

COMPASSIONATE

Luke 6:27-38

One of the things in vogue today is PC - Political Correctness. Many times, the “politically correct” emphases are captured in pithy sayings that can become the main talking points when people try to communicate about societal concerns. One concern that comes up frequently is related to preserving life. All of us have heard discussions in such areas with regard to the use of the death penalty for heinous crimes, the concerns about racial injustice and statements such as “black lives matter” and the more inclusive argument that “all lives matter,” and we are currently experiencing the results of concerns about minimizing deaths caused by pandemic disease. We have also seen heroic and costly efforts taken to rescue a child whose life is in peril because of falling into a hole in the ground. Passionate arguments are made in many of these examples regarding the value of a human life. We don’t tolerate any arguments regarding cost-benefit concerns and risk-reward issues in such cases and dismiss these as being insensitive and lacking compassion.

At the same time, we show much less concern to causes of deaths of human beings that are not on the PC radar. We don’t, for example, legislate rules regarding what people can eat and how much exercise they have to have to lessen the number of deaths from heart disease. We travel in automobiles in spite of the risk of fatal accidents and life-altering injuries associated with such activities. The list could go on and on of all the “things” we ignore with regard to preserving lives. It is especially disconcerting that compassionate protection and concern does not include preserving human lives prior to birth. The facts are (as of 2019) New York abortion law now allows for abortions all the way to full-term! There are nearly 1,000,000 abortions per year on average (and that's just ones reported!) Planned Parenthood is the nation's largest abortion provider. A child’s heart beats at 21 days. It is audible at 8-10 weeks gestation. Other statistics include one in four women has had an abortion. Only 1.5% of abortions are due to rape and incest. In 2015, approximately 35% of all pregnancies in New York City ended in abortion (CDC). For African American women in NYC, more abortions happen than babies born.

Many Christians say they are concerned about what is happening and strongly believe that abortion is wrong. We could coin a phrase “It doesn't make any difference in *what you believe*, **unless** *what you believe* makes a difference in the way you think, in what you say and especially in what you do.” You could believe in communism and if it did not affect anything about you, then what difference does it make? You can believe in Jesus Christ and if it does not affect anything about you, then what difference does it make? The other side of this same coin is that “If you genuinely believe in something, then it **will** make a difference in your life.”

Can we identify what might be some differences in the way we live that would be indicative of the fact that we are true believers? For example, we know that God accepted us as we were; therefore, it would be logical that we are to accept others. We will see in the Sermon on the Plain that Luke recorded in the latter part of Chapter six that we need to interact with others in the same way that God deals with us. (Matthew’s account of similar teachings of Christ is called the Sermon on the Mount. There are some differences in the two accounts and scholars are not sure if there were two different events or just two versions of the same event.) The most obvious characteristic that many people associate with God is unselfish love. We can add to that “legitimate care and concern for others” along with an approach in dealing with others that is consistent with the principles of the Kingdom of God. Attention to these ideas will do a lot to produce good relationships with other people.

Love All - 6:27-31

²⁷ “But I say to you who hear, love your enemies, do good to those who hate you, ²⁸ bless those who curse you, pray for those who mistreat you. ²⁹ “Whoever hits you on the cheek, offer him the other also; and whoever takes away your coat, do not withhold your shirt from him either. ³⁰ “Give to everyone who asks of you, and whoever takes away what is yours, do not demand it back. ³¹ “Treat others the same way you want them to treat you. Luke 6:27-31 (NASB95)

The key to this discourse is the word “love.” Matthew’s version of Jesus’ sermon included an introductory verse that was meant to contrast the teaching of the rabbis with His message. The “conventional ideas” of that day was to “love your neighbor and hate your enemies.” The twist that made what Jesus said so radical was that love (as the basis of the way we act and react) was to be extended to enemies. The specific actions that follow this statement are “how to” actually put love into practice in practical ways. In this discourse that Jesus gave to His disciples, He talked about actions that were addressed in the law and the corresponding attitudes that lead to wrong actions. We also see that there are positive choices or alternatives that more than counteract the negative alternatives. Most everyone would agree that loving our neighbor is a good, positive thing to do. It is, however, by extending love to our enemies, that we go beyond the “neutral point” to the possibility of making a breakthrough in relationships.

Examples of how to “love our enemies” are expressed in things that we do for them. Bless them that curse us, pray for those that abuse us. Do good for them that hate you. The result is that we will be fulfilling what it really means to be made in the image of God. We will truly be children of our Heavenly Father. There is no trace of any suggestion that our enemies “deserve” such gracious responses. This is, in fact, what “grace” is all about. It is truly the way God deals with us as Paul pointed out in Ephesians 2:8-9: “It is by grace, through faith that we are saved . . .”

The only way to break the cycle of conflict is to interrupt the cycle by not returning evil for evil. As humans, we are naturally “imprinted” to **win** at all cost. Therefore, we are very competitive and if someone hits us, we hit them harder. They, being of the same nature, will attempt to hit us harder. Where does it all end? The end is destruction of both sides. Whose agenda would we be following if the outcome is destruction? (See John 10:10)

Alfred Tennyson told us that the natural endowment of a Poet is “to hate the hate and to scorn the scorn while loving love.” That really sounds like the “wisdom of the world.” It may be that Tennyson was simply pointing out the natural tendency of fallen man rather than advocating attitudes that are contrary to the words of Christ. In contrast to Tennyson, Jesus told us to love even our enemies. Tennyson’s words have been used by some to advocate these thoughts as the way we should live by appending them to lovely pictures of tranquil scenes. This is one reason why we should not rely on poets for the basic foundational values of our lives.

Alexander MacLaren shared the following thoughts on this: “Why should we as Christians always let our enemies set the terms of how we interact? We are not to be mere reverberating surfaces, giving back echoes of angry voices. Let us take the initiative, and if others scowl, let us meet them with open hearts and smiles.”

Another question we need to ask is, “What is the definition of winning?” If we win by getting to the finish line before everyone else only to find that it was the wrong finish line, then what have we accomplished? If winning is defined as bringing people into the kingdom of heaven, then we must return love for hate, good for evil, etc.

With a Pure Heart – 6:32-36

³² “If you love those who love you, what credit is *that* to you? For even sinners love those who love them. ³³ “If you do good to those who do good to you, what credit is *that* to you? For even sinners do the same. ³⁴ “If you lend to those from whom you expect to receive, what credit is *that* to you? Even sinners lend to sinners in order to receive back the same *amount*. 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 Himself is kind to ungrateful and evil *men*. ³⁶ “Be merciful, just as your Father is merciful. Luke 6:32-36 (NASB95)

These new kingdom paradigms must apply to all people with whom we come in contact. Notice the use of the words “whoever” and “everyone” in the previous text we just read. We are not to be selective as if driven by an ulterior motive. It is not a big deal to be kind and generous to someone who has been kind and generous to us. That is simply acting out of a sense of obligation to “repay” someone for something we have received. Some may even take the initiative in being “nice” in anticipation of receiving a favor in the future. This is nothing more than an attempt to manipulate another person for our own ultimate benefit. These motives are not in keeping with the character of God. Our goal is to be as our Father is. We are to become legitimate children of God by loving, doing good, showing mercy, and lending while expecting nothing in return.

And With Mercy – 6:37-38

³⁷ “Do not judge, and you will not be judged; and do not condemn, and you will not be condemned; pardon, and you will be pardoned. ³⁸ “Give, and it will be given to you. They will pour into your lap a good measure—pressed down, shaken together, *and* running over. For by your standard of measure it will be measured to you in return.” Luke 6:37-38 (NASB95)

Amazingly, when we do all these things without having a selfish agenda, then we do, in fact, experience similar benefits as a consequence. The summary statement Jesus made is easy to remember and it should be committed to memory and woven into the way we think and process information and what we do as a result. “By your standard of measure, it shall be measured unto you.” This could be argued to be an alternative way to state the Golden Rule of “Do unto others as you would have them do unto you.” This is also an alternative way to state the universal principle of sowing and reaping. Whatever you sow, you shall also reap. It does not matter if the seeds you are sowing are mangos or mercy, corn or condemnation, parsnips or pardon; the crop you reap is what you sow.

If we have genuine concern for others and want to do something that is beneficial, then it is helpful if we know what we are doing. So often we speak about “Valuing Others.” What does that phrase even mean? In the most basic sense, it could simply mean that a person has intrinsic value. The source of that value is argued by some to be inextricably tied to the belief that human beings are made in the image of the Creator of all things.

Too often, we rely on the “talking heads” in the media for information rather than doing any independent checking of what is truth. Consequently, we (as a nation) may vote for and elect people who do not share our Christian-based values. Failure to seek to know the truth is like burying your talent in the ground. If the leaders of our nation fail to lead us in ways that are aligned with the principle of the Kingdom of God, then the root cause is likely traceable to our failure as Christians to impact the culture in a positive way. An often-quoted verse regarding such a situation is 2 Chronicles 7:14 which begins with “If My people, who are called by My Name.”

Many are involved in much Bible study but the power of eternal life is not in the hearing of the words and even in vocal professions, but in a fruit-producing change of mind and change of action, i.e., in repentance.

The ruin of Israel was not because they were without the word of God, it was in their

failure to practice it. The same can be said for the church. We have the word and we also have greater responsibility than those who have never heard the word.

The mark of wisdom for man today is found in the choice of following Jesus. Jesus is our rock. He is the Eternal One from the foundation of the world. James tells us that God is the Father of Light in whom there is no variableness nor shadow of turning. You can count on changes in manmade religions - they change to fit the situation and the times in which people live. This is an example of a shifting foundation.