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THE STANDARDS OF CHRIST *LUKE 6:1-49*

In this chapter, the standards of Christ stand out bold and clear. First, they are seen through the controversy with the Pharisees. Then they are stated in His marvelous teaching which often stands in stark contrast with man's usual ways of thinking about things.

Sabbath Controversies — Luke 6:1-11

John R.W. Stott wrote,

The popular image of Christ as 'gentle Jesus, meek and mild' simply will not do. It is a false image. To be sure, He was full of love, compassion and tenderness. But He was also uninhibited in exposing error and denouncing sin, especially hypocrisy. Christ was a controversialist. The Evangelists portray Him as constantly debating with the leaders of contemporary Judaism (*Christ the Controversialist*, p. 49).

Few subjects generated more controversy among the Jewish religious leaders than questions concerning the right use of the sabbath.

Jewish books of doctrine and interpretation, the *Mishnah* and *Talmud*, devoted a large amount of space to opinions concerning sabbath-keeping. But this text (6:1-11) shows that the religious leaders had missed the true meaning of what God intended in regard to sabbath observance.

6 On a sabbath, while he was going through the grainfields, his disciples plucked and ate some heads of grain, rubbing them in their hands. ²But some of the Pharisees said, "Why are you doing what is not lawful to do on the sabbath?" ³And Jesus answered, "Have you not read what David did when he was hungry, he and those who were with him: how he entered the house of God, and took and ate the bread of the Presence, which it is not lawful for any but the priests to eat, and also gave it to those with him?" ⁴And he said to them, "The Son of man is lord of the sabbath."

⁵On another sabbath, when he entered the synagogue and taught, a man was there whose right hand was withered. ⁶And the scribes and the Pharisees watched him, to see whether he would heal on the sabbath, so that they might find an accusation against him. ⁷But he knew their thoughts, and he said to the man who had the withered hand, "Come and stand here." And he rose and stood there. ⁸And Jesus said to them, "I ask you, is it lawful on the sabbath to do good or to do harm, to save life or to destroy it?" ⁹And he looked around on them all, and said to him, "Stretch out your hand." And he did so, and his hand was restored. ¹⁰But they were filled with fury and discussed with one another what they might do to Jesus.

6:1-2. As they walked through the wheat fields, Jesus' disciples picked some heads of grain, rubbed them in their hands, blew the chaff away and then ate the kernels. (*Corn* in the *King James Version* means small grain.) Wheat would be ripe in some places in Galilee by April. This practice was permitted under the Law as long as one did not use a sickle (Deut. 23:25).

The Pharisees did not object to the act but that it was done on the sabbath. They held that this was reaping, threshing, winnowing and preparing food — all which violated the traditional rules for sabbath observance. These were acts listed in the *Mishnah* as forbidden on the sabbath. The Pharisees were looking for a charge they could use against Jesus. Work was forbidden in the Mosaic Law (Exod. 20:8-11; 34:21; Deut. 5:12-15). However the Jewish rabbis added thousands of additional rules to what was written in the Old Testament.

6:3-4. Jesus referred to an incident in I Samuel 21:3-6. David and his men were fleeing for their life from Saul and were hungry. The priest gave them bread from the Table of Shewbread. Luke called it bread of the Presence as it is called in I Samuel 21:6. These twelve wheat loaves were changed on the table in the Holy Place weekly. None but the priests could eat the old loaves (Exod. 25:30; Lev. 24:9).

Hendriksen said, "If then David had a right to ignore a *divinely ordained, ceremonial provision* when necessity demanded it" then would not Jesus "have the right, under similar conditions of need, to set aside a *totally unwarranted, man-made sabbath regulation?*" (p. 319). Jesus and His disciples had every right to "ignore a purely rabbinical regulation regarding sabbath observance, a rule resting on nothing more solid than a misinterpretation and misapplication of God's holy law" (Hendriksen, p. 513).

It is possible that Jesus used this example as an argument to point out the inconsistency in the thinking of the Pharisees. He did not discuss whether David's behavior was right or wrong. His argument is — You do not condemn David, why do you condemn my disciples? They approved what David did which was forbidden by the Law while they disapproved what the disciples did which was not forbidden by the Law. Therefore the disciples were guiltless according to the Law.

6:5. For Jesus to claim to be "Lord of the Sabbath" was to make a claim to have divine authority because Jehovah God had established the sabbath and revealed how it should be observed (Exod. 20:8-11). Jesus, as God-in-flesh, certainly had a right to tell how God intended the Sabbath to be kept. In the Greek sentence *Lord* is placed first for emphasis. His disciples were in submission to His lordship rather than to the lordship of rabbis' traditions. The fundamental issue is — What is your relationship with Jesus, Lord of the Sabbath?

Jesus honored the sabbath. He worshipped regularly on the sabbath (Luke 4:16). He performed acts of mercy and healing on the sabbath — Matthew 12:9-14; Luke 13:10-17; 14:1-6; John 5:9; 7:23; 9:14).

The Pharisees' narrow interpretation of the Law was not in harmony with the spirit and intention of the Law. The Lord of the sabbath knew the true intention of the sabbath. He exposed as wrong a system of fencing the law with human regulations which in effect nullified the Word of God. Jesus claimed sovereign authority over the sabbath, and as such He had a right to lay down the principles for the proper way to observe the sabbath.

6:6-8. On another sabbath when Jesus was teaching in a synagogue

a man with a crippled hand was present. Dr. Luke specifies it was his right hand. The word translated withered was a word used of dried-up plants.

The scribes and Pharisees watched Jesus very closely hoping to see Him heal someone on the sabbath so they would have an accusation against Him. The rabbis allowed healing of a Jew on the sabbath day when his life was threatened. They generously applied this to many diseases. They made exceptions for themselves but they wanted to make none for Jesus.

He knew their inward thoughts and questionings. Jesus told the man with the useless hand to come and stand in the midst of those assembled.

6:9-11. He then answered the questions in their hearts by His public question which put things in true perspective. It was an "either or" situation. He asked His antagonists, "Is it lawful to do good or to refuse to do good and thereby do evil?" He then paused to allow them opportunity to answer. His question went unanswered. It was an embarrassing silence while He looked around the group. He then asked the man to stretch out his crippled hand. This was a test of the man's faith which he passed with flying colors. When he extended the useless, withered hand it was immediately completely well and healthy.

Jesus had bested them and they were angry. How ironic that they were faulting Jesus for healing on the sabbath, while they were filled with rage and a desire to destroy Him. Mark informed us, "The Pharisees went out, and immediately held counsel with the Herodians against him, how to destroy him" (Mark 3:6). The Herodians were the party associated with Herod Antipas, the governor over Galilee. Perhaps they thought he would help them do away with Jesus as he had done with John the Baptist.

The Choosing of the Twelve Apostles — Luke 6:12-16

Training the next generation of leaders is matter of high priority if a movement or organization is to continue with a commitment to its original mission and goals. The selection and the training of the Twelve was an important part of Jesus' ministry.

¹²In these days he went out to the mountain to pray; and all night he continued in prayer to God. ¹³And when it was day, he called his disciples, and chose from them twelve, whom he named apostles;

¹⁴Simon, whom he named Peter, and Andrew his brother, and James and John, and Philip, and Bartholomew, ¹⁵and Matthew, and Thomas, and James the son of Alphaeus, and Simon who was called the Zealot, ¹⁶and Judas the son of James, and Judas Iscariot, who became a traitor.

6:12-13. Luke is indefinite about the time and place. It was characteristic of Jesus to spend time in prayer communing with the Heavenly Father. Luke stressed prayer: 1:10,13; 2:37; 3:21; 5:16; 6:12,28; 9:28-29; 10:2; 11:1-13; 18:1-8,9-14; 19:46; 21:36; 22:32,40-46. Our Lord continued all night in prayer. It was a momentous choice He was about to make. It no doubt increased the burden on His heart as He could foresee Judas' betrayal of Him, the apostles' misunderstanding of His mission and the hardships that lay in store for these specially chosen leaders.

Early the next day He called His disciples to Him. From this larger group He selected twelve apostles, *Disciple* means a learner. The word *student* may mean one who studies a subject or studies in a school. But *disciple* indicates a personal attachment to a specific teacher. *Apostle* means one sent forth on a mission, an ambassador. The word *apostle* appears nine times in the Gospels: Matthew 10:2; Mark 6:30; Luke 6:13; 9:10; 11:49; 17:5; 22:14; 24:10; John 13:16. The group is frequently called the Twelve in the Gospels. *Apostle* is used in the special sense of the word when referring to the Twelve, Matthias (Judas' replacement) and Paul. The following persons are called apostles in the general sense of the term: Barnabas (Acts 14:4,14), Andronicus and Junias (Rom. 16:7), two unnamed brethren (II Cor. 8:23), Epaphroditus (Phil. 2:25); Silas and Timothy (I Thess. 2:6). The word is used of Christ in Hebrews 3:1.

Jesus called these twelve men to be His personal companions and to be His representatives to carry out His mission. He personally commissioned them and sent them with His authority. Mark recorded, "And he appointed twelve, to be with him, and to be sent out to preach and have authority to cast out demons" (Mark 3:14-15).

Several stages can be noted in Jesus' leadership recruitment. Some of the men here chosen as apostles had become His disciples when John the Baptist announced Jesus (Andrew, Peter, James, John, Philip, Nathaniel — John 1). Jesus' disciples were with Him in His early ministry (John 2:12,17,22; 3:22; 4:2,8,27-38). He called four of them to be fishers of men (Matt. 4, Mark 2 and Luke 5). Then He chose twelve as apostles (Mark 3 and Luke 6). In Matthew 10 He gave

the apostles miracle-working power. After His resurrection just before His return to heaven, He commissioned the apostles to go into all the world with His message (Matt. 28; Mark 16; Luke 24; John 20:21-23; Acts 1).

6:14-16. The following is a list of the names of the apostles as given in Luke's text with additional names added to the list:

1. Simon, Peter, Cephas (rock), Barjonah (son of John or Jonas)
2. Andrew
3. James and 4. John, Boanerges (sons of thunder), sons of Zebedee
5. Philip
6. Bartholomew, Nathaniel
7. Matthew, Levi
8. Thomas, Didymus (twin)
9. James the son of Alphaeus, James the Less (the younger)
10. Simon the Zealot, the Canaanean
11. Judas the son of James, Thaddeus
12. Judas Iscariot, son of Simon Iscariot

The Twelve are listed four times in the New Testament: Matthew 10:2-4; Mark 3:16-19; Luke 6:14-16; Acts 1:13,26.

Jesus gave Simon the name Peter (Greek) or Cephas (Aramaic) which means rock (John 1:42). He was fisherman by trade with his brother, Andrew. He first lived in Bethsaida (John 1:44) which was a section of Capernaum (Mark 1:21,29). Peter was the author of I and II Peter.

Andrew was Peter's brother. He brought Peter to Jesus (John 1:41,42). See Mark 1:16,17,29; 3:18; John 6:8,9; 12:22; Acts 1:13.

James and John were fishermen who were the sons of Zebedee. Perhaps because of their fiery tempers they were called "sons of thunder" (Mark 3:17; 9:38; Luke 9:54-56). James was the first apostle martyred (Acts 12:2). John was the "disciple whom Jesus loved" (John 13:23; 19:26; 20:2; 21:7,20). John was the author of the Gospel of John, I,II, and III John, and Revelation.

Philip was from Bethsaida. He taught Nathaniel about Jesus as one promised by Moses and the prophets (John 1:45). See John 6:5,7; John 12:21-22; 14:8.

Bartholomew means the son of Tolmai. He is the Nathaniel of John's Gospel (John 1:45-49; 21:2).

Matthew, the tax collector, was also called Levi (Luke 5:27-32). He calls himself Matthew in Matthew 9:9. In all the New Testament lists of apostles he is called Matthew. He was the author of the Gospel of Matthew. He was the son of Alphaeus.

Thomas is often called "Doubting Thomas" because he said he would not believe Jesus had risen unless he saw Him with his own eyes. It is unwise to judge the whole personality of a person from one statement. He also expressed commitment and faith (John 11:16; 14:5; 20:24-28; 21:2; Acts 1:13).

James, the son of Alphaeus, in Mark's Gospel is James the Less or the Younger (Mark 15:40).

Simon the Zealot must have been at some time a member of a nationalist party that worked for independence from Rome. Mark called him the Cananaean (Mark 3:18).

Judas, the son of James, is called Thaddaeus in Matthew 10:3; Mark 3:18; (Lebbaeus in some textual readings). He is probably the Judas, not Iscariot, of John 14:22.

Judas Iscariot is identified variously as traitor, betrayer and Simon's son. It is likely that Iscariot means he was from Kerioth, a city in southern Judea. He finds frequent mention in the Gospels: Matthew 26:14,25,47; 27:3; Mark 14:10,43; Luke 22:3,47,48; John 6:76; 12:4,6; 13:2,26,29; 18:2-5.

Jesus chose ordinary men to be His apostles. He loved them dearly (John 13:1). The night before His death He prayed to the Father for their mission (John 17:6-19).

Blessings and Woes — Luke 6:17-26

Given sometime during the second year of His Galilean ministry, Jesus' teaching recorded in Luke 6:17-49 is possibly the same sermon as recorded as the "Sermon on the Mount" in Matthew 5-7. Luke includes much material in common with Matthew and omits much that Matthew includes. Luke also includes some material not in Matthew. Jesus may have used the same or similar material on different occasions. It is possible Matthew and Luke record different events. Or they may be reporting on the same sermon, which is abbreviated by Luke. Luke tells of Jesus' teaching some of the material in other contexts (e.g. Luke 12:22-31).

In a few discerning challenges and principles Jesus set forth the moral demands of the righteousness of God. Here is summarized God's kind of wisdom concerning the psychology of personal relationships and social justice.

Matthew contrasts the true spirit of righteousness with religious legalism. Luke's audience, being Gentile, would not be plagued with Jewish legalism. He has therefore preserved Jesus' teaching, con-

trasting human selfishness with Christian love.

¹⁷And he came down with them and stood on a level place, with a great crowd of his disciples and a great multitude of people from all Judea and Jerusalem and the seacoast of Tyre and Sidon, who came to hear him and to be healed of their diseases; ¹⁸and those who were troubled with unclean spirits were cured. ¹⁹And all the crowd sought to touch him, for power came forth from him and healed them all.

²⁰And he lifted up his eyes on his disciples, and said:

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

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

“Blessed are you that weep now, for you shall laugh.

²²“Blessed are you when men hate you, and when they exclude you and revile you, and cast out your name as evil, on account of the Son of man! ²³Rejoice in that day, and leap for joy, for behold, your reward is great in heaven; for so their fathers did to the prophets.

²⁴“But woe to you that are rich, for you have received your consolation.

²⁵“Woe to you that are full now, for you shall hunger.

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

²⁶“Woe to you, when all men speak well of you, for so their fathers did to the false prophets.”

6:17-19. The level place to which Jesus came down may be a plateau on the side of a mountain. Three groups were there: Jesus and the Twelve, a large crowd of disciples of Jesus, and a great throng of people from as far south as Jerusalem and Judea and from northwest as far as the seacoast towns of Tyre and Sidon. They came to hear His teaching and to be healed of diseases. Jesus cast evil spirits or demons out of those possessed. People pressed through the crowd to touch Him and receive His healing power. The compassionate Son of God “healed them all.”

6:20-21. The crowds heard this teaching but it was especially directed to His disciples (see Matthew 5:1-2). It is a mistake to take the Sermon on the Mount as a program for social reform for society. It describes the principles of the righteous character and conduct of those who have submitted to Jesus as Lord and Savior.

The blessings and woes are flat contradictions of the way people usually view life. They are not platitudes but heartshaking challenges. These fundamental statements describe a true disciple of Christ. *Happy* is not the best translation because it may be so superficial and

selfish. The word *blessed* means one is really well off. It describes a spiritual well-being that is not dependent on circumstances.

Poor is used in the sense of being without spiritual resources to stand on one's own merit before God. Physical poverty is not necessarily a blessing (Psa. 40:17; 72:2,4). Matthew has "poor in spirit" (Matt. 5:3). Really well off is the person who is not impressed with his self-importance nor filled with self-sufficiency or self-righteousness. The humble person who realizes his spiritual need and inadequacy is the person who will submit to the rule of Christ in his heart and life.

Blessed are those who are hungry for God. Matthew has "hunger and thirst after righteousness" (Matt. 5:6). It concerns the strange, deep desires in one's heart. What do you want most in life? Really well off is the person who realizes that a selfish life, grabbing all the pleasure and power this world has to offer, does not satisfy. The person who longs to know God, to have His favor, to walk in His will, is the person who will find true, lasting satisfaction.

Jesus was not granting a blessing on cry babies and whiners. Even though important lessons are learned from sorrow, Jesus intended a deeper meaning. Those who have genuine grief and godly sorrow over their sinful unworthiness will truly be able to laugh and know real joy. Sorrow for sin and genuine repentance precede spiritual well-being.

6:22-23: Blessed are those unfairly persecuted — what a paradox! Jesus is not talking about all kinds of suffering. It is suffering "on account of the Son of Man," "for righteousness sake" (Matt. 5:10). Jesus said the world hated Him and would hate His followers (John 15:18-19). Paul said, "All who desire to live a godly life in Christ Jesus will be persecuted" (II Tim. 3:12). When the apostles were beaten for refusing to cease speaking of Jesus, they left "rejoicing that they were counted worthy to suffer dishonor for the name" (Acts 5:41). Peter wrote, "But if when you do right and suffer for it you take it patiently, you have God's approval" (I Pet. 2:20). When persecuted we must follow in Christ's steps. "When he was reviled, he did not revile in return; when he suffered, he did not threaten; but he trusted to him who judges justly" (I Pet. 2:23). Our reward is greater than any sacrifice (Rom. 8:18; II Cor. 4:17-18).

6:24-26: Each of the four woes gives a contrast corresponding with each of the beatitudes: poor-rich; hungry-full; weep-laugh; and hate you-speak well of you. Leon Morris observed:

These woes, which are found in Luke only, form the natural cor-

relative to the beatitudes. They pronounce a surprising verdict on qualities, and states which men have universally regarded as desirable. But the world blessings may encourage an independent attitude over against God, an attitude of self-sufficiency which is fatal to spiritual growth. *Woe* does not convey the exact force of Jesus' *ouai*. It is more like 'Alas' (NEB) or 'How terrible' (TEV). It is an expression of regret and compassion, not a threat (Morris, p. 127).

As the beatitudes declared who is really well off in a deeply spiritual sense, the woes declare who is not.

How sad for those whose sole ambition in life is to make money and gain material things. "You cannot serve God and mammon" (Luke 16:13). Greed is idolatry (Col. 3:5). Earthly riches are little consolation in the light of eternity's values.

Those who fill their lives only with the pleasures of this life do not find satisfaction. Those who are full of what this world has to offer have an inner emptiness and void. They may feel like they have no need of God. They will try various ways to deal with this void, but God alone can satisfy man's innate spiritual hunger.

Those who laugh at God in this life will spend an eternity where there is "weeping and gnashing of teeth" (Luke 13:28).

It is not the goal of Christians to get people to dislike them. An elder "must be well-thought of by outsiders" (I Tim. 3:7). Jesus meant how sad for the person who wants peace at any price and who compromises truth in order to buy friendship. Some teachers tell people what they like to hear rather than telling them the truth (II Tim. 4:3).

Love Your Enemies — Luke 6:27-37

This passage constitutes the heart of the sermon. They are told the manner of life needed to avoid the woes and to be able to claim the blessings. He states principles for living for His followers in their relations with their fellowmen.

²⁷"But I say to you that hear, Love your enemies, do good to those who hate you, ²⁸bless those who curse you, pray for those who abuse you. ²⁹To him who strikes you on the cheek, offer the other also; and from him who takes away your coat do not withhold even your shirt. ³⁰Give to every one who begs from you; and of him who takes away your goods do not ask them again. ³¹And as you wish that men would

do to you, do so to them.

³²“If you love those who love you, what credit is that to you? For even sinners love those who love them. ³³And if you do good to those who do good to you, what credit is that to you? For even sinners do the same. ³⁴And if you lend to those from whom you hope to receive, what credit is that to you? Even sinners lend to sinners, to receive as much again. ³⁵But 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 is kind to the ungrateful and the selfish. ³⁶Be merciful, even as your Father is merciful.”

6:27-28. These principles are valid for all persons. He addressed them to “you that hear.” His words stand in contrast to the way men generally selfishly view their life. Jesus announced the absolute demands of morality one must follow if he wants to do God’s will in his life.

The law taught against vengeance and advocated love for one’s neighbor (Lev. 19:19) and assistance for one’s enemy (Exod. 23:4-5). However, the Jews of Jesus’ day allowed themselves to hate Gentiles and even certain Jews, such as tax collectors.

Our word for love has been soiled by those who equate it with lust or make it only a sentimental feeling. Love seeks to act in the best interests of others. It acts in unselfish good will toward others regardless of how they respond. Love sees other persons as individuals made in God’s image, worthwhile to God. Love cares for the welfare of each person and out of this concern acts in regard for his welfare.

The word for love used in this verse is not the same as the word that denotes personal affection for intimate friends and family. God does not command “Like your enemies,” but He does ask, “Act in your enemy’s best interest.” It is natural to love those who love us, but the transforming power of God’s Spirit is necessary before we can love the unlovely. Christ’s love for enemies brought Him to earth (Rom. 5:8).

We cannot love our enemies as we love our dearest friends. But we can determine that no matter what evil he may do to us we will seek nothing but his highest good.

Express genuine interest in the welfare of those who curse you. Do not lower yourself to return abuse for abuse. Why should you let them determine your behavior? Rather than seething with hate and revenge toward those who misrepresent and misuse you, be willing to forgive. Share with God in prayer what they have done. Leave the vengeance in

His hands. Pray for their salvation. Pray for ways to show real love and for helping oneself and the hostile person to a better relationship with Christ. Return good for evil (Luke 23:34; Acts 7:60; Rom. 12:20-21).

6:29-30. Jesus taught the principle of non-retaliation to personal insults. He is not laying down principles for national foreign policy, or forbidding government action against evil deeds. Persons who have submitted to the lordship of Christ and are responsive to the Spirit of God can obey this teaching.

Jesus does not expect us to allow violence and robbery. In one place Jesus told the disciple to flee for safety (Matt. 10:23). To the soldier who smote Jesus on the face, our Lord did not retaliate, but He did rebuke him (John 18:23). This verse concerns a personal insult, a slap on the face, not an assault on one's life. Self-defense when one's life is threatened is not prohibited. Instead of seeking revenge, love endures injury and injustice for the sake of peace. It is better to suffer wrong rather than return wrong (I Cor. 6:7; Heb. 10:34).

This principle of generous helpfulness must be understood in harmony with all other Biblical teaching and applied with common sense. Jesus did not say give *what* he asks. We would not give a bottle of poison to a baby just because he asks for it. God does not want us to contribute to the delinquency of drunks, frauds and professional beggars. Paul said not to help one who is too lazy and refuses to work (II Thess. 3:10). Unlimited giving to some would ruin their character. The limit on our giving must be because we care for the other person's best interest rather than out of selfish motives. Jesus wants in our heart a willingness to share with those in need. We need a sense of values that places spiritual priorities above material losses.

6:31-34. This guideline helps the Christian see his duty in carrying out the other principles that are in this passage. Jesus did not say to treat your brother as he wants you to treat him. We should behave toward other people in exactly the way we, with Christ's standards, would want them to act toward us in the same situation. The liquor ad that has the word "Do unto others" under a bottle of whiskey is a blasphemous misuse of this verse. The Greeks, Romans, Jews and the Chinese had expressed a negative form of the golden rule. Jesus put it in a positive form which makes the motive love rather than selfishness. This idea is so practical that it can guide one's conduct in all personal relationships. God's Spirit within can enable the Christian to practice this guideline for life.

To be concerned about only those who are concerned for us is to

behave only as a natural man. There is no special grace or credit in this. In general, non-Christians are kind to those who are kind to them. More is expected of a follower of Christ.

There is nothing unusual or difficult about being nice to nice people. Our treatment of others must not depend on their position, prestige or power, but on the fact they are persons made in the image of God. Christ calls us to be unselfish in loving not only our friends but also the unlovely and the hateful.

In a dog-eat-dog business world the Christian will be kind, generous and helpful, rather than ruthless, greedy and selfish.

6:35-36. Caring for others leaves you vulnerable to being hurt. Christians are to be concerned even for the welfare of their enemies. This will sometimes cost, but losses and hurts incurred in the service of Christ will not be in vain. Reward from God will come to those who practice love. God's children manifest His character in their lives, being partakers of His divine nature (II Pet. 1:4). God has expressed His love to all men unselfishly. He sends sunshine and rain on the just and the unjust (Matt. 5:45). He is kind even to the ungrateful.

God is love. Mercy means not only pity over another's plight but it is a concern that seeks to help the person in his needs. Christians must be merciful in their treatment of others even as God has been merciful in dealing with them.

Unloving Judging Forbidden — Luke 6:37-45

³⁷“Judge not, and you will not be judged; condemn not, and you will not be condemned; forgive, and you will be forgiven; ³⁸give, and it will be given to you; good measure, pressed down, shaken together, running over, will be put into your lap. For the measure you give will be the measure you get back.”

³⁹He also told them a parable: “Can a blind man lead a blind man? Will they not both fall into a pit? ⁴⁰A disciple is not above his teacher, but every one when he is fully taught will be like his teacher. ⁴¹Why do you see 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 no good tree bears bad fruit, nor again does a bad tree bear good fruit; ⁴⁴for each tree is known by its own fruit. For figs are not

gathered from thorns, nor are grapes picked from a bramble bush. "The good man out of the good treasure of his heart produces good, and the evil man out of his evil treasure produces evil; for out of the abundance of the heart his mouth speaks."

6:37. Unloving criticism and harsh condemnation have no place in the Christian's life. God — not man — is the judge of the eternal destiny of man's soul. Jesus forbids the thoughtless, merciless, fault-finding judgments of people's motives and actions out of a heart of suspicion and jealousy. God is the final judge and He alone knows all the background circumstances and motives. Jesus did not prohibit all judging, as many have misunderstood Him to say. He said on another occasion, "Judge righteous judgment" (John 7:24; Matt. 7:8-15; Rom. 16:17-18; I Cor. 5:11 ff; I John 4:1-2; II John 7-11).

Matthew adds, "For with the judgment you pronounce you will be judged" (Matt. 7:1). "Judgment is without mercy to one who has shown no mercy" (James 2:13). "Blessed are the merciful, for they shall obtain mercy" (Matt. 5:7). "For if you forgive men their trespasses, your heavenly Father also will forgive you; but if you do not forgive men their trespasses, neither will your Father forgive your trespasses" (Matt. 6:14-15). "And be kind to one another, tenderhearted, forgiving one another, as God in Christ forgave you" (Eph. 4:32).

6:38. As a general rule people are generous to a person who is generous. "He who sows sparingly will also reap sparingly, and he who sows bountifully will also reap bountifully" (II Cor. 9:6). The language comes from a grain market in the Near East. "Will be put into your lap" has reference to a loose fold in their garment which hung over the belt and was used as a pocket. (See Ruth 3:15.)

This text applies both to man's response to our giving and to God's response. If we give of ourselves and our means in His service, God will overwhelm us with His generosity. The rewards of service increase in proportion to the selflessness with which the Christian serves.

6:39. Jesus discusses the responsibilities a disciple has toward others. It is foolish to set oneself up a judge over others. As human beings we need to be led to know and do what is right. Paul said, "But when they measure themselves by one another, and compare themselves with one another, they are without understanding" (II Cor. 10:12). Man needs an authority outside himself to know what is right. Leaders who do not see clearly where they are going bring

disaster to themselves and those they lead. "Into a pit" refers to an open well or quarry.

6:40. The relationship of disciple to teacher is one in which the disciple acknowledges the superior knowledge of the teacher and submits to the leadership of the teacher. The goal of the teacher is to enable the student to understand and act on the truth being taught. When the teaching task is complete the student is equipped to see and respond to the truth in both content and spirit with the same maturity as the teacher.

Jesus was warning against those who are "instant experts" in religious matters, Christian discipleship is a matter of wisdom, attitudes, motives and spirit, not just knowledge, content and information. Paul said, "My little children, with whom I am again in travail until Christ be formed in you" (Gal. 4:19). A disciple of Christ wants to know Christ and be Christlike. Some talk of discipling a small group of their disciples. We are to call men and women to be disciples of Christ, not of us. Our goal is not that they become like us but that they become like Christ.

6:41-42. We may miss the ridiculousness of the picture Jesus paints because we have heard it so often. He used a humorous illustration to teach a serious lesson. We must judge and correct our own faults first, before we can be of any help to others in overcoming their faults.

It is absurd for a person with a large beam of wood sticking out of his eye trying to pick a tiny bit of wood out of another's eye. A person is a hypocrite when he pretends to be able to judge the sins of others when he is unrepentant of sins in his own life. Careful, rigorous self-examination that results in changed attitudes and behavior is essential. Then and only then, we are spiritually prepared to see clearly and to help others deal with their faults.

6:43-44. Our deeds provide a test of our character. The fruit from a tree indicates what kind of a tree it is. There is an inseparable connection between one's belief and behavior, attitude and actions, and character and conduct.

6:45. Jesus emphasized the importance of the inner life. Thoughts are behind words and deeds. Evil thoughts give birth to evil behavior. Good thoughts give birth to good behavior. True religion concerns thoughts, motives, attitudes, as well as outward actions.

The old country doctor asked the patient to stick out his tongue. The condition of the tongue was an evidence of the health of the person. The words a person speaks may seem insignificant, but in fact they are an important index and revelation of inner character.

True Foundation — Luke 6:46-49

Some are attracted to Jesus as Savior, but not as Lord, For selfish reasons they want what Jesus has to offer, but they don't want to commit themselves to obey without reservation Jesus' demands on their lives. Christianity is not a situation in which you have a hold on Christ without allowing Him to have a hold on you. Jesus exposed the fundamental difference between a true follower of Christ and one who merely claims to be a follower of Christ.

“‘Why do you call me ‘Lord, Lord,’ and not do what I tell you? ⁴⁷Every one who comes to me and hears my words and does them, I will show you what he is like: ⁴⁸he is like a man building a house, who dug deep, and laid the foundation upon rock; and when a flood arose, the stream broke against that house and could not shake it, because it had been well built. ⁴⁹But he who hears and does not do them is like a man who built a house on the ground without a foundation; against which the stream broke, and immediately it fell, and the ruin of that house was great.’”

6:46. This short sentence probes to the heart of the matter. The issue is not whether one calls himself a Christian or calls Jesus Lord. The question Jesus asked shows the essential contradiction between calling Jesus Lord yet disobeying Him. Matthew's record has: “Not everyone, who says to me, ‘Lord, Lord’ shall enter the Kingdom of heaven, but he who does the will of my Father who is in heaven. On that day many will say to me, ‘Lord, Lord, did we not prophesy in your name, and cast out demons in your name, and do mighty works in your name?’ And I will declare to them, ‘I never knew you; depart from me, you evildoers’ ” (Matt. 7:21-23).

6:47-48. Jesus illustrated His point with the Parable of the Two Builders. The wise builder represents the true Christian who hears and obeys the words of Christ. This man wanted to build a house in the best way. He built the house on a solid rock foundation. The storm was not able to shake the house because it was secure on this foundation. The true follower of Christ does the will of Christ. He is humble and teachable. He trusts and obeys. He does not pick and choose, practicing selective obedience. He welcomes the searching analysis of God's Word because he knows it is good for him. The true believer trusts that Jesus knows best, and he obeys what Jesus commanded. His supreme desire is to please God and be like Christ.

6:48-49. The person who hears the words of Christ but does not obey them is like the foolish builder. He did not have time or inclination to build a foundation or follow the rules for the right way to construct a house. When the storm hit, the house fell in a heap. This kind of a person is more interested in the benefits of Christianity than the responsibilities. He wants forgiveness and hope, but does not want the discipline and demands of holy living. He wants to be comfortable and please himself. The root problem is that he does not know God and He does not fully trust God.

The New Testament teaches that we are saved by faith (Eph. 2:8), but we are not saved by faith only (James 2:24). We are judged by our works of obedience (II Cor. 5:10, Rev. 20:12). Our obedience does not earn salvation, but it does show whether or not we truly believe (James 2:18,22). Wise is the person who trusts *and obeys* Jesus as Lord.

STUDY QUESTIONS

1. What does *corn* in the *King James Version* mean?
2. Was it against the law to pluck grain as one walked through fields?
3. If Jesus did not approve of David's eating the shew bread, what did He mean by referring to the incident?
4. Who is the lord of the sabbath?
5. What was the response of the scribes and the Pharisees when Jesus healed the man with the withered hand?
6. What did Jesus do all night before he named the apostles?
7. Give the names of the apostles listed first and last.
8. Jesus said what four types of persons were blessed?
9. Contrast loving your enemies with liking your enemies.
10. Does Jesus forbid self-defense?
11. If all judging is not condemned, what kind of judging is wrong?
12. What humorous illustration did Jesus use in the last chapter studied?
13. Define hypocrite.
14. What does Jesus say is the essential difference between the two builders?

