

Luke 6:27-38

²⁷“But I say to you who are listening: Love your enemies. Do good to those who hate you. ²⁸Bless those who curse you. Pray for those who mistreat you. ²⁹If someone strikes you on one cheek, offer the other too. If someone takes away your coat, do not withhold your shirt. ³⁰Give to everyone who asks you, and if anyone takes away your things, do not demand them back.

³¹“Treat others just as you would want them to treat you. ³²If you love those who love you, what credit is that to you? To be sure, even the sinners love those who love them. ³³And if you do good to those who do good to you, what credit is that to you? Even the sinners do the same thing. ³⁴If you lend to those from whom you expect to be repaid, what credit is that to you? Even the sinners lend to sinners in order to be paid back in full. ³⁵Instead, love your enemies, do good and lend, expecting nothing in return. Your reward will be great, and you will be sons of the Most High, because he is kind to the unthankful and the evil. 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. In fact, the measure with which you measure will be measured back to you.”

Love: Another Definition

I.

569. That’s how many times some variation of the word “love” appears in the Evangelical Heritage Version of the Bible.

Since the word is used so often, perhaps we should define it. You can find a number of definitions for love in the Bible. Perhaps the one that might come to mind most quickly is Paul’s famous so-called “Love chapter,” 1 Corinthians 13. Paul starts by pointing out that if he does great things and says great things, but without a loving attitude, these things he says and does are worthless. Then he starts to define love: “Love is patient. Love is kind. Love does not envy. It does not brag. It is not arrogant...” (1 Corinthians 13:4ff, EHV). What is striking about Paul’s definition is that love takes work—it isn’t described as merely an emotion.

Now, when you look at the definition Paul gives you automatically start thinking about people you care about. That’s natural. Before a person is willing to be patient and kind and do all the kinds of work involved in love as Paul describes, you get to know them. Go out for coffee. Eventually your relationship becomes deeper and more profound and you are willing to be patient and kind. You are willing to not brag or be arrogant. You won’t be perfect, of course, but you become willing to try to get better as the relationship continues to grow.

So much of what Paul describes as love fits perfectly in the relationship of marriage, which is perhaps why so many couples request part of the Love Chapter to be read at their wedding, or even used as the sermon text.

II.

What Paul said in the Love Chapter can be challenging. Anyone who is honest realizes that we fail again and again to be patient and kind and the other things he said, even with our loved ones.

Jesus describes love as work in today’s Gospel, too, but there is a difference right at the start of what he says. “Love your enemies. Do good to those who hate you. ²⁸Bless those who curse you. Pray for those who mistreat you...” (Luke 6:27-28, EHV).

Paul really didn’t intend *his* definition to be used only for people you might care deeply about, either, but Jesus is even more blunt and to the point. Love is to be shown also to

people who you don't like; people who actively dislike and mistreat you; people who are unkind to you; people who are downright vicious to you. I don't know about you, but I don't live up to what Jesus describes as true Christian behavior.

"If someone strikes you on one cheek, offer the other too. If someone takes away your coat, do not withhold your shirt. ³⁰Give to everyone who asks you, and if anyone takes away your things, do not demand them back" (Luke 6:29-30, EHV).

Do you give money or things to people without counting the cost first? Even donations to the church are not immune. Givers tend to think the church should cater to their every whim if they are going to make sizeable contributions to the work of the church.

When someone you don't know comes asking for a handout, what do you do? We tend to try to evaluate the person. Will the gift be misused, perhaps to feed a drug or alcohol addiction?

It's even harder to give to our enemies or people who mistreat us or hate us than it is to give to someone we don't know—someone who might misuse our gift. Of course a person might buy lunch for a friend from time to time, but it's not likely you would willingly give your lunch money to the school bully.

"If you do good to those who do good to you, what credit is that to you? Even the sinners do the same thing" (Luke 6:33, EHV). Jesus says we are no better than any other sinner when we give only to those who "deserve" our charity.

III.

"The Most High... is kind to the unthankful and the evil. ³⁶Be merciful, just as your Father is merciful" (Luke 6:35-36, EHV). You are in a position to be giving and loving because of what God has already done for you.

Paul once said: "God shows his own love for us in this: While we were still sinners, Christ died for us" (Romans 5:8, EHV). God didn't wait to see if you would be the kind of person who would be worthy of his love. If he had, he would still be waiting.

Paul goes on: "While we were enemies, we were reconciled to God by the death of his Son" (Romans 5:10, EHV). God gave you, his enemy, not just another cheek, or the shirt of his back, or some money, but his One and only Son.

Jesus hanging on a cross and suffering a horrible death is certainly something that seems bad. Christians revisit that sad scene every year on Good Friday. That day is somber. In a sense it even has a tinge of sadness to it. But even on Good Friday Christians remember that what Jesus endured was, in reality, God's greatest gift to mankind.

Every sin was paid in full by Jesus on the cross; every lack of love we exhibit toward our enemies, every curse we hurl back at those who curse us, every time we fail to pray for those who mistreat us. Jesus paid it all.

The worst thing that happened in the history of the whole world was God dying on the cross. At least, it would *seem* to be the worst. But really it was the best thing that ever happened. God himself carried out everything necessary for your salvation. You don't have to wonder if *you* have done enough, because *he* has done enough—he has done it all.

IV.

"Treat others just as you would want them to treat you. ³⁶Be merciful, just as your Father is merciful" (Luke 6:31, 36, EHV). The starting point for our love is the Father's mercy to us. His love and mercy were on full display throughout Jesus' life, and especially at his death and resurrection, when we saw the full extent of God's love for us.

That's what enables us to show love to our enemies and those who hate us and mistreat us. Rather than expecting *them* to make the first move and be kind to us, *we* make the first move. Treat even your enemies and those who hate you as *you* would want to be treated by them, whatever their response might be.

"Pray for those who mistreat you" (Luke 6:28, EHV). Pray for your enemies and those

who mistreat you. Pray that they repent and learn of God's love for them. Christians want everyone to hear of God's great love for all mankind.

"God our Savior ⁴...wants all people to be saved and to come to the knowledge of the truth" (1 Timothy 2:3-4, EHV). *We* didn't deserve God's love and mercy. Neither does *anyone* deserve what Jesus did when he died on the cross for all. Just as God wants all people to know the truth of what Jesus did for all, we want them to know, too.

"Treat others just as you would want them to treat you" (Luke 6:31, EHV). Jesus explains in the next verses what this means.

"If you love those who love you, what credit is that to you? To be sure, even the sinners love those who love them. ³³And if you do good to those who do good to you, what credit is that to you? Even the sinners do the same thing. ³⁴If you lend to those from whom you expect to be repaid, what credit is that to you? Even the sinners lend to sinners in order to be paid back in full" (Luke 6:32-34, EHV).

If you do to others what they already do to you, that's nothing unusual. Unbelievers love those who love them in return. Unbelievers do good things for those they expect might do good things for them, too. Unbelievers make loans to their friends, expecting to be repaid in full.

Treating others as you would have them treat you means to go above and beyond. "Instead, love your enemies, do good and lend, expecting nothing in return. Your reward will be great, and you will be sons of the Most High, because he is kind to the unthankful and the evil" (Luke 6:35, EHV). If God is kind, even to the unthankful, imagine his great kindness when we reflect the love he showed to us.

"Do not judge, and you will not be judged. Do not condemn, and you will not be condemned. Forgive, and you will be forgiven" (Luke 6:37, EHV). There are certain kinds of judging we *are* to do. We *are* to point out sin and the need for repentance. We *are* to judge whether someone is teaching God's Word correctly or not. We *are* to judge ourselves by God's righteous moral law. We *are* to "correct, rebuke, and train in righteousness," as we heard a few weeks ago in our lessons. What we are *not* to judge is the heart—whether a person has faith or not. We are *not* to judge in a hypocritical way, thinking we are superior to others.

Forgive and you will be forgiven. We already have the forgiveness Jesus won for us. Since we have that, we will find it easier to forgive others.

"Give, and it will be given to you. A good measure pressed down, shaken together, and running over will be poured into your lap. In fact, the measure with which you measure will be measured back to you" (Luke 6:38, EHV). When you give, God promises that you won't miss what you have shared. God will always share with us what he has.

A good measure, pressed down, shaken together. If your recipe calls for brown sugar, you smash it in rather than just leveling off the measuring cup. Other ingredients you might shake the measuring cup a little to make sure you are getting as much in as you should. God is generous with his blessings to us. He shakes them in and smashes them down to give us even more. His blessings to us are running over.

God promises that he will share with us as generously as we share in love with others what he has given us.

Many people treat love as nothing more than an emotion. One moment you feel love, the next moment another emotion takes over. Love is pretty important in the Bible, too, but it is treated as an action. Love is something you do. *God's* acts of love for all of us are the greatest of all. Jesus teaches us to work at being loving. We love, because he first loved us. God bless your deeds of love. Amen.