

Let Mercy Rule

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[0:00] Luke 6, starting with verse 36.

! You shall not be judged.

Condemn not, and you shall not be condemned. Forgive, and you will be forgiven. Give, and it will be given to you.

Good measure, pressed down, shaken together, running over, will be put into your bosom. For with the same measure that you use, it will be measured back to you.

Interesting passage, isn't it? Somewhat familiar, at least part of it. In fact, I would say to you that verse 37 is perhaps one of those very often quoted passages.

[1:17] By Christians, certainly. I'm talking about judge not, lest you be judged. That's the King James Version, how I memorized it. Quoted by Christians, but also quoted by non-Christians, right?

In fact, quite often, it is quoted by non-Christians to use against Christians. I would also say that it's one of those passages that is perhaps most misunderstood.

The meaning, that is. Because it's misinterpreted. And therefore, because it's misinterpreted quite often, it is misapplied. All right?

A misapplied verse of Scripture. It's one of those passages. I would also say on the flip side of that, that it is one of the most violated commands in the Bible.

Because it is a command, by the way. And it's so often violated. You know, we like to say you should never judge others and then we do it.

[2:25] We do it. We do it all the time. Only when we do it, we call it something else, don't we? For example, you might say of someone, you know, that guy, he's a coward, a wimp.

But me, I'm just a quiet person. I'm just kind of a laid-back person. Or we might say, you know, she's a busybody, a gossip.

But me, I'm just, you know, simply prayerfully concerned about other people's problems. You might say, well, he's a cheapskate, a tightwad.

But I'm a thrifty person. I'm just simply a good steward of God's money. Or we might say, she's a speed demon, you know, a reckless driver, a woman driver.

But I just simply drive with the flow of the traffic. See the difference? Judge not, we say.

[3:36] And then we do it all the time. Now, wait a minute before we go too far with this kind of line of reasoning and thought. We'll end up misapplying this passage ourselves here this morning.

I don't want to do that. Before we go any further, we need to first consider, well, this is what we need to do here this morning. Consider what exactly Jesus means by this passage.

When he says, judge not and you shall not be judged. You can't just simply cut and paste this passage any way you please. You know, you can't just cut it out of the Bible and out of its context and then paste it wherever you want and make it and force it to apply to anything and everything.

You can't do that. And that's what we usually do. And many people do. I mentioned the importance of context last Sunday. And that's always very, very important, vitally important.

And so before we make any conclusions about the meaning of this passage, not just this part of it that I've been focusing on, but the larger part of the passage, before we make any conclusions about what Jesus is talking about here, we need to, again, keep it in its context.

[4:47] And the context, by the way, is still the same. Same as it was last Sunday. Same as it was, really, the Sunday before that. It was established there all the way back to verse 13 when the Bible says, And he called his disciples to himself.

Remember, he chose his disciples, selected 12, and he called them to himself. And then it takes further form in verse 20 when the Bible says, He lifted up his eyes toward his disciples and said.

And so he chose his disciples. Then he is, now he is teaching his disciples. And we call it the Sermon on the Mount, remember? That's what this is. Luke's account of the Sermon on the Mount. And it's not a sermon for unbelievers, rather, though there were a number of unbelievers present. In fact, very likely a great multitude of unbelievers were there. But it is a special set of instructions from the Lord Jesus Christ, specifically directed toward his disciples, disciples then and now. That would include us here today. And so with this sermon, he prepares his disciples for the difficult life they will most certainly experience. And he is also instructing them on what true blessedness really is.

[6:06] And then he commands them and us to love the unloving, those who do not love you, those who, back in verse 22, hate you, ostracize you, insult you, scorn your name as evil.

Jesus says that true disciples who love the unloving, they love the unloving, those who, in verse 28, curse you, and abuse you or mistreat you.

And we ended last Sunday's study with verse 35 in these words, love your enemies, do good, and lend, hoping for nothing in return.

And then Jesus gave his disciples, including us here today, the reason for doing this, the whole reason for doing this, because, he said, that's what your heavenly Father has done for you. That's what he said in verse 35, he himself is kind to the ungrateful and the evil. That is, God has already done for us what he is telling us to do for others.

[7:23] Do you get it? And that's the reason. And really, it provides for us the strongest possible motivation for doing exactly what Jesus instructs his disciples to do.

The strongest possible motivation. I would say to you that of the ways, all the ways to present the very essence of the gospel of Jesus Christ through your life, not just verbally, but through your life, the very best possible way, the purest way, to present through your life the gospel, the very essence of the gospel, is this way, the way he's commanding us.

There is no higher expression of the gospel of Jesus Christ than when you actively love someone who does not deserve it.

Do you want a perfect way to show the unbelieving world the good news of Jesus Christ? Do you want a perfect way to do that? Do you want a foolproof way, I would suggest to you, a foolproof way to effectively present the truth of the gospel of Jesus Christ?

Do you want that? Then love your enemies. That's just, that's what he's saying. Love your enemies. Do good to those who hate you. Bless those who curse you.

[8:49] Pray for those who mistreat you. Don't you know that that is exactly what Jesus has done for each and every one of us? So the absolute best testimony you could have of the saving grace of God is to actively love those who do not deserve your love.

In fact, those who continue to deserve just the opposite. Now, it may seem that I'm belaboring the point here because I did cover this last week, but I have to say to you that the subject of our text for this morning is a continuation of this same theme, this same subject.

Only the emphasis is slightly different. The emphasis in these three verses here is now squarely on the issue of how we should respond to those who hate us, hurt us, harm us, do not love us.

The emphasis on how we should respond. I mean, how should you respond to the person who acts hatefully toward you? How should you react?

How should we all react to those people who act hatefully toward us and hurt us to say hurtful things about us and to us and even do mean things to us?

[10:18] How should we respond to them? When someone slanders your name, ever had that happen? When someone spreads malicious rumors and gossip about you or maybe about your family or maybe your friend, a friend, or maybe your church, how should you respond to that?

And this, I think, is what Jesus teaches us in this passage. How should we, the disciples of the Lord Jesus Christ, chosen by Him, how should we respond to unloving acts toward us?

And I have a simple answer for that question. Are you ready for the answer? when someone treats you in an unloving way, hateful way, a hurtful way, just do the exact opposite of what is natural for you to do.

That's a pretty good rule of thumb. Just do the exact opposite of what you naturally want to do. When someone hurts you, hates you, speaks evil of you, does something to you that is wicked or evil.

Just do the exact opposite of what you want to do. Listen, what is it that you naturally want to do when you think someone has wronged you or hurt you or hated you?

[11:52] What is natural? Well, get hurt, get ugly, get angry, get even. And in that order. Pretty much, isn't it?

And, you know, at the very least, tell everyone you know about how rotten that person is. That's what we naturally want to do. Right?

You know I'm right. I'm not saying that you always do that. I'm not saying that we, as believers, always act that way. I hope you don't.

But that is the natural thing we want to do. And truth be known, that is what we normally do. What is the opposite response?

You know what is natural for you. I know what's natural for me. What is the unnatural? What is the unnatural response? In fact, we might even call it the supernatural response.

[12:53] Well, I could sum it up with one word. Mercy. Mercy. Mercy. And by the way, that's the word Jesus used here in our text for this morning.

And so let's just see what Jesus has to say about this, about mercy. And the first thing that I want you to consider is the rule of mercy. The rule of mercy.

Jesus put it very simply, didn't he, here in verse 36? Be merciful. That's pretty simple. And that introduces this section of thought, his theme that he's dealing with, what he's about to command us to do.

He introduces it with this very simple command, be merciful. That's how you ought to be. That's the rule of mercy. And that little word be carries a great deal of weight, by the way.

It makes this a command. This is a command. The word be, that little two-letter word, is a verb, of course. To be verb.

[13:57] And it is in a certain form that makes it a command. It's an imperative. It's a command. And so obedience is what's required of us. Here, on this. Be merciful.

That's a command. But also this little word be makes what Jesus commands us, it makes it a continuous action, continuous thing.

It's in a certain form that's called present tense, and it means it's a continuous action. And so mercy is to be the rule, not the exception.

In fact, we could literally translate this be being merciful. Be always being merciful. That sounds silly. We wouldn't say it that way, but that's the idea behind the form of the word be.

Be being, always being merciful. Mercy should always be the rule of your life as disciples of Jesus, and not the exception.

[15:01] But I'm not just talking about a rule of behavior. I'm talking about a behavior that rules. It wins the day, this kind of behavior.

And that is to say, in every situation, every situation, no matter what the situation, no matter what the circumstance, no matter the magnitude of the hurt, or harm, or ugliness that may come from another, no matter what the situation, in every situation, always seek to let mercy rule.

That's the principle that Jesus is teaching here. Let me say that again. No matter what someone has done to you, no matter how hateful, hurtful, harmful, it has been, always seek to let mercy rule.

There it is. We could pray and go home, but we're not. That's what we need to learn here, and that's what we need to do, not just learn, but do.

And believe me, this is the key to everything else Jesus is here. this is the key to understanding and obeying the much harder things Jesus says next.

[16:26] Judge not, condemn not, forgive, give. Mercy, you see, is the dynamic.

Mercy is the force behind behind all of these difficult things we are to do. We could say the mercy is the dominating principle.

Should be the dominating principle for our lives in relation to others, and especially those who wrong us. Mercy. And that leads to a second thing, and that is the reason for mercy.

mercy. And this is just very simple. What reason does Jesus give us for dealing with our enemies according to the rule of mercy? Well, verse 36, just as your Father also is merciful.

There's the reason. Just as your Father, your Heavenly Father, that's a capital F, Father, that's our Heavenly Father, that's God, our Heavenly Father, just as He also is merciful, there is the reason.

[17:31] And the idea here is not just that we should want to mimic the Lord. We should, but that's not the whole idea here. The idea really is this, to deal with our enemies the same way God has

dealt with us.

By the way, what is the definition of mercy? Well, someone has said that mercy is the other side of grace. And I think that's right.

Mercy is the other side of grace. What do we mean by that? Well, grace is giving what is undeserved. That's what grace is.

It's giving what is undeserved. If it could be deserved, it's not grace. So grace is giving, always giving what is undeserved. But mercy is the flip side of that.

The other side of that, mercy is withholding what is deserved. Do you see? mercy. And that's what God through Jesus Christ has done for us when he saved us.

[18 : 36] Hebrews 8, 12, for I will be merciful to their unrighteousness. What does unrighteousness deserve? It deserves wrath, judgment. But God says I will be merciful.

That's I'm going to withhold what is deserved here because of unrighteousness. And he said in their sins and their lawless deeds I will remember no more. That's mercy.

Praise the Lord. That's what God has done for us in salvation. Do you see? See, the reason we must always show mercy to those who don't deserve it, to those who continue to deserve just the opposite, is because that is what the Lord Jesus Christ has done for you and me in salvation.

That's why. And so Jesus is not demanding anything that he's not already done for us. The rule of mercy, be merciful. The reason for mercy, as your Father, also is merciful.

And then third, the restraint of mercy. Now here's where we get into the deep water or the high weeds, whichever way you want to think of it.

[19 : 48] The restraint of mercy. Verse 37, judge not and you will not be judged. And again, this is one of the most misinterpreted, misapplied verses in the Bible.

Now, please hear me. There is no command in the Bible that prohibits you or me from ever judging another person.

none. Not here in Luke 637, not anywhere in the Bible. Are you shocked?

The Bible commands us to judge, but to judge in the right way. For example, we have a duty to evaluate the rightness and wrongness of a person's actions, beliefs, teachings.

You had better evaluate mine and judge my teachings. As a church, we could carry this to our body and any church like us.

[21 : 10] As a church, we must not overlook or tolerate sin in the body. we must not do that. And we must not overlook and tolerate doctrinal error within the body, within the church.

Outside the church, we have a duty as citizens of this country to uphold what is right and to stand against and speak out against what is wrong and to seek, always seek, the cause of justice.

We're commanded to do that. And all of these things and many other scenarios that I might mention, all of these things require us to evaluate and to judge, to make judgments.

We must. But here's the overarching, the guiding principle. We have every right and I would say every duty to judge those things the Bible has already judged.

That's what we must do. All right, so that's that. Now, what is Jesus talking about? I mean, it clearly says, do not judge. And it is in the form of a command.

[22 : 29] So what is he talking about? Well, we need to add the next sentence to the verse in this verse and then remind ourselves again of the context.

All right, let's stay together here. Jesus said, judge not and you shall not be judged. Condemn not and you shall not be condemned.

All right, now judging, judging, that pertains to the verdict. Condemning pertains to the sentence.

And so, in the barest sense of this, in the larger sense, when we do this and do it incorrectly, we set ourselves up as judge, jury, and executioner.

That's what we do. All right, but we've got to remember the context. What are we talking about here? Talking about judging in just any context, in any scenario?

[23 : 33] No. we're talking here about how we respond to those who hate us, to those who not only hate us, but hurt us, those who seek to harm us and do harm us, whether it's physically or emotionally or whatever way.

That's the context, that's the subject, how we respond to those who have cursed us, those who have hurt us, those who have wronged us. How are we to respond?

How do you respond? How are we to judge in this situation? Do you know the person's heart who has wronged you?

Well, of course not. So do you judge then the heart or do you judge the behavior? do you know all the extenuating circumstances in this particular situation where you perceive you've been harmed or you believe you've been harmed?

Do you know all the extenuating circumstances, those circumstances in that other person's life that may have no relevance to you? Things that are going on in that other person's life that has affected the way they perceive you, their perspective concerning you?

[25 : 04] And so their actions are not really about you, about other things. Have you considered that? Jesus said, remember, Father, forgive them for they don't know what they're doing.

Do you know for certain that person has wronged you? Or do you just think they have, believe they have, mis-evaluation on your part?

I mean, just as those who wrong you are kind of emotionally charged based upon a number of things, our reactions and response and our evaluation of it is sometimes very emotionally charged. And a day or two later we wonder why we even thought that. Why we'd even come to that conclusion. I'm just trying to have us think about some very general kind of scenarios.

You'll have to fill in the blank. How do you judge that situation when someone has wronged you? Could it be that you have incomplete information?

[26 : 21] Could it be that what you heard about what so-and-so did or maybe heard so-and-so say? Could it be that you've taken that out of context?

You haven't considered the larger picture. Maybe you just have partial information. I mean, you take anything somebody says out of the sentence, the paragraph, the whole discussion, and you can come to any conclusion you desire or your heart wants to make.

do you see what I'm saying? You might be basing your evaluation on conjecture on your part, and on and on we could go.

But even to do this, to try to list some scenarios, that is getting us off track because it all comes down to this. Mercy should rule.

And when mercy rules, mercy will always temper, restrain, rash, and quick judgments, and usually incorrect judgments.

[27 : 34] If you will let mercy rule, it will never, ever make a quick judgment or condemnation. Because some of those things that I mentioned a moment ago, things that you might consider, things that you don't know, those are things you may never know, things you cannot find out about what's going on in the heart and mind of the other person, the extenuating circumstances and so forth, and the context.

Maybe you don't know any of those things, and so you can't make an informed conclusion, but that doesn't matter. If mercy rules, then it doesn't matter what the scenario is.

You will be restrained from making judgments and condemnations. how would you like your actions to be judged?

How would you like the things you say to another person or about another person? How would you like your judgments and the things you say? How would you like the things you say, how would you like for them to be judged and condemned by the same standard you use to judge and condemn others?

But isn't that what Jesus is saying? Isn't Jesus saying that you will be judged and condemned according to your standard of judging and condemning others?

[28 : 56] Isn't that what he's saying? Well, yes. Absolutely. Jesus said, Judge not, and you shall not be judged. Condemn not, and you shall not be condemned.

Verse 38, for with the same measure that you use, it will be measured back to you. And in case that is not quite clear, listen to how Matthew quotes this same sermon in Matthew 7, verses 1 and 2.

He said, Judge not, that you be not judged, for with what judgment you judge, you will be judged, and with the measure you use, it will be measured back to you.

Pretty clear, isn't it? The restraint of mercy. Fourth, the release of mercy.

The release. Even when, on those occasions when your judgment about the whole situation is correct, I mean, you truly have been harmed.

[30 : 06] You truly have been hurt. And you have evaluated that and made judgment upon what this person has done toward you, and you're absolutely right on that.

Then, the rule of mercy will determine the outcome of that. Verse 37, forgive and you will be forgiven.

Forgive. The word translated forgive is apolu'o, and it means to set free. It means to release. In fact, we could even use the word release here in the translation of the Greek text in the Bible, and we would be absolutely correct.

Release. Some versions of the Bible have the word pardon. Folks, this is the gospel in action. This is the very essence of it, of the gospel. You see, Jesus is talking about doing the exact opposite of what is natural for us to do when someone hurts us.

[31 : 22] The exact opposite. What's the natural thing for us to do? Judge harshly. condemn mercilessly, and never, never, never, ever forgive or forget.

That's what comes natural. We say, to err is human, to forgive is unheard of. No, that's not right, is it? To forgive is divine.

And you're never more like God than when you forgive those who do not deserve it. I'm not saying this is easy.

I'm just telling you this is what Jesus is saying. Do you care what he says? And I also mean to really forgive. All right, no strings attached.

We might say, I forgive you, but then we've got them still tied. Tied up in some way. And we don't, we're not to forgive out of some self-centered motivation.

[32 : 27] Or even with the idea that if I will forgive this person, maybe, you know, when I mess up, they'll forgive me. None of that. We just openly, without any strings attached, without any conditions, forgive.

Forgive. That's the release of mercy. I release you. I pardon you. One more. There's the rule of mercy.

That's be being merciful. The reason for mercy, your Father, your Heavenly Father also is merciful. The restraint of mercy, judge not.

Condemn not. The release of mercy, forgive. And then finally this morning, the reward of mercy. There is a reward.

Verse 38, give and it will be given to you. Good measure, pressed down, shaken together, running over, will be put into your bosom. When mercy rules, a good measure will be laid in your lap.

[33 : 44] A good measure. A great reward. It's interesting, this pressed down, shaken together, running over.

this image would have been very, very clear, crystal clear to Jesus' disciples when he said this.

For they had all been to the market to buy grain. And they all knew what a good measure was.

That when the merchant would take that measure, that container, and fill it with grain, first he would fill it, not even yet halfway, and then start tapping it, shaking it, get all the air, all the space out of it, add a little bit more, and continue to tamp it on the ground and shake it.

And when he got to the top, he would press down on it and add a few more pieces of grain. Then he would take his finger and poke a hole down in it and then put a few more pieces of grain in it and continue to do that process until it was a good measure.

[35 : 17] And Jesus even adds another, running over, so that you just have to be careful and if you move too much, grain will fall out.

It's so full. A good measure. King James Version has it, shall men give into your bosom.

New American Standard has it, they, again, referencing other people, will pour it into your lap.

But the primary point for us to understand is you can expect a reward from God. If you will love the unloving, let mercy rule.

Now God may give it to you through them in this life. And that's a general principle.

[36 : 22] It's a proverb, not necessarily a promise or a precept. It's a proverb. This is the general rule. You can have every right to expect those you treat well, those you who you return curse with blessing, those who you show mercy to will show mercy back to you.

Those you give generously to will give generously to you. And it won't happen every time, will it?

Well, it certainly doesn't. It's a proverb. It's a proverb. It's a general principle. But we can safely say that God will, will, will give you a good measure in the next life, in heaven.

Our reward is in heaven. But the principle is give and it will be given to you.

Same thing you give, you'll get back. The amount of what you give will be returned same amount.

That's the general principle. I read a story about Louis Mayer, founder of Metro Golden Mayer.

Remember the movie studio? When he was just a small boy, he got in a fight with another boy and lost, lost the fight. And so when he got home, his mother was bathing his black eye and all the while

she was bathing his black eye.

[38 : 01] Louis was explaining how evil and wicked this other boy was. How he started the whole thing. And he was calling him all kinds of names and his mother just sat there and listened and said nothing and continued to doctor his eye.

And when she was done, she took him to the back porch and she said, Louis, you see those hills out there? She said, I want you to shout to those hills all the bad names you can think of.

And so he did. And all those names came echoing back to him. And she said, now, I want you to shout out, God bless you.

And he did. And God bless you echoed right back. Lewis Mayer said he never forgot that lesson. How you treat others will always come back to you.

Be it evil, be it good. Let mercy move. Thank you.