTRODUCTION:

Let me introduce you to this man, Luke.

**If we start with an understanding of Luke,
we have a better change of understanding**

this piece of scripture,

**“Luke” is a Greek name,
and we think he was a Gentile from Antioch.**

**One clue lies in the fact he writes in a Greek style,
using Greek expressions rather than Hebrew ones.
He was also a very educated person.**

**Luke was the only Gentile to write a book of the Bible,
and it is clear he wrote with a Gentile audience in mind.**

**Luke makes very few references to the Hebrew Bible
and therefore often explains Jewish traditions.**

**Luke wanted to give a detailed account of everything he wrote
so those to whom he is writing who were not familiar
with Jewish traditions and customs.
would better understand Jesus
and the plan of salvation.**

**It is also evident that Luke borrowed heavily from Mark’s writing;
a huge amount of Mark’s gospel is found in Luke’s gospel.**

**And to that which he borrowed from Mark,
he added a compassion for people –
- especially women, children and Gentiles.**

**Therefore, keeping mind who Luke was,
what his background was – a well-educated Gentile
and a physician who cared about people
and to whom he was writing,
we are ready to look at today’s passage.**

LOVE EXPLAINED:

Luke quotes Jesus as saying: “Love your enemies.”

That is a profound statement!

**Take a moment and think of someone in your life
that has caused you emotional pain and suffering.**

**Now, imagine trying to “love” that person;
to invite them over for dinner,
to take a nice, long trip with that person,
to confide in that person.**

Can’t do it, can you?

Well, neither can I.

The good news is that is not what Jesus meant.

The Greek word translated as “love” is *agape*.

And the best translation I can come up with is “charity.”

Jesus is saying to us,

“Be charitable – benevolent – toward our enemies.”

**If we see this “love” as having an attitude of benign benevolence
towards our enemies,**

the rest of that sentence becomes more meaningful.

“do good to those who hate you,

bless those who curse you,

pray for those who mistreat you.”

You see, when folks have not *physically* harmed us,

but their words and attitudes have severely bruised our ego,

betrayed a trust, stolen our peace

our response should be benign, charitable.

It costs us nothing – other than a little nausea – to treat them well.

**The benefit to us is that we can move toward forgiveness
and stop brooding on the negative part of our life
that is standing in the way of our peace.**

It does not mean we have to invite them to our house.

We do not have to invite them to be our best friend.

**Jesus is asking us to just be civil towards them;
instead of being hateful
and seeking revenge.**

Luke records that Jesus went on to say:

³² “If you love those who love you, what credit is that to you? Even sinners love those who love them. ³³ And if you do good to those who are good to you, what credit is that to you? Even sinners do that. ³⁴ And if you lend to those from whom you expect repayment, what credit is that to you? Even sinners lend to sinners, expecting to be repaid in full. ³⁵ But love your enemies, do good to them, and lend to them without expecting to get anything back. Then your reward will be great, and you will be children of the Most High, because he is kind to the ungrateful and wicked. ³⁶ Be merciful, just as your Father is merciful.”

**It's easy to be kind to those people we like,
it may even be easy to be kind to strangers;
but how hard is it to be kind
to someone who has wronged us?**

We want to offer them revenge – not kindness.

**There is a little justice monster who lives in us
that demands we hurt them as much – or more –
than they hurt us.**

The world would have us get even” before we offer kindness.

**Jesus invites us to overcome the worldly nature
and offer them kindness *regardless*.**

No, that’s not easy to do.

But it is the Godly thing to do.

If we follow this advice – perhaps it is a commandment –

**we will begin to reflect the mercy
that God has shown towards us.**

For if we are sinners – and indeed, we are –

**- then we have offended God
just as badly as someone offended us!**

PHYSICAL HARM:

Now, I skipped over a part of this passage I want to return to.

Luke wrote:

**“²⁹ If someone slaps you on one cheek, turn to them the other
also.”**

**On the surface, that seems to be a call to be passive
in the face of physical harm.**

It is not!

I have heard this passage explained this way:

**In the culture in which Luke is writing,
it is customary to do almost everything with the right hand.
The left hand was considered “unclean.”**

**Therefore, the only way a person could strike us on the right cheek,
using their right hand
is to strike us with the *back* of their hand.**

**Turn to your neighbor and *gently* try putting your right hand
on his or her right cheek.**

See what I mean?

**In that same culture,
it was customary to discipline lesser folks
by backhanding them;
children, slaves, wives, etc.**

**Jesus is saying that if you are treated as a lesser being,
then stand your ground and invite your tormentor
to treat you with the value you have.**

**Jesus is not saying,
“Thank you, sir, may I have another.”**

**Jesus is saying,
treat me with the respect I deserve.**

**If someone has done you physical harm,
remember who you are,**

and don't dwell on who/what they are!

FORGIVENESS:

Which then brings us to the final part of our passage for today.

³⁷ “Do not judge, and you will not be judged. Do not condemn, and you will not be condemned. Forgive, and you will be forgiven. ³⁸ Give, and it will be given to you. A good measure, pressed down, shaken together and running over, will be poured into your lap. For with the measure you use, it will be measured to you.”

The Golden Rule.

“Do unto others as you would have done unto you.”

That may be the first ethical rule we learn as children.

They used to give out rulers at school
with those words printed on them.

Indeed, it is the “gold standard” of conduct:
Treat others as you wish to be treated.

Years ago,

I took a group of 10 men through a year-long study
of how to become Godly men and leaders.

We read a book each month
and then spent time together discussing that book.

The biggest challenge was when we read Gary Smalley's book
If Only He Knew: What No Woman Can Resist.

The premise of the book is simply this:

**the quickest and most efficient way to change your spouse
is to change yourself!**

Start treating your spouse as you wish to be treated.

If you offer respect, soon you will be receiving respect.

If you offer kindness, you will receive kindness.

We've all known kind people whose paths crossed ours.

People who are so kind to us

that we can't resist being kind to them.

THAT's what Jesus is saying.

If you are a judging person,

you can expect others to judge you just as harshly!

Maybe even a little harsher.

If you are a generous person,

most people will respond in kind.

Oh, there are some who will take advantage of you,

but there will be a lot fewer of them

than those who will love you and respect you.

We usually see this passage as referring to how God will judge us.

The truth is,

without Jesus, every one of us will be judged guilty

and no matter how much good we do,

we will still be found missing the mark.

In this world in which we live,

we are going to be treated as we treat others.

**If we are harsh and unforgiving,
we can count on being treated harshly and remain unforgiven.**

**Harboring a judgmental attitude towards others
will eventually lead to a very unhappy attitude.**

**Instead of finding joy – and celebrating that –
a judgmental person will always be looking for the negative,
always finding fault,
brooding and wasting a lot of spiritual energy.**

**In the end,
God doesn't have to punish the unmerciful;
they punish themselves with their attitude.**

CONCLUSION:

**Notice that everything I have said about the proper attitude
towards an enemy–
- and what Jesus meant –
was to act *positively* towards an enemy.**

**The world would have us respond in a negative way;
Jesus is saying to avoid the negative
and offer the positive.**

**Mosaic law had deteriorated to the point
that what was required was strict adherence to the law –
- and no more.**

**Jesus is urging us to go beyond what is required -
- to go the extra mile.**

In return,

**we shall reap the blessings of peace and joy
that comes only from a spirit of love.**

Paul, in his letter to the people of Galatia, said:

“Whatever you sow, that is what you will harvest.”

Galatians 6:7

It is not easy to love one’s enemies.

It is not easy to lay aside the thirst for revenge.

It is not easy to be charitable towards those who harm us.

But . . . that is *exactly* what Jesus is asking us to do!

PRAYER:

Our hearts are filled with gratitude, O Lord, for the love and forgiveness You offer to us. It is our greatest desire to offer that same love to those who harm us, offend us, judge us. We are human and spiritually weak. Therefore, we ask for strength and faith to treat our enemies with charity and love. Bless our efforts that we might be faithful ambassadors of Your love. In the Name of the One who loves us beyond measure, Jesus. Amen.