

Luke 6:20-49 • The Differences That Matter

Introduction

It is not uncommon for people not to study this section too intently because they think it is just a collection of highlights from the much longer and more detailed Sermon on the Mount provided in Matthew 5-7. The fact is that Jesus taught the same sermon – and most likely variants of it – **many** times in **many** different places in the course of His ministry. And it is even more important to remember that while Matthew authored his account knowing that he was sending it to a mainly Jewish audience, Luke wrote his gospel with the aim of reaching a mainly Gentile audience. So one of the striking differences is that Luke has not included material Matthew thought was relevant to Jews. But if we take the time to study what Luke has provided we will see that it is not an outline that is “missing” all the things Matthew chose to include, but is a complete and effectual sermon in and of itself with its own message which largely uses contrasts to illustrate the differences which define a godly, biblical life versus one rooted in the world.

²⁰And turning His gaze toward His disciples, He began to say,

“Blessed are you who are poor, for yours is the kingdom of God.

²¹Blessed are you who hunger now, for you shall be satisfied.

Blessed are you who weep now, for you shall laugh.

²²Blessed are you when men hate you, and ostracize you, and insult you, and scorn your name as evil, for the sake of the Son of Man.

²³Be glad in that day and leap for joy, for behold, your reward is great in heaven. For in the same way their fathers used to treat the prophets.

²⁴But woe to you who are rich, for you are receiving your comfort in full.

²⁵Woe to you who are well-fed now, for you shall be hungry.

Woe to you who laugh now, for you shall mourn and weep.

²⁶Woe to you when all men speak well of you, for their fathers used to treat the false prophets in the same way.

[Read v. 20-26]

Q: Who is contrasted in the blessings and the woes?

1. The poor (v.20) and the rich (v.24).
2. Those who hunger now (v.21) and those who are well-fed now (v.25).
3. Those who weep now (v.21) vs. those who laugh now (v.25).
4. Those whom men hate (v.22) vs. those men speak well of (v.26)

Q: What is the basic thing that is being addressed here?

A: The disposition of possessions.

Q: What is common to the things promised to those who are blessed?

A: They all speak of possessions, if you will, promised to come in the future: “yours in the kingdom of heaven”, “you shall be satisfied”, “you shall laugh”, “for the sake of the Son of Man”. The rewards are not necessarily promised to come in this present life.

Q: What is common to the things promised to those who are cursed?

A: They all speak of getting everything in this life: “you are receiving your comfort in full”, “you shall be hungry”, “you shall mourn and weep”, “their fathers used to treat the false prophets in the same way”. Having received everything in the course of this life, there is nothing waiting for them in the next except eternal consequences.

Application

1. Poverty is not a blessing but poverty does not deny us God’s blessing.
2. It is not a sin to be rich, but it is a sin to trust in riches and think you are special in God’s sight because of worldly wealth.
3. People grounded in this life seem to know the price of everything but the value of nothing, whereas those focused on the next life understand what is truly of value.

²⁷“But I say to you who hear, love your enemies, do good to those who hate you,

²⁸bless those who curse you, pray for those who mistreat you. ²⁹Whoever hits you on the cheek, offer him the other also; and whoever takes away your coat, do not withhold your shirt from him either. ³⁰Give to everyone who asks of you, and whoever takes away what is yours, do not demand it back. ³¹Treat others the same way you want them to

[Read v.27-31]

Q: Is this message intended for everybody?

A: Jesus qualifies it with, “But I say to you who hear”. (v.27) The biblical definition of “hearing” is someone who proves they have understood what they have heard by actually putting it into practice.

Application: Christ’s followers are not defined as those who know about Him, or acknowledge Him, or even hold Him in high regard, but as those who put His Word into practice.

treat you.

Q: So how does this relate to the opening section on the blessings and the woes?

A: Jesus directly addresses the issue of how God's people are supposed to treat possessions.

Q: What are the four actions directed by Jesus in v.27-28?

1. "Love".
2. "Do good".
3. "Bless".
4. "Pray for".

These are all actions we are supposed to take in regards to other people.

Q: To whom does Jesus specifically hold that we are to treat this way?

1. "Your enemies".
2. "Those who hate you".
3. "Those who curse you".
4. "Those who mistreat you".

Q: Why does Jesus emphasize dealing with those who treat us the worst?

A: One reason might be that if we express this kind of love for our enemies, how much more our love for fellow believers. But it takes little effort to love and serve our friends as opposed to the exercise of faith necessary to not just love our enemies but do good for them. This is how we rise to a higher level and glorify Christ.

Q: How does Jesus summarize what is expected?

A: "Treat others the same way you want them to treat you". (v.31)

Q: What does "mistreat you" mean?

A: Another option of translating this word is "revile". The Greek word is derived from the words "against" and "insult" and is actually a bit stronger than what "mistreat" conveys in modern English. It is describing being misused, treated spitefully, directly insulted. It describes how deep our threshold is supposed to be when it comes to dealing with the worst the world has to offer.

Never pay back evil for evil to anyone. Respect what is right in the sight of all men. If possible, so far as it depends on you, be at peace with all men. Never take your own revenge, beloved, but leave room for the wrath of God, for it is written, "VENGEANCE IS MINE, I WILL REPAY," says the Lord. "BUT IF YOUR ENEMY IS HUNGRY, FEED HIM, AND IF HE IS THIRSTY, GIVE HIM A DRINK; FOR IN SO DOING YOU WILL HEAP BURNING COALS ON HIS HEAD." Do not be overcome by evil, but overcome evil with good.

— Romans 12:17-21

Application: *The proof of the quality of our faith is in how we treat others, especially in how we choose to use the things of this world in doing so. Christians are supposed to be willing to sacrifice the temporal things of this world to gain the eternal things of the next.*

³²“If you love those who love you, what credit is that to you? For even sinners love those who love them. ³³If you do good to those who do good to you, what credit is that to you? For even sinners do the same. ³⁴If 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. ³⁶Be merciful, just as your Father is merciful.

[Read v.32-36]

Q: What is the defining difference between a saint and a sinner?

A: “Even sinners love those who love them”. (v.32) Saints show love to everyone.

Q: What are Christ’s three qualifying conditional statements in v.32-34?

1. “If you love...” (v.32)
2. “If you do good...” (v.33)
3. “If you lend...” (v.34)

Q: How does Christ follow up with how these conditions are to be fulfilled in v.35?

1. “...love your enemies...” (v.35)
2. “...do good...” (v.35)
3. “...lend, expecting nothing in return...” (v.35)

Q: What do each of the promised results for this behavior have in common?

A: Both “your reward will be great” and “you will be sons of the Most High” confirm that we should not expect repayment or rewards in this life but in the one to come.

Q: Why is God holding us to this standard?

A: It is the same standard He holds Himself to. “...for He himself is kind to ungrateful and evil men”. (v.35)

Q: How does v.36 provide insight into how such difficult things are accomplished in a believer’s life?

A: They are undertaken from the position of acting merciful.

Q: What does “merciful” mean?

A: Another way to state it is “to have compassion”. In other words, it is not something undertaken out of a strict sense of duty, but the inclination of a heart predisposed toward love.

Application: *If we fully understand that those so egregiously mistreating and hating us are spiritually blind and unaware of the eternal consequences of their actions, we will see why the response of a right, Christian heart is to show mercy and love in return that they might yet be saved. As David teaches in Psalm 51, in reality all sin is committed against God even though others on earth may be victims of its actions. (Ps. 51:42)*

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.”

³⁹And He also spoke a parable to them: “A blind man cannot guide a blind man, can he? Will they not both fall into a pit?”

[Read v.37-40]

Q: How is v.37 actually a practical example of what was taught in the preceding verse?

A: This is what it means to “be merciful”.

Q: False teachers LOVE to quote this verse as some kind of formula for attaining material blessing in this life. Now that you are reading it in the full context of Christ’s teaching, what is this really promising?

A: What is promised is a multiplied return on our love and mercy for others, which is the “standard of measure it will be measured to you in return”.

Luke 6:20-49 • The Differences That Matter, Page 3 of 5

⁴⁰A pupil is not above his teacher; but everyone, after he has been fully trained, will be like his teacher.

⁴¹“Why do you look at the speck that is in your brother’s eye, but do not notice the log that is in your own eye? ⁴²Or 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.

⁴³“For there is no good tree which produces bad fruit, nor, on the other hand, a bad tree which produces good fruit. ⁴⁴For each tree is known by its own fruit. For men do not gather figs from thorns, nor do they pick grapes from a briar bush. ⁴⁵The good man out of the good treasure of his heart brings forth what is good; and the evil man out of the evil treasure brings forth what is evil; for his mouth speaks from that which fills his heart.

⁴⁶“Why do you call Me, ‘Lord, Lord,’ and do not do what I say? ⁴⁷Everyone who comes to Me and hears My words and acts on them, I will show you whom he is like: ⁴⁸he is like a man building a house, who dug deep and laid a foundation on the rock; and when a flood occurred, the torrent burst against that house and could not shake it, because it had been well built. ⁴⁹But the one who has heard and has not acted accordingly, is like a man who built a house on the ground without any foundation; and the torrent burst against it and immediately it collapsed, and the ruin of that house was great.”

Q: How does this parable also relate to the admonition in v.36 to “Be merciful, just as your Father is merciful”?

A: The proof of a true student of Christ is someone who is no longer spiritually blind because they put His Word into practice. The Teacher is “*merciful*”, therefore the student putting His teaching into practice becomes “*merciful*”.

Application: *God proves our love for Him in the quality of our love for others.*

[Read v.41-45]

Q: What appears to be the greatest danger for a believer and why?

A: Hypocrisy. It is the worst evidence of someone who knows the Word but does not simply fail to put it into practice and biblically love others; they actually twist it and use it to biblically hate others, even those closest to them.

Q: What happens when the greater focus becomes the faults of others?

A: It often leads to a loss of sight for our own, greater personal faults.

Q: Are we told we can never address another person’s sin?

A: No, we are told to “**first take the log out of your own eyes, and then you will see clearly to take out the speck that is in your brother’s eye**”. (v.42) Then you will be acting from a heart of love and mercy instead of judgment and condemnation.

Q: How does this fit with the illustration of the trees and fruit?

A: There is visible evidence in every person’s life which reveals the condition and disposition of their heart. The very nature of a hypocrite is to say one thing and do another; the nature of a true believer is to follow up with actions which prove the quality of their faith and love.

Q: Jesus further illustrates this with the difference between “good treasure” and “evil treasure”. What external, visible sign does He say will reveal what kind of treasure is stored in someone’s heart?

A: “...for his mouth speaks from that which fills his heart”. (v.45)

Application: *Christ’s teaching of the difference by which a saint and a sinner handle people and possessions is punctuated by the evidence of their behavior towards people and possessions.*

[Read v.46-49]

Q: How has the emphasis of this final section changed from the previous ones?

A: Whereas the focus was on the differences between a saint and a sinner based on their handling of people and possessions, here the difference is in their handling of the person of Christ.

Q: How does Christ Himself qualify the difference between a saint and a sinner?

A: A saint is “*everyone who come to Me and hears My words and acts on them*” (v.47); a sinner is “*the one who has heard and has not acted accordingly*”. (v.49)

Luke 6:20-49 • The Differences That Matter, Page 4 of 5

Q: How is true Christianity measured? Is it by emotion? Is it by regularly going to church? Is it by religious observances?

A: Those things only count if they are pursued within the context of someone who “hears My words and acts on them”.

Application: True Christianity – be it individually, within a denomination, or within an entire spiritual movement – is authentic only to the degree that it is first and foremost putting God’s Word into practice. This will become visibly evident in the quality of their personal relationships.

Overall Application

It is especially enlightening to realize that Jesus does not admonish anyone for not keeping the Old Testament rituals, Temple service, offerings and sacrifices, or the operation of the priesthood. As is done repeatedly throughout the Old Testament, the proof of love for God is proven by love for others. How do you know for sure someone truly loves God? Can you just take their word for it? In Jesus’ ministry He not only lays the foundation for the New Commandment to come, (Jn. 13:34) but clarifies how the original commandments were supposed to be applied.

In Matthew’s account of the Sermon on the Mount we are told that the listeners were amazed at Christ’s teaching. (Mt. 7:28-28) Even the most casual, secular reader of Scripture has great admiration for this teaching and often extols it as beautiful piece of religious philosophy. When we are all ultimately held accountable to Christ in the end, admiration for this teaching is not what is going to make the difference, is it?