

Luke Chapter 6 v 27 - 36

Disclaimer: this is an automatically generated machine transcription - there may be small errors or mistranscriptions. Please refer to the original audio if you are in any doubt.

Date: 19 August 2018

Preacher: Peter Robinson

[0 : 00] Good morning. Welcome to all of you. Particularly it's good to have lots of visitors amongst us, friends old and new. And if it's only your first time here at the Evangelical Church, we especially want to welcome you in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ. We're here because of him, because of Jesus Christ, the Son of God, because he came into this world, because he is our Savior and Lord. What's he like? What's this Jesus really like? Well, on the verse on the screen behind me, we have just a portion taken from Philippians, letter of the Apostle Paul telling us about Jesus. And he says of him, he made himself nothing by taking the very nature of a servant, being made in human likeness. The Lord Jesus Christ is... Is this German? Oh, it's German. Well, we cater for all nationalities. We have no prejudices here, German, French, illiterate people. No. What is he like? Well, he's humble, humbled himself, emptied himself, gave up his position, if we put it that way, at the right hand of God the

Father, to come to be with us. Sometimes the people who have power in our world are proud and arrogant and forceful and dictatorial. Our Lord Jesus Christ, who the Bible calls the King of Kings and the Lord of Lords, humbled himself, came down to our level, not to, as it were, to remain with us or to leave us unchanged, but to lift us up. Lift us up that we might be children of the living God, that we might be those who enjoy the mercy, the forgiveness, and the goodness of God. Our first hymn reflects that wonderful truth. Oh, what matchless condescension.

Condescension means to lower yourself, to bring yourself low. And it's a hymn that speaks of the Lord Jesus Christ and all that he is to us. It's an old hymn, but a great hymn. So let's stand and sing.

One hundred and thirty-five. One, three, five. Let's continue in our worship of our Saviour and our God as we pray together. Let us therefore pray.

You, O Lord, are indeed a God who is beyond compare. You indeed, O Lord, are the only God.

[2 : 45] There is no one like you in heaven or earth. There is no one who compares with you in the greatness of your power, in the greatness of your might and strength, your holiness and righteousness, your justice. Lord, you are a God who is worthy of our praise.

And worship for who you are. But Lord, we thank you that you are more than that. You are the God who is love. The God who is grace. The God who is mercy. The God who is kind. Lord, every possible adjective, every possible description of you pales in the reality of what you actually are like. And we know that you are like this. Not only because we know that you made this world and created it and we see your power and might, your wisdom and splendor in creation. Not only because you created us as human beings in your image so that we have intellects, the ability to communicate so that we are able to love, we are able to create and be creative. But Lord, even though that image is spoiled and tarnished by sin, yet we see in each other and in our own lives, Lord, something of your beauty and glory. But Lord, it is surely in the greatest and most glorious act of that grace, that love, that kindness, that mercy, that we see you best of all, just as we've been singing, in the giving and the condescension of your Son, the Lord Jesus Christ, who being forever God, yet humbled himself, emptied himself, and became truly and fully human amongst us while still remaining God. It's a mystery we can't comprehend. But Lord, we're so grateful for it.

Because it means that you came to us. We could never come to you. We could never, as it were, attain the lofty heights of your heaven. Only that which is holy and sinless can enter heaven.

And we are neither of those things. We know, just as we know there is reflections of your beauty and character. So when we look in our hearts and we look at the lives of ourselves and others, we see wickedness, evil, selfishness, pride, greed. We see all those things which are abhorrent to you and even to us at times. We thank you that when Jesus came as the only sinless human being, yet fully God, we thank you that he came to bring change and transformation to this world and to us as

individuals.

[5 : 33] He came to make us holy. He came to bring us forgiveness and pardon for all our sins. He came to accomplish what could never be accomplished by us. Reconciliation with God.

Friendship with God. Renewed life with God. That we might know you as our heavenly father. That we might experience your love in our lives day by day. That we might know and enjoy your presence for eternity where you dwell in heaven. We thank you that to accomplish all this, Jesus came.

He didn't just simply come and teach us the way. He came to bring forgiveness through his blood. As he was crucified, as he died, as he gave his life up upon the cross of Calvary. We know that there an amazing transaction took place. He took upon himself our sin, our blame, our guilt, our punishment.

He took it upon himself willingly and he suffered all that is deserving to come to us in our place as our substitute. And we thank you because he did that then his perfect righteousness, his obedience, his faithfulness was transferred to us. So that in your eyes, oh Lord our God, our sins are not only forgiven but we are accepted in Christ the beloved son.

We thank you that this becomes a reality in each of our lives by the work of your Holy Spirit. When by faith and repentance we turn to you and say, save me Lord. And we thank you that there is a marvelous miracle that takes place then. And we are here this morning, many of us who've experienced and are living that miracle day by day. And we want to bring you our praise and our thanks. Help us to do that.

[7 : 35] Help us to grasp and to comprehend something more of all that you are and your greatness in this time and to bring to the worship and the praise that you rightly deserve. Help us by your Holy Spirit we pray to make us see again, if not for the first time, what a wonderful, gracious God you are.

That all the glory, the praise and the honor may be yours now and always. Amen. Amen. Together from our Bibles. And it would be good if you could turn with me to Luke and chapter 6.

Luke and chapter 6. This is Jesus' sermon, similar to the Sermon on the Mount that Matthew records, which is much, much longer. Though personally I don't think it's the same event. It's another time when Jesus was preaching. There's differences and Jesus brings out different elements. And we're going to begin at verse 20 and read through to verse 36. Last week we looked at verses 20 to 26, these blessings and woes, and saw how Jesus separates humanity in between those who are blessed and those who are woeful. But it's particularly verses 27 to 36 we're going to be looking at this morning.

So if you've got one of the Red Church Bibles, that's page 1034 and beginning at verse 27 of Luke chapter 6. Sorry, verse 20, beg your pardon, verse 20 of Luke chapter 6.

Looking at his disciples, he said, Blessed are you who are poor, for yours is the kingdom of God. Blessed are you who hunger now, for you will be satisfied. Blessed are you who weep now, for you will laugh. Blessed are you when people hate you, when they exclude you and insult you, and reject your name as evil because of the Son of Man. Rejoice in that day and leap for joy, because great is your reward in heaven, for that is how their ancestors treated the prophets. But woe to you who are rich, if you have already received your comfort. Woe to you who are well fed now, for you will go hungry. Woe to you who laugh now, for you will mourn and weep. Woe to you when everyone speaks well of you, for that's how their ancestors treated the false prophets. But to you who are listening, I say, love your enemies. Do good to those who hate you. Bless those who curse you. Pray for those who will treat you. If anyone slaps you on one cheek, turn to them the other also. If someone takes your coat, do not withhold your shirt from them. Give to everyone who asks you. And if anyone takes what belongs to you, do not demand it back. Do to others as you would have them do to you. If you love those who love you, what credit is that to you? Even sinners love those who love them. And if you do good to those who are good to you, what credit is that to you? Even sinners do that. And if you lend to those from whom you expect repayment, what credit is that to you? Even sinners lend to sinners expecting to be repaid in full.

[11 : 14] But love your enemies. Do good to them and lend to them without expecting to get anything back. Then your reward will be great and you will be children of the Most High because he is kind to the ungrateful and wicked. Be merciful just as your Father is merciful. May God help us to understand his word and apply it to our lives.

Can I just add about the open air this afternoon? One, please, please, please come along. If you've never been to one of our open air services, it's not like any other, I don't think, in the sense it's really our evening service in the open air. So we're singing hymns and we're going to be some preaching and it's going to be particularly a testimony. Now that's one thing. I really would like somebody to share their testimony in the open air this afternoon. So if you feel like you've done that before or would like to do that for the first time, have a word to me after the service this morning and that would be great. It doesn't matter if you're a visitor. If you're a visitor and you want to share a testimony, even better because we'll have not heard it before. But as long as you can keep it short, okay, to about two or three minutes. But please pray for that. Please, if you can come along, it's the sun's starting to shine. So God willing, it will be a wonderful opportunity. This week is Folk Week in Whitby. Last week was regatta weekend. There's always something going on in Whitby. And the fair at the regatta last week was the fair and all sorts of rides. And perhaps some of you went on those rides. Perhaps some of you went on, what was it called? The hopping frog, I think, wasn't it? Sorry? King frog. Okay, king frog. Have you gone on king frog? No? Oh, okay. So perhaps like me, you actually avoided the whole part of town where the regatta was taking place. But anyway, it was one of the things that was taking place. At the regatta fair, I don't think they have, it's not like the old fairs, when a few are older like me and a bit older than that. When the old fairs used to come, they'd always be very popular. One would be the Hall of Mirrors. Have you ever been in the Hall of Mirrors? If you've not been, it's like a sort of, you go through these corridors, and as you go through, on the walls are mirrors. It doesn't sound particularly exciting unless you're exceptionally vain. But it's not about vanity. All the mirrors are curved and shaped so that when you stand before it, it doesn't give a true reflection of you. And if you stand before it, suddenly your head's massive and your body's small or your legs are really long and your body's short. It's a little bit of fun. But none of the mirrors ever give a true portrayal of the person standing in front of them. They're always distorted. The society that we live in, community, the world in which we live in, in this day and age, has always been a world which is like a Hall of Mirrors. It never presents a true picture. It never presents an accurate reflection of truth. It always gives something of a distorted image, a misshapen image. We thought last week when we were looking at these blessings and woes how everything in the world is upside down. But people have got so used to seeing the world and viewing the world as upside down. They accept it as normal. So we find that evil is accepted as good. We find that what is righteous and God-pleasing is considered wicked. It's upside down. Truth is reversed. It is opposed. It's only through the life of Jesus and through the lens of his view of things that we actually see the world as it really is, as it actually is. And that's what we saw there, that the world would say the poor, the hungry, those who weep and those who are insulted are woeful people, people to be pitied. And in fact, the rich and the well-fed and the laughing and those who are spoken well of are the blessed people. But Jesus turns it on its head. Or rather, as I said last week, he turns it the right way up. Those who are poor are the blessed. Those who are hungry are the blessed. Those who are rich are the woeful, those to be pitied. In Christ alone, we view what is good. In Christ alone, we view what is true. In Christ alone, we view what is perfect and righteous. That's because he is the only living human being who ever lived a sinless, unpolluted, unwarped life. The only person who ever lived a God-pleasing life. And for the Christian, our goal, our purpose, our raise and debtor, the thing that we are to pursue with the greatest desire is a life like that of Jesus. We've been saved by God primarily that we might be transformed into the likeness of his only son, Jesus Christ. Paul, writing to the Romans in chapter 8, writes this, those God foreknew, he also predestined to be conformed to the likeness of the image of his son. We've been saved for that work and there's that process that's going on in every born-again believer from the moment they're converted all the way through their lives to the moment of their death where they are being changed and transformed, molded and shaped, fashioned into more the likeness of Christ in this world. And if there's one characteristic, surely above all else, that we are to reflect, to imitate, to be transformed into, one characteristic of Jesus that we are to long and strive to be most like, surely it is love.

[17 : 41] The love that's called love in our own day, again, is a distorted love, isn't it? It's a hall of mirrors love, a twisted love, a disfigured love. It bears no likeness to the love of Jesus and neither should it be reflected in the love of his disciples, those who are his people.

So it's no surprise that when we get to this sermon of Jesus, that when he comes to instruction, if I can put it the way, when he comes to commandment, when he comes to giving direction as to how

disciples of his are to live, he begins with this command to love. To you who are listening, I say, love. And the love that he calls for is a love unlike anything else in the world, unlike any love that we find in the world. For he says, love your enemies. And so we are not mistaken in what he says, he repeats it again in verse 35, but love your enemies. Who's ever heard of such a thing as loving your enemies? Surely, again, if we were to look and read the words of Jesus through the lens of the world in which we live, it should say this, hate your enemies. Do evil to those who hate you. Curse those who curse you. Get revenge against those who will treat you. Hit back those who strike your cheek.

That's the way of the world, isn't it? That's the way we've been taught. That's the way of things. That's the natural order of things. Revenge. So how on earth can Jesus command us, call us, expect us to love our enemies? And he describes who our enemies are, those who hate us, who curse us, who ill-treat us, who may strike us, who rob us.

How can he expect us to do this? When it is so unnatural, it is so out of keeping with what we've been brought up with and how we live our lives even today. He can call us to do these things and expect these things of us because this is how he lived his life. Every example that he gives here in verse 28 particularly, or 27 and 28, he did himself in his relationship with his own enemies and those who treated him poorly and badly. So he says, first of all, love your enemies. What does that mean? Do good to those who hate you. Is there an example of Jesus doing that? Well, there's lots, but I can think of one in particular in Luke chapter 22. As the crowd come to arrest him, including soldiers and those who were the servants of the high priest, remember the high priest who was determined along with the others to have him killed, what happens? When Jesus' followers saw what was going to happen, they said, Lord, should we strike with our swords? And one of them, who we know in another gospel is Peter, struck the servant of the high priest and cut off his right ear. Jesus answered, no more of this. And he touched the man's ear and healed him. A man who'd come with the intent purpose of taking Jesus to his death, an enemy surely of his who hated him. What does he do? He does him good. He heals him. Jesus says here as well, bless those who curse you. We think again of that occasion around the cross, Matthew in chapter 27, where we're told that those robbers who were crucified next to him also were told heaped insults on him.

And yet later that day, just a matter of a few hours, in fact, after that, Jesus promises one of those robbers, one of those robbers, one of those murderers, one of those evil men who was dying and who had cursed him, he promises him this blessing. Today you'll be with me in paradise.

[21 : 57] Bless those who curse you. Pray for those who ill-treat you. Surely again, we're looking at the supreme example of love in the Lord Jesus Christ as he is crucified. In Luke in chapter 23, we're told that as those soldiers took him to the place of the skull, and as they crucified him with the other men, the criminals next to him, what does Jesus say to them?

Father, forgive them. He prays for them. The men who are driving the nails into his arms and his feet. The men who even just previously had beaten him and scourged him and mocked him.

The other examples that Jesus gives, turning the cheek, someone takes your coat, and we could easily look at them as well in the life of Jesus as he was beaten without returning blows, as he had all of his clothes taken and gambled without a word of rebuke.

And how he allowed his life to be taken from him. In fact, of course, we know he gave it freely and willingly. The whole point that Jesus is making here in these examples is that our love is to be limitless love.

Unconditional love. Having no fixed end. Unconditional love. It's to be a love that doesn't have a line that can be crossed where it ceases.

[23 : 35] It's a love that doesn't give until it hurts. It's a love that gives even as it hurts and then gives some more. It can never be a feeling within only.

It can never simply be an emotion which is detached from action. Notice, love your enemies, do good. Doing word. The follower of Jesus Christ is to reflect the love of Christ.

Endless, sacrificial, never ceasing. You see, so often people get hung up, don't they? If you were to say to people, they'll often repeat, don't they?

Oh, Christian, turn the other cheek. When you're attacked or insulted or rejected or something's done to you. We can get caught up in the individual examples, but we're not meant to be.

These are just examples, general thoughts, which are to live to us the bigger picture. We're not to get hung up with this thing about give to anyone who asks, and if anyone takes what belongs to you, do not demand it back.

[24 : 44] And you get people saying, well, of course, that means if my neighbor borrows my lawnmower, I mustn't ask it back from them. Even if my grass is waist high, I've got to wait for them to give it.

Now, that's silly, isn't it? You have to see the bigger picture. The whole sweep of Jesus' words is this. Unrestricted, unconditional love. Love that keeps unloving.

Even when it's struck, it keeps unloving. Even when it's been robbed, it keeps unloving. Even when it's been cursed, it keeps unloving. It keeps unloving. Do to others as you would have them do to you.

And as if to answer our thoughts and the thoughts of his hearers there, surely Jesus goes on to explain what this love is not like. Because in our thoughts, the thinking is, yes, I can love and give, but this is how I would love.

If you love those who love you, well, that's natural. That's normal. That's what to be expected. What credit? What good? What grace is that to you? Or sign of grace is that in you? Even sinners love those who love them.

[25 : 59] Who are the sinners? Well, we know that we are all sinners, but that's not who Jesus is particularly speaking about here. He's making a distinction between his disciples and those who are not his disciples.

The sinners are those who have no desire to please God. The sinners are those who live their lives as they choose with no concern over what God commands or Jesus wants.

And so, yes, they love those who love them back. And they do good to those who do them good back. And they lend to those who they know will receive and give them back, but to them only.

Ouch, I say to that. That hurts. That's how we all love.

We love those who are lovely, those who care for us, those who lend to us, and those who return what we lend to them, don't we? We give people one chance, or maybe two if they're lucky, to show that they can be trusted, that they can be loved.

[27 : 08] If they respond to our love with hate, then they've had their chance. If they never return what we lend them, then that's it.

They've had their opportunity, once bitten, twice shy. We aren't going to lend to them again. We aren't going to give to them again. We aren't going to help them again. We aren't going to love them again and allow ourselves to be abused and taken advantage of and for granted.

Thank God that he doesn't deal with us in the way that we would deal with him. If God only showed love to those who love him, if he only did good to those who appreciate him, if he only gave to those who he know will give back what is rightfully his, then you and I would already be in hell.

Jesus says he is kind to the ungrateful and the wicked.

Is there any difference between the two, ungrateful and wicked? There seem to be two extremes. Ungrateful is a bit naughty, it's not nice, and wicked is evil and horrible.

[28 : 22] But is there really any difference between the two? Aren't they really just two sides of the same coin? Don't we even recognize how wrong it is to be never grateful or thankful for what we receive, to take for granted from another person's love and kindness and generosity?

Don't even we, from the very earliest age, teach our children to say please and thank you? How much more wicked is it to be ungrateful to God?

To the God who's given us every single thing that we enjoy in this life, who's given us life and health and strength, who's given us family and friends, who's given us this incredible world to enjoy and to work in and to benefit from.

So the reality is this, God loves his enemies. God loves his enemies.

He has mercy upon those who hate him. He loves those who mock him, who curse him and who treat him. God loves his enemies. How?

[29 : 29] How, you may ask? Well, of course, by sending them Jesus Christ, his son, as a saviour. To purchase at great expense and cost forgiveness, a reconciliation, to give the free gift of everlasting and eternal life to his enemies.

And that's who you and I are, or at the very least were. Every one of us. Every single person who lives their life by the world's standards, who lives their life by their own standards, every person who lives their life the way that they choose, is an enemy of God.

Paul writes again to the Christians at Rome. He says, While we were God's enemies, we were reconciled to him through the death of his son. While we were God's enemies, Jesus came.

Not when we had put up the white flag of surrender and said we want to make peace. Before that, while we were still at enmity with God, we deserved nothing but God's anger.

We deserved nothing but God's hatred. But instead, he shows us mercy. He is merciful to the ungrateful and the wicked. Here's how Paul describes our situation and what we are like.

[30 : 49] All of us, in Ephesians chapter 2, all of us also lived among them, that's everybody in the world, at one time, gratifying the cravings of our flesh and following its desires and thoughts.

Like the rest, like everybody, we were by nature deserving of wrath. But, because of his great love for us, God, who is rich in mercy, made us alive with Christ, even when we were dead in transgressions.

It's by grace you've been saved. Grace is undeserved favor. Grace is God's mercy.

It's a motivating factor that sent Jesus into the world to suffer and to die for us. And it's only when we have experienced that love ourselves, that unconditional love, that undeserved love, that we are able to love in that way also.

Notice he says, be merciful as your Father is merciful. As we've received love, then we are made children of God by the Holy Spirit's transforming power.

[32 : 07] Again, to the Romans, Paul writes, because God's love's been poured out into our hearts through the Holy Spirit who's been given us. It's impossible to love the way that Jesus loves and the way that God loves unless we too have experienced and known that love for ourselves.

That's why in the world in which we live, even the very best of loves can never measure up to or be like this love that loves enemies as God loves enemies, as Christ loves his enemies.

Because only the transforming power of God's love in us can make us lovers like him. And I have to say this, dear friends, this morning, that if we do not love as God loves, and if we do not even seek to love our enemies as Christ commands us, then it is very likely that we have never experienced the love of God, and it is very likely that we are not the children of God.

Because what are we told? Then your reward will be great and you will be children of the Most High. The evidence, the proof of the pudding is in that we love as Christ loves.

But notice as well, then your reward will be great. Aha! Here's the Achilles heel perhaps we see in this commandment. Like the world's love, like everybody else's love, we're to love because there's something for us in it.

[33 : 45] We can get something out of it. It's for reward. But no, it's not. That's a false understanding of what Jesus is saying.

When we love our enemies, it is rewarding. It produces a reward, a by-product, we might say, of our loving them. Not the sort of reward that Oscar Wilde had in mind when he said this, forgive your enemies, nothing annoys them so much.

It's not that sort of self-satisfaction reward that says, look how good I am. Instead, the reward, I believe, there's many rewards, but there's one I want us to particularly bear in mind this morning. The reward is that by loving our enemies, we might see them come to know Jesus for themselves. By loving our enemies, they might become our friends.

By loving our enemies, they may become our brothers and sisters in Christ. That's the greatest reward, surely. That's the reason that we are to love all those that we meet, all those that we come in contact with.

[34 : 58] That's why we are to love them with an unconditional, an ongoing love, that even in the first time our love is smacked down, we get up and love again. And the third time, and the seventh time, our love is rejected, we get up and love again.

Why? Because we long for that reward of seeing them saved. I want to close with an illustration of that. An illustration that comes from the fields, the killing fields of Cambodia.

Remember the name of Chris Lapel, lost all his family to the Khmer Rouge, the murderous regime that dominated Cambodia in the 1970s.

His parents, his brother, his sister, his cousin. Later on, he, as a Christian, went out preaching in the villages of Cambodia.

People were converted and say one man particularly was converted. A man who said, I've done terrible things, awful things. He came to faith in Christ and he grew as a Christian.

[36 : 10] Only several years later did Chris learn that this man had been the governor and the chief torturer of the Khmer Rouge in its most infamous prison where his cousin had been killed.

The man was called Duke. He was brought before the international tribes. He gave himself up. He'd been in hiding all that time until his conversion and he witnessed in the dock and confessed his crimes.

He was imprisoned where he still is going on as a Christian. Chris found out later that this was the case and he wrote these words. I was shocked when I found out who he really was because what he did was so evil.

then I reflected, it's amazing. It's a miracle. Christianity changes people's lives. If Jesus can change Duke, he can change anyone.

If Jesus can change Duke, he can change me. He can change you. Be men and women who love our enemies. Let's sing together our final hymn.

[37 : 25] It's a wonderful hymn of faith and trust in Christ. It's number 647. In Christ alone my hope is found.

He is my light, my strength, my song. To be in Christ is to be the recipient of Christ's love and to be the giver of that love also.

647. And this is my prayer that your love may abound more and more in knowledge and depth of insight so that you may be able to discern what is best and may be pure and blameless for the day of Christ filled with the fruit of righteousness that comes through Jesus Christ to the glory and the praise of God.

Amen. Amen.