

Luke Chapter 6 v 43 - 49

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[0 : 0 0] Good morning. Welcome, welcome to all of you, particularly a warm welcome to those who are visiting, some on holiday, some old friends, some new, and it's a great joy to have you with us.

And as we come to worship our Saviour, to come together with one people, one heart, one desire, one longing, to meet with God and to worship him. The verse that we're thinking about as we come to worship is Psalm 32, the very first verse. Blessed is the one whose transgressions are forgiven, whose sins are covered. The word blessed, as I'm sure you're aware in the Bible, means happy, content, content, joyful, at peace with themselves. And as we come this morning, I hope that's true of you.

I hope that you yourself can say, I'm blessed of God. And I'm blessed because I know my sins are forgiven. I know that I have peace with God. There's nothing greater in the world, nothing that gives us more of a sense of assurance and satisfaction and joy than knowing that we are right with God. And that, of course, only through Jesus Christ our Saviour, only through his life, his death, his resurrection for us. And so our first hymn, which will come up on the screen, is, My heart is filled with thankfulness to him who bore the pain. We are so thankful for our Lord Jesus Christ. Let's sing his praise together.

Please do be seated. It's a wonderful thing for us to know that our sins are forgiven and that it's all because our Lord Jesus Christ has died for us and is risen again. So let's come to him in prayer together now. Let's bring our prayers of thankfulness to the Lord.

Our gracious God and Father, how we thank you again that this morning as we gather in the name of your Son, the Lord Jesus Christ, we are gathered in your presence. Lord, it's true that wherever we go, wherever we are, we can never escape from you. You are with us at home, at work, at school.

[2 : 2 0] You're with us night and day. We never are far from you. You are always close by. But we thank you for the special blessing that it is to be able to gather together as brothers and sisters in Christ. Thank you for the special promises that you give us, that you are pleased to dwell amongst the praises of your people. Lord, that you are there, Lord Jesus, with two or three gathering your name. And we long, Lord, to know your presence. We long to know your nearness. We long to know your Holy Spirit at work in our hearts and minds. Lord, not only that we might hear you speak to us and know your word and your truth, that we might be encouraged and strengthened in our own faith. But Lord, we want to know your nearness, that by your Spirit our hearts may indeed be filled with thankfulness. We have to confess that so often through the week our hearts are filled with other things, filled with concerns over this life, concerns over where we're going to pay those bills, concerns over our health or that of others. Lord, so many things fill our hearts.

And at times, if we're honest, Lord, even sinful thoughts and desires fill our hearts. Temptations and, oh Lord, doubts and fears as well. Oh Lord, we ask you to forgive us for those things.

Forgive us that we allow our hearts to even be open and receptive to them. And we pray even now again that you would fill us with your Holy Spirit. You've promised and you've said and you called us to be filled with the Spirit. And we know that's something that we cannot do ourselves. He is sovereign. He is the third person of the Trinity. He does what he wishes. And we pray that his wish and desire may be to fill us. To fill us again, to praise you. To fill us again, to draw near to you. To fill us again, oh Lord, that we might hear and that we might obey your word.

Oh Lord, we thank you that you know us completely. You know, Lord, our struggles, our trials. You know, Lord, how much we need you day by day. Not only to keep us alive in these bodies. Every breath, Lord, is a gift from you. But Lord, how we need you to keep us from sinning. How we need you to keep us walking faithfully in those paths of righteousness you've set before us. Oh Lord, help us then and meet with us. May this time be again a time, Lord, not where we simply carry out some religious ritual, where we simply sing songs which have no meaning or concept, where we hear things which just go over our heads. Lord, we long that this time together may be a time in which the living God comes down amongst his living people. And oh Lord, that you have your way in us and through us and with us, oh Lord, that we may be changed and transformed. May we be made more into the likeness of your son.

We come and give you thanks for him and we bring our prayers to you in his name. Amen. Amen. We're going to read together now from God's word, from our Bibles and from the Gospel of Luke, Luke in chapter 6. If you have one of the red church Bibles, that's page 1034.

[5 : 39] Page 1034. Luke in chapter 6. We've been traveling through the Gospel of Luke since the beginning of the year and we managed to get to chapter 6. In the last several weeks, we've been looking at this Sermon of Jesus. Very similar to Matthew's Sermon on the Mount, but different as well. It probably preached at a different occasion. This first real public sermon that we have laid out for us by the Lord Jesus. And we're going to read from verse 27 through to the end of the chapter. We've already looked at quite a large part of it. So particularly verses 43 and following are the verses we're going to be concentrating on in a moment. But to give it the context so we understand what Jesus is saying, we'll read from verse 27. Luke 6, 27.

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 someone 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. But love your enemies. Do good to them. 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. Do not judge. You will not be judged. Do not condemn, and you will not be condemned.

Forgive, and you will be forgiven. Give, and it will be given to you. A good measure, pressed down, shaken together and running over, will be poured into your lap. For with the measure you use it, it will be measured to you. He also told them this parable. Can the blind lead the blind? Will they not fall together, both into a pit? The student is not above the teacher, but everyone who is fully trained will be like their teacher. Why do you look at the speck of sawdust in your brother's eye and pay no attention to the plank in your own eye? How can you say to your brother, brother, let me take the speck out of your eye when you yourself fail to see the plank in your own eye? You hypocrite. First take the plank out of your eye, and then you'll see clearly to remove the speck from your brother's eye.

No good tree bears bad fruit, nor does a bad tree bear good fruit. Each tree is recognized by its own fruit. People do not pick figs from thorn bushes or grapes from briars. A good man brings good things out of the good stored up in his heart, and an evil man brings evil things out of the evil stored up in his heart. For the mouth speaks what the heart is full of. Why do you call me Lord, Lord, and do not do what I say? As for everyone who comes to me and hears my words and puts them into practice, I will show you what they are like. They are like a man building a house who dug down deep and laid the foundation on rock. When the flood came, the torrent struck that house, but could not shake it, because it was well built. But the one who hears my words and does not put them into practice is like a man who built a house on the ground without a foundation. The moment the torrent struck that house, it collapsed, and its destruction was complete.

[9 : 56] If so, please would you turn back with me to Luke and chapter 6. If you have a Bible to hand, I would encourage you very much to have a Bible at hand. It will help you in all sorts of ways, but particularly as we look at these verses from verse 43 to 49, this last part, the closing words in one sense, the culmination of what Jesus has been saying in this sermon. Now I'm sure as you go shopping, as you go to the supermarket, the shops, you'll see all sorts of exotic fruit and vegetables that weren't there really just a few years ago, unknown and ungrown really in the UK. I mean nowadays we are used to seeing mangoes and kiwi fruit and pomegranates of course, but we're perhaps a little cautious. There's all sorts of things like guava and papaya and star fruit. We don't know really how to eat them even and what to do with them, but they're all coming in, these exotic fruit. One exotic fruit that you will not see on your shelves, and if you do it'll be a serious problem, is a fruit called a manchineel.

It comes from the Caribbean area of the world and it looks identical to a small green apple, so much so that when the first Europeans landed on the shores, they, after on a long journey, many of them picked up these fruit which often grow on the beaches and bit them, but a lot of them died.

It's extremely, extremely poisonous. In fact every part of the plant is poisonous, not just the fruit, which if you do bite it, burns your mouth and as I say many people have been killed because they've eaten them, but even the tree itself, even if you chop it down and use it as firewood, the sap in the tree lets off fumes which are so poisonous that if the smoke goes in your eye you can be permanently blinded. So I don't think many of us are going to put them in our garden. So there's good fruit and there's bad fruit. Here's Jesus speaking, verse 43, no good tree bears bad fruit nor does a bad tree bear good fruit. It's a fact of life that we've come to acknowledge that there are good fruit and bad fruit. There are good people, there are bad people. Many of us have learned that perhaps even by bitter experience and Jesus is drawing up as he's been doing throughout this sermon a clear division. He's pointing out in the natural world, in the world around about us, we see that there is this division between good and bad and we see that also in the spiritual world. We see that in the hearts and the lives of people there is good and there is bad. If you were to mistake the fruit of the manchineel tree for the fruit of an apple, that mistake could prove to be fatal. But if you mistake good spiritual fruit from bad spiritual fruit, the consequences would be eternal. It's even more serious than that.

Jesus has been concentrating throughout this sermon on the difference between a true disciple. The difference a true disciple is, what it makes in their lives, what it means to them, how it is expressed, how it is revealed.

We saw there in the first verses 20 to 26 the comparison between the blessed disciple and the woeful non-disciple, if I can put it that way, the non-follower of Jesus, the unbeliever. We saw that in verses 27 through to 36 about the godlike, the divine love within the disciple's heart, even for enemies, and the self-serving type of love of those Jesus calls sinners. They're different. And we saw last week how he compared mercy and condemnation. Be merciful just as your father is merciful. Do not judge.

[14 : 11] Do not condemn. The question is, how do we discern that? We looked at that last week. How do we discern or recognize what is good from what is bad? And we saw that that examination must begin with ourselves.

Jesus' parables in verses 39 to 42 are all about examining ourselves and seeing that, first of all, naturally we are all blind. Our natural judgment over spiritual things is wrong. We're in darkness.

We need to recognize that to begin with. We cannot think ourselves to be able to discern and judge rightly. We need a teacher and we need to be teachable. And that teacher, of course, is Christ himself.

We need to come to him and learn from him. And lastly, we saw as well, we need to recognize that we ourselves must be changed before we can bring about change or good in others. We need the plank removing, the beam, that's the word, as we saw last week, from our own eyes, if we are ever to be able to help and support and judge and guide others with the speck.

And as we go into verse 43, please keep in mind there is a flow. I know that we have, and it's very helpful for us to have paragraphs, it's very helpful for us to have, even as we have in the NIV, subtitles and verse numbers. But this is just one flowing message, which is one theme.

[15 : 42] And verse 43 flows from verse 42. It isn't meant to be disjointed. It's not meant to think that Jesus has changed the subject and gone on to something else. Remember, as we thought, Luke has set this out, guided by the Spirit in themes together, putting all things together so that it flows in a natural way. We're meant to understand that what Jesus is saying is this, from verse 42, you hypocrite. First take the plank out of your eye, then you'll be able to see clearly to remove the speck from your brother's eye, because no good tree bears bad fruits. It flows in that way.

Bad here has the sense of and the meaning of something that's rotten, or something that's diseased. So no good tree bears rotten, diseased fruit, nor does a diseased or a rotten tree bear good fruit.

Most of the fruit trees that we have nowadays in the UK, if you're a gardener, will know they're cultivated trees. They're trees which have been specially bred to be resilient to disease and to worm and to all sorts of blights and so on. That's not the case with wild trees, and particularly the trees of Jesus's day. They would have just been wild fruit that would have been picked, and they would have been susceptible to, and they would have been diseased from time to time, producing diseased or rotten or bad fruit. Now we may think of ourselves as being cultivated people, good people. But if as we examine ourselves, we spot rotten fruit, diseased fruit in our own lives, it must be because there is something spiritually rotten within something spiritually unhealthy or diseased in our own lives.

The second thing that Jesus picks up, following from that, and the same theme is this, every tree or plant only produces its own fruit. So he uses the simple thing, each tree is recognised by its own fruit. People don't pick figs from thorn bushes or grapes from briars. And we know that an apple tree doesn't produce plums, a bramble bush doesn't grow strawberries. We don't get many figs in Yorkshire or grapes, so I'm sure there must be some somewhere. But if we did, we'd be able to gather them, we'd be able to pick them as we go out picking damsons or blackberries or whatever it may be. What Jesus is saying is simply this, it's impossible, impossible for a bad person to produce good spiritual fruit. And it's impossible, and this is what the key thing I think for us dear friends is, it's impossible for a good person to produce bad spiritual fruit.

You recognise a tree by its fruit. The fruit gives you that clear, definitive sign that this tree is this tree and not another. So the question that we really need to ask is, am I a disciple of Christ? Am I one of his followers, as he's been speaking about here? Am I a child, as he puts it, of the Most High God? Am I a Christian?

[19 : 09] Then if I am, I must stand out as different. I must have a taste about me. There must be something in my life which is observable for all to see that shows that I am such. There must be fruit.

When Jesus talks there, verse 45, a good man brings good things out of the good stored up in his heart. The word that's used there in some translations, it's not here, it's treasury, from the treasury of his heart.

What's the treasury? It's a bit like the safe that you may have in the wall. It's where your valuables are. It's the inner sanctum. It's the inner you. It's the place where you are you, which nobody else sees except God alone.

That secret place. From that secret place, from the very inner part of your heart, in the very inner part of who you are, flows, comes, either good, says Jesus, or evil.

What is this fruit like then? What are we to expect? Well, it seems very clear from what Jesus says in the rest of verse 45.

[20 : 25] For the mouth speaks what the heart is full of. This is fruit that you can hear. Apparently, if you want to tell if a melon is ripe, you can tap it and it makes a certain sound.

Our mouths are the loudspeakers of our hearts. Does that mean that you can tell somebody's a Christian by the way that they speak?

That they always use the right words? That they use religious language? That they don't ever swear? That they don't tell filthy jokes?

Is that how you tell somebody he's a believer? Here's what James says. He seems to understand Jesus' sermon very well. And you can tell that he's heard what Jesus said from James in chapter 3.

Just listen to what he writes. With the tongue we praise our Lord and Father. And with it we curse human beings who've been made in God's likeness. Out of the same mouth come praise and cursing.

[21 : 31] My brothers and sisters, this should not be. Can both fresh water and salt water flow from the same spring? My brothers and sisters, can a fig tree bear olives or a grapevine bear figs?

He's saying just what Jesus is saying, isn't he? He's opening it up. How can you praise God, say those religious words, speak those things, but actually still speak curses upon others?

What is it that's to distinguish the speech of the disciple? It's what's to distinguish all the life of the disciple. It is surely love. That's what he's been saying, hasn't he?

Love your enemies. Bless those. You do that with your mouth. Pray for those. You do that with your mouth. Love causes us to bless those who curse us.

To pray for those who ill-treat us. And so the fruit that we need to have, the fruit of your life and mine, must be this. Do my words speak blessing?

[22 : 41] Do my words build up? Do my words encourage? Do my words comfort? Do my words heal? Do my words pray for and speak love to all people, including those people that I find difficult?

Those people that I struggle with, or even those people who are hurtful to me? Do my words feel like I'm going to be. And here's the real crux of the matter, isn't it?

And it comes out again and again through the New Testament, surely. If from our mouths there comes critical, judgmental, condemnatory words, then there's something rotten inside.

Is my language permanently negative about others? Is it, as we go back, judgmental? Is it condemnatory? Is it looking and picking out the faults, the specks in the eyes of my brother?

Is that all the language that I ever use when I speak about other people? Then, dear friends, there's something spiritually wrong deep down in our hearts. Because a good tree can't produce bad fruit.

[23 : 46] And don't think that words don't matter. You know the old saying in the playground, sticks and stones may break my bones, but words will never hurt me. Words do hurt us, in the sense that they hurt the person who speaks those words, because Jesus says elsewhere, I tell you that everyone will have to give an account on the day of judgment for every empty word they've spoken.

For by your words you'll be acquitted, by your words you'll be condemned. So don't think that how I speak or what I say is not going to be taken into account by God.

God looks at and sees and hears those empty words that we speak. Those judgmental, those critical, those words that pull down, that undermine.

Dear friends, haven't we all got to hold our hands up at times and say that these words have been found on our lips and they shouldn't be there. None of if we're a disciple of Jesus.

So being a disciple, we might say, oh well, it's all about what we say. It's all about our words. It's not about what we do or believe.

[25 : 01] Well, Jesus seems to answer that question immediately, doesn't he? Verse 46, verse 45, For the mouth speaks what the heart is full of. Why do you call me Lord, Lord, and don't do what I say?

As if to answer. It's not just about what you say. It's something more than that. What do you call me Lord, Lord? There's a repetition there.

There's this speaking of the religious language. There's a taking part in the praises of God. There's the engaging in prayer even, we might say. And Jesus says these words are empty words, meaningless words.

If that's all they are. The evidence, the fruit that we are Christ's disciples is the evidence and the fruit that we are the children of God, that we are filled with good things, is that we delight to do Jesus' will.

We love Jesus' commandments. Why do you call me Lord, Lord, and do not do what I say? As for everyone who comes to me, hears my words, and puts them into practice, does them, obeys them, carries them out.

[26 : 13] It cannot be just what we say. It cannot be just that we speak. It cannot be that we just refrain from crudity or false, filthy language or whatever it may be.

Even that many non-Christians are very well spoken. Even many non-Christians do not swear or even use religious language. Every American president that I've ever heard speaking almost inevitably ends his speech with, God bless America.

But I don't think there's many of them who are true followers and disciples of Jesus. He can use the language. He can say what wants to be heard. And perhaps, dear friends, that's us.

When we're in the company of Christians or in the company of other people, we'll use the right words. We won't say what we say in private. We won't say to people's faces what we call them behind their backs.

Dear friends, that's not enough. That's no evidence. That's not true fruit. Here's the fruit, Jesus says. It's not just lip service. One of the condemnations that God had against the Old Testament people, and it's repeated by Jesus concerning the people who were around about him, was this.

[27 : 35] These people honour me with their lips, but their hearts are far from me. They'll say all the right words, but there's nothing in their hearts to say, I want to please God. I want to obey God. I want to live for God.

I want to follow him. I want to say something now which will either get me burnt at the stake, thrown out the ministry, or stoned.

It's not enough to say you believe in Jesus, or to say that you put your faith in Jesus, or to say that you call Jesus Lord.

That's not enough to make you a Christian. There must be real, tangible, tasteable, recognisable, distinguishable obedience.

James, again, in his letter, says this in chapter 2. A person is considered righteous by what they do and not by faith alone. Ouch!

[28 : 38] For us, evangelicals. Are we saved by obedience to Jesus? Yes. That's what Jesus says here, isn't it?

Everyone who comes to me and hears my words and puts them into practice, does them, obeys them, etc., I'll show you what they're like. They're like the man who dug his house and was saved when the judgment, the torrent, came.

Everyone who hears my words and ignores them does not put them into practice. It's like a house without a foundation. When the torrent came, the house collapsed. Jesus is making it absolutely crystal clear.

The difference that it makes between obedience and disobedience is much greater even than life and death. I don't know many of you because many are visitors, which is lovely to see.

I don't know where you stand. I don't know your background. I don't know what your life is like. I don't know whether you are someone who can say, yes, I'm a believer and a Christian. I put my faith in Christ. Let me ask you again, dear friend, is there real fruit in your life?

[29 : 53] Real fruit, tangible fruit. Do you show that you are a disciple of Jesus because in your life your first desire is not just to call Jesus Lord, but to live with him as Lord?

Some people are under the mistaken idea and thought that simply being a good person, going to a good church, believing that the Bible is true, even if I can put it this way, believing that Jesus died for their sins, means that they are genuinely, really safe.

But the point of the whole matter, surely, that Jesus has been laying upon us here throughout this whole sermon is simply this. Unless we are born again, unless we are changed, unless we are transformed, unless there is something that has happened in our lives, which means not only that we say, Jesus, you're my Lord, but we live Jesus as Lord, then we are still lost.

Lost. Unless there has been such a transformation that somehow, in one sense, we've been grafted into Christ, so that now we receive and are a good tree bearing good fruit, then we shall forever, ever be lost.

There's got to be a real transformation. There's got to be real change, and it's got to be visible. It cannot be hidden. It cannot be secret. It cannot be somebody who says, yes, I'm a Christian, but in my life, I'm just going to be like everybody else.

[31 : 33] I'm not going to obey the word of Christ. I'm not going to live for him. I'm just going to try and blend in and keep my head down as much as I can. It's impossible to do. It's like getting a bottle of pop and shaking, or a can of pop.

Have you ever done that? Shaking up a can of pop like that and then opening it quietly. Do you want to do that? It's impossible, isn't it? It's going to go, it's going to burst out. Well, if the Holy Spirit of God has come and lived in, come into your heart and life, and he's changed you and transformed you and made you a new creation and a child of God, then dear friends, whenever you open mouth, it's going to burst out.

Whenever you live, it's going to burst out. It's going to be seen. There's going to be love. There's going to be compassion. There's going to be mercy. There's going to be care. There's going to be a desire and a longing to make this Jesus known and to live for him.

And let's be very clear about this as well. Jesus is not simply setting these things before us because he wants us to live a good life, because he wants us to enjoy life to the full, because he wants life for us which is going to be meaningful and helpful and happy and so on.

All those things are true, yes, but please don't miss the point of this last parable of these two people. These two men, these two builders, we might say. Here they are.

[32 : 59] They're both determined that they're going to build a home, a house. And when they've built the house, when it's up and it's near to one another, side by side, you can say, well, they're both excellent looking houses.

Both got similar tiles on the roof. They've both got good UPVC windows. They've both got a nice appearance on the front. But there's coming a day which cannot be avoided when each of those houses, when each of those builders' work, as it were, of their lives will be put to the test, will be judged.

And for one, it will be that that house, that home, that place of safety for them will remain. They shall be eternally forever secure.

But for the other person, we read there, and notice how Jesus describes the catastrophe in such detail. He doesn't just say it fell down. He says it collapsed and its destruction was complete.

He's not just talking about the storms of life, the trials of life. They come and they blow against us, and it's clear that there are many people who do not have Christ, who find themselves completely overwhelmed by those things.

[34 : 19] But Jesus must be talking here about the final day of judgment. He must be talking here about that time when you and I must stand before God, and he will judge us as to how we have lived, how we have spoken, and what will be the end result if we have not built our lives on Christ, if we have not found ourselves rooted, as it were, to the rock of Jesus by saving faith and by the work of the Spirit, then your life and mine and our whole eternity will be destroyed.

Completely. And it's down to one simple thing.

Hearing and doing, hearing and ignoring. Both heard, didn't they? Jesus said they both heard, and dear friends here this morning, you've all heard the Word of God, you've all heard it probably many times before, and I want to ask you again and again, what's been the fruit of your hearing?

If it's been nothing at all, then you are living a life which is on the very precipice and the point of collapse. You've got to take that warning seriously.

But, but dear friend, if you have, if you've come to Christ as one who recognizes that you are blind, if you've come to Christ and said, Lord, I want to know you and know your ways, if you've come to Christ and said, Lord, I can see there's a massive beam in my life of sin and blindness, and I long for you to take it away and to change me.

[36 : 10] Lord, I've come to you as a rotten-hearted person, but Lord, I long that you should make me whole. If you come to him and you say, Lord, I want to hear your Word and I want to obey it, then dear friends, what you have done is you've dug down deep.

You've dug down deep and now your life is cemented, concreted and united with Christ, the rock who shall never be moved and who shall never let you down. blessed, woeful, blessed, woeful, disciple, sinner.

There's no fence, there's no in-between, there's no aisle, as it were, that you can stand in. It's one or the other. Jesus has made that plain. May it be by his grace and goodness that you and I may be fruitful believers, that our lives may show and declare and prove that Christ is my Lord and my Saviour.

Well, let's sing together our final hymn this morning. 586. 586. My hope is built on nothing less than Jesus' blood and righteousness.

All around is sinking sand. That's the reality. Is this true of you? Your hope is Jesus? Or are you still on sinking sand?

[38 : 01] 586. Since then, you've been raised with Christ. Set your hearts on things above, where Christ is seated at the right hand of God.

Set your minds on the things above, not on earthly things. For you died and your life is now hidden with Christ in God. When Christ, who is your life, appears, then you also will appear with him in glory.

Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen.