Hearing and Doing: Jesus' Call to a Kingdom Life

In Luke 6, Jesus says some people are "blessed" and others get "woes," and He means something very different from what we usually think. We often think blessing means money, comfort, success, or being admired. But Jesus says the real blessing is knowing God and depending on Him.

People who are poor, hungry, sad, or rejected may actually be in a better place spiritually because they know they need God. But people who feel full, comfortable, and satisfied with themselves can miss their need for Him. The blessings that Jesus describes also free us to love in a way that is more like the way Christ loves us—sacrificially and denying self—ultimately even loving one's enemies.

1. Read Luke 6:32–38. Some questions: In these verses, how do mercy, forgiveness, and generosity fit together? What does "pressed down, shaken together, and overflowing" make you picture? What would overflowing mercy look like in everyday life? And how might we live differently if we really believed God is quicker to forgive than to condemn?

   In the Old Testament, this word is "chesed" which means "steadfast love." Mercy expresses itself in forgiveness (not judging and not condemning) and generosity. There is a correspondence between God's forgiveness and generosity and the way Christians forgive and give to others. A true Christian gives generously because the Father first gave generously. Forgiveness and generosity are therefore Christological actions. God gave His complete forgiveness in Christ. But why is it that our human nature makes us so stingy in this regard? Mercy and forgiveness are not just things we are meant to receive but to embody—mankind was meant to embody or be the "image" of all that God is!

   The image Jesus uses in v. 38 is that of grain being poured into a vessel, pressed down, and shaken to make room for more to the point of overflowing. The grain is then poured into the fold of a garment (kind of like a big pocket) and is taken home. This is a radical notion. The standard God adopts in judging people is the standard each person uses in relation to others. Will one give generously to the point of overflowing or will one purposely hold back and give a smaller portion?

2. Jesus says, "Judge not and you will not be judged; condemn not and you will not be condemned; forgive and you will be forgiven." Is all judging bad and sinful? What kind of judging is Jesus describing? How can we judge someone without being judgmental? Finally, what do we gain by being judgmental and what do we lose?

   Jesus is not saying that every kind of judging is wrong. He is warning against self-righteous, condemning judgment—the kind that looks down on others, assumes the worst about them, and treats them without mercy--being quick to criticize instead of being quick to forgive. In John 7:24 Jesus even says: "Do not judge by appearances, but judge with right judgment."

Jesus is saying in a very practical way, "Do not condemn others harshly, because the same standard will be used for you. Instead, be humble, merciful, and forgiving instead of critical and self-righteous and you will be blessed because people may well respond the same way to you. But even, if they don't, you are embodying God's own way of judging.

We gain little by being judgmental—maybe a feeling of superiority or control—but we lose humility, compassion and thus relationships, and often, then also, our own peace.

3. How might your relationship with God feel if He responded to you the way you respond to others? Also consider this: If God related to you in the way you relate to others, what would stand out to you most?

   What part of these questions feels hardest to answer? And where do you see grace meeting you there?

   It would feel exhausting and discouraging if God treated me the way I sometimes treat others. What stands out most is how easily I expect grace for myself but struggle to give it to others. The hardest part is seeing my own inconsistency clearly. Grace meets me in God's patience and forgiveness, which remind me that He is shaping me to respond more like Him.

4. Read Luke 6:39–45. How do Jesus' examples of the blind leading the blind and the student/teacher relationship challenge us to examine who is influencing us and how we influence others?

   Jesus' examples of the blind leading the blind and the student/teacher relationship challenge us to think carefully about both our influences and our impact on others. Since Jesus' messianic ministry includes opening the eyes of the blind, disciples are meant to be "enlightened" and shaped into his likeness. The student is called to become like the teacher, which means a teacher must do more than pass on knowledge — he or she must also serve as a model of faith and character. Jesus was the obviously the master teacher in this regard. In light of this, the beatitudes and Jesus' following commands show what kind of people we are to be: humble, loving, merciful, and free from judgment and hypocrisy. We also help lead the world to know the ways of God.

5. What kind of hypocrisy is Jesus warning against in the beam-and-speck example, and how does this challenge us as "blind students" who depend on Jesus, the true Teacher, for sight and guidance?

   Jesus is warning against the hypocrisy of claiming to follow Him while living in a way that contradicts His character. In the beam-and-speck example, the issue is not just judging others, but doing so without first acknowledging God's grace in Christ and letting that shape our attitude and response towards that person. It also means acknowledging our own sinfulness and need for mercy and grace. Jesus teaches that character comes before action: our deeds reveal what is truly in us. If we have a Christ-shaped character, as described in the Beatitudes, then our actions will reflect the way Jesus Himself lived and treated others. As His students, it would be hypocritical to act any differently. The church must guard against this kind of inconsistency, because when believers fail to live out the mercy, humility, and love of Jesus, the world sees a contradiction and may reject the faith because of it.

6. If we are all born as "bad trees" and only God can transform us into "good trees," what does the fruit we bear reveal about whether Christ and the Holy Spirit are at work in our lives?

The kind of fruit we produce shows what's going on in our hearts. If Jesus is really at work in us, that will start to show in the way we talk, act, and treat other people. It won't mean we're perfect, but over time our lives should look more and more like repentance, obedience, love, humility, and holiness. If someone keeps showing bad fruit like pride, dishonesty, cruelty, or refusing to obey God, that can be a sign that their heart hasn't truly been changed, or that they're pushing against the Holy Spirit. So fruit doesn't save us—it shows what's already there. We don't make ourselves good by trying harder on our own. It is God's grace that changes us and produces good fruit in our lives.

7. Read Luke 6:46–49. Notice how the first line of verse 46 sums up the purpose of the whole sermon: we must listen to Jesus and take His words seriously. But Jesus also makes it clear that hearing His words is not enough—we must put them into practice. What does it look like in real life to "build on the rock," and why is the house-building analogy such a powerful warning about the difference between hearing Jesus and truly obeying Him? Also, what Old Testament account of flooding and disaster closely parallels this passage, and what connections can be drawn between the two?

   The blessed life is not merely a life of religious knowledge, but a life grounded in obedient communion with Christ. To "build on the rock" is to arrange one's entire existence around the words of Jesus—to let His teaching shape our desires, choices, relationships, and understanding of reality itself. The warning in the house-building analogy is that hearing without obedience creates only the illusion of stability; the storm eventually exposes whether one's life has been rooted in Christ or in self. In that sense, the parable is not just about individual morality, but about the spiritual architecture of the soul.

   The Old Testament account that most closely parallels this image is the flood in Noah's day. There too, judgment comes as water, and there too the dividing line is not mere awareness of God's word, but faithful response to it. Noah hears God and acts; the rest of humanity lives as though God's word does not define reality. The flood thus becomes a tragic picture of what happens when human beings abandon their calling as image-bearers and instead live according to violence, corruption, and self-rule. Genesis 5–6 highlights this degeneration, especially in the line of Cain and in the widespread violence that marks the earth. Lamech's boastful violence and the Nephilim narrative both underscore a world disordered by pride and unrighteousness.

   Seen together, Noah's flood and Jesus' parable teach the same truth: judgment reveals foundations. What one has built upon is only fully disclosed when the storm arrives. The difference between the wise and the foolish is not either hearing or not hearing, but hearing and doing. Christ's words are not merely information to be admired—they are the living foundation on which human life must be constructed if it is to endure. We are image-bearers of our great teacher, Jesus!

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