

## Kingdom Love

Luke 6:27-36

**(Discussion Guide pg. 12)**

What do you consider to be a God blessed life? God's word teaches that a blessed life is a life consecrated to God and His others-oriented purposes. When we trust Christ as Savior and King we are made citizens of His kingdom and our set apart for His glory, however there are some real misconceptions about what it means to be set apart.

I recently read a story about a Wisconsin mom who was trying to teach her kids how God sees them. She told them that when they received Jesus as Savior that He then sees them clean and without sin. Actually, He sees them as saints. So, she could call them Saint Sawyer or Saint Mylee or Saint Charlie. She kept this up all week, periodically calling them her little saints. Then, towards the end of the week, the family was going for a ride in the car when one of the sons proclaimed, "I don't want to be a Saint; I'm a Packers fan!" I think the cheese head missed the point, don't you?

As we saw last week, Jesus began His sermon on the plain, with the declaration, "*Blessed are you who are poor, for yours is the Kingdom of God*" (Luke 6:20b). Jesus is not saying here that only the poor are qualified to make it into heaven.

Being poor, as opposed to being rich, only has value, if in our poverty we become more aware of our dependence upon God. And it's a life lived in dependence upon God that is characteristic of one who belongs to the Kingdom of God. This distinctive of recognizing our spiritual poverty and utter dependence on God is radically counter cultural in our society.

It's counter cultural because we live in a world that values self-rule, self-sufficiency, and self-love. We live in a society that believes that happiness is found not in relying upon God's truth, but in being true to yourself, finding my truth, and living it out, though in truth, it is simply selfishness.

Do you belong to the kingdom of God? Again, God's word teaches that all who have received Jesus as Savior and Lord are citizens of God's kingdom. As such, we have been given the Holy Spirit, God's indwelling presence so that we can distinctively represent His Kingdom on earth through our surrendered lives.

Only as we live our lives in a supernaturally distinct way can we make a supernatural difference for Christ.

In light of this, let me ask you, above all other things, what distinctive of God's kingdom ought to mark our lives as His representatives—as His adoptive sons and daughters? I want to submit to you that the greatest distinctive of all, which should mark our lives, is love.

When writing about other qualities that should mark us as beloved children of God, like kindness, humility, and patience, Paul writes: *“And above all these put on love, which binds everything together in perfect harmony.”* Colossians 3:14

Do our lives look distinctively different from the world around us or do we just blend in to the rest of society? To make a supernatural difference for Christ in our self-centered, and self-absorbed society, we must not only live supernaturally different, there must be something radically different about the way we show love.

**Main idea:** Only when our love resembles the indiscriminate love of Christ can we as Christians effect positive change for God's kingdom.

To unfold this theme, we are going to consider from Jesus' sermon on the plain, what kingdom love looks like and why it sets us apart to fulfill God's others-oriented purposes.

- 1. Kingdom Love is more than what we give to our friends/family; it's what we give to our foes**

What is it about kingdom love that sets us apart as believers to make a positive impact for Christ in this world? To begin with, *Kingdom Love is more than what we give to our friends/family; it's what we give to our foes.*

After laying out four blessed qualities of God's kingdom, ending with *blessed are you when people hate you*, and following them up with four contrasting woes, ending with, *"Woe to you, when all people speak well of you,"* Jesus continues:

*"But I say to you who hear, Love your enemies, do good to those who hate you, <sup>28</sup> bless those who curse you, pray for those who abuse you. <sup>29</sup> To one who strikes you on the cheek, offer the other also, and from one who takes away your cloak do not withhold your tunic either."*  
Luke 6:27-29

Notice that as Jesus continues to describe the characteristics that mark those who belong to His Kingdom, He gets to the one mark from which all the other qualities spring from, namely love. The people of His day would not have taken exception to the call to love. Love is a quality that even pagans to a certain degree understand and appreciate.

But Jesus didn't just say love one another, or love your family. Rather, Jesus looked at His disciples and described a kind of love that was radically different and deeply challenging to the natural man. Jesus said, *Love your enemies*. And before they could catch their breath or give their own interpretation about what loving your enemy would look like, Jesus defines it for them.

The way our natural minds would spin and apply what Jesus meant by love your enemies would be to avoid them, or to do them no harm. But Jesus didn't say to avoid your enemies or leave them be. He said that as Kingdom representatives we are called to *do good to those who hate you, to bless those who curse you, and pray for those who abuse you.*

Again, this kind of love goes against our natural inclination. Our natural inclination is not to do good to our enemies, or to bless them with our words or to pray for them. Our natural inclination would be to either avoid them or get even with them.

But, as we will see more later, when we go beyond the natural we not only show that there's something otherworldly at work in us, but this is how kingdom representatives effect positive change in our world. Kingdom people are not overcome by evil; or return evil for evil, we overcome evil with good.

One commentator summarizes Jesus' application of *love your enemies* this way: "The command to love our enemies is a call to unnatural deeds, unnatural words, unnatural prayer. It is a command for supernatural love."

Do we love this way? Have we done something tangibly good for someone who has been unkind or abusive to us? Do we speak kindly to those who have been rude or bitter towards us?

How many of you know, there's an increasing hostility towards Christianity today. How are we responding to it? Do we pray for people who are directly or indirectly hostile towards our Christianity?

Only this kind of unconventional love—a love that is impossible to give apart from dependence on the Holy Spirit—a love that requires dying to self, can manifest the transforming presence of Jesus and overcome the hate and evil in our world.

Regarding this unconventional love, which goes against our natural inclination, Jesus continues to clarify what it should look like in the lives of His followers:

*"To one who strikes you on the cheek, offer the other also, and from one who takes away your cloak do not withhold your tunic either.  
30 Give to everyone who begs from you, and from one who takes away your goods do not demand them back."* Luke 6:29-30

What is Jesus doing here? Jesus is confronting the conventional understanding of love that naturally looks out for one's own interests, and turns it on its head.

You know, when I was a Police Officer, I had the reputation of being a christian. This sometimes made other officers who I worked with for the first time a little nervous. What made some of them nervous was their misunderstanding of scripture. They wondered how literally I viewed Jesus' call to "turn the other cheek." I was asked on more than one occasion questions that went something like this, "If we encountered a hostile situation that could cause bodily injury or death, will you have my back." In others word, would I use physical force or fire my weapon if it were necessary to protect life or restrain someone who resisted arrest?

My response was that when Jesus spoke to His disciples about turning the other cheek He was teaching that a Christian in their everyday relationships should not respond in kind to personal insults or injury. But Jesus does not mean that there is no place for just punishment or retribution in society. He's not doing away with the God ordained proper function of government in restraining evil, which the apostle Paul outlined in Romans 13:1-4.

Again, Jesus is speaking of how we are to respond to a personal insult, which is what Jesus is speaking of when he refers to being slapped once in the face.

Going back to my time serving as a police officer, if my partner and I had a disagreement and he called me a derogatory name, as a Christian, I would not return insult for insult. If he shoved me, I probably would not have shoved him back. But as a Police officer and agent of the government I had the authority and responsibility to restrain evil for the good of society.

It's important to also clarify that Jesus is not doing away with the proper exercise of self-defense or the right to private property. "Rather,

He is demanding a loving attitude that is not vengeful but is generous and self-giving.” Kent Hughes

As one Christian author put it: “Jesus is not calling His followers to some weak form of passivity which enables evil. He never told us not to restrain the murderer’s hand, not to stand up against the abuser, not to check the thief, not to oppose dishonesty. What, then, is the principle that Jesus is making concrete here? It’s simply this: that when we receive an injury, we must not seek revenge. Put another way, we are not to be normal. “Normal” is to meet force with force, and insult with insult, and malice with malice. Normal is to deprive others of your blessing if they treat you wrongly. What a Christian is to seek to do is what’s best for your enemy in the same way as you would for a friend.” Alistair Begg

Now Jesus summarizes the unconventional way that His representatives are to love by saying: *“And as you wish that others would do to you, do so to them.”* Luke 6:31

What Jesus is saying here, which we know as the golden rule, was not unfamiliar to the people in His day. Different versions of the golden rule in ancient Jewish writings can be found before the time of Christ. But there’s one significant difference. Pre-Christian versions of the golden rule are stated in the negative whereas Jesus stated it in the positive.

For example, in the writings of an influential Jewish rabbi Hillel, you’ll find this interpretation of the golden rule: “What is hateful to you, do not do to your neighbor.” Jesus, on the other hand, states it positively. And in so doing, Jesus made the command much broader. “It is the difference between not breaking traffic laws and in doing something positive, like helping a stranded motorist.” Guzik

But not just one who is a stranger, but helping someone who may have wronged you in the past. Again, by Jesus stating the golden rule in the positive, “He is making it clear that it is not simply enough for His followers to be passive, or to refrain from revenge. [Rather] the

children of God are to take the initiative in this matter of love.” Alistair Begg

This brings us to our second point:

## **2. Kingdom Love is more than affection; it’s an action**

That is to say, Jesus is not only calling us to love people when we feel loving affection for them. For whom do we typically have loving affection for? Our loved ones, or those who we know love us. It’s easy to take the initiative to love someone by doing good to them when we are full of affection.

Every time we are at a retail store it’s seems like my wife is buying something for our grandchildren who she’s full of affection for. It’s hard to figure out what to buy them for a birthday or Christmas because they already have so much stuff.

We haven’t done anything out of the ordinary when we love those who love us. We should love those who love us. Although some people don’t always love even their loved ones the way they should, we are not really doing anything extraordinary when we do.

Jesus’ followers are called to love in a way that is not ordinary. We are called to love with actions despite our feelings. Jesus continues:

*“If you love those who love you, what benefit is that to you? For even sinners love those who love them. <sup>33</sup> And if you do good to those who do good to you, what benefit is that to you? For even sinners do the same. <sup>34</sup> And if you lend to those from whom you expect to receive, what credit is that to you? Even sinners lend to sinners, to get back the same amount.” Luke 6:32-34*

The love that those who belong to the kingdom of God are to demonstrate is shown through loving actions. Jesus is not commanding us to wait for a warm, fuzzy feeling deep in our hearts before we decide to love. If we wait for a fuzzy feeling, we may never

love people, especially those outside of our circle of friends, family, and church. The love for our enemies is a love that *does* something for them whether we feel it or not.

As one commentator explained: “We cannot love our enemies as we love our nearest and dearest. To do so would be [awkward, uncomfortable], and even wrong. But we can see to it that, no matter what a man does to us, even if he insults, ill-treats, and injures us, we will seek nothing but his highest good.” (Barclay)

Now God does want us to have genuine affection for people, especially those in our community of faith. The apostle Paul, for example, wrote to the church in Rome, “*Love one another with brotherly affection. Outdo one another in showing honor.*” Romans 12:10

But although genuine loving affection should characterize communities of faith, in order to have this affection, it must be cultivated through loving actions. This kind of affectionate connection requires making personal investment in and sacrifices for one another motivated by the love of Christ. Genuine affectionate relationships in Jesus are rooted in loving actions that involve up-close and personal attention, care, sacrifice, and kindness.

This is true in all relationships, including marriage. And if we would see people outside the community of faith come to know the love of Christ, which is to characterize our community, we must do acts of love that breaks down walls and builds bridges—that kills hate with kindness—that overcomes evil with good.

But as Jesus said, if you only love those who love you, if you are only doing good to those who are doing good to you, and lending only to those who can pay you back, what credit is that to you as a person who is supposed to show the world what God’s kingdom is like. If our love is no different than the world, we have no ability to make a real difference in the world.



So how do we measure whether we are demonstrating this kingdom transformational love? One bible teacher suggests: “Think about who you are kind to. Think about who you invite over to your home. Think about those for whom you go out of your way. If it’s only those from whom you get something, then none of that marks you out as a follower of Christ, the one who loved us before we ever loved or did anything for him (Romans 5:8; 1 John 4:19). None of that draws praise from Christ. It’s just what everyone else is doing, one way or another.”  
Alistair Begg

Why is loving our enemies and taking the initiative to love people outside of our communities of faith and family proof that we belong to the kingdom? Because the reason you belong to God’s kingdom, if indeed you do, is because the manner in which Jesus calls us to love, is how He loves us.

This brings us to our final point:

### **3. Kingdom Love is more than bearing with people’s faults, it’s bearing the family resemblance.**

Again, Jesus reiterates the love that is to characterize those who belong to His kingdom, those who are sons and daughters of God:

*“But 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 evil. <sup>36</sup> Be merciful, even as your Father is merciful.”* Luke 6:35-36

When Jesus says that His disciples’ reward will be great in heaven and that they will be sons of the most high by showing unconventional love, He’s not saying that we must love our enemies to gain entrance into His kingdom.

He makes it clear that it is the ungrateful and the evil who God is kind to, without regard for their moral goodness. What’s more, Jesus

words, *“And you will be sons of the Most High,* is the Hebrew way of saying, we will be like the Most High, like God himself.

According to the Apostle Paul in Colossians 1: 13-14 & Galatians 4:4-5, we are transferred into the kingdom of God and adopted as sons and daughters into the family of God through the forgiveness and redemption wrought by Jesus on the cross.

So how can we, who know such a great salvation, not love our enemies? How can we who know that God demonstrated His love for us while we were yet sinners and rebels by Christ dying for us, not do good to people expecting nothing in return?

Beloved, loving our enemies and taking the initiative to love people outside of our communities of faith, is a supernatural action, and it is an action that is the proof of our salvation.

What’s more, Jesus said that when our love show’s that we are children of God, great is our reward. What is that reward? When you know the love of God in Christ, there’s no greater reward than to know you are pleasing your heavenly Father. What pleases the Father? That we love others the way Jesus loves us.

None of us will love perfectly the way Jesus loves us this side of heaven. But when we truly know His redeeming love, loving others is what we will strive for by the power of the Spirit within. And if it’s not what we are striving for, then we need to examine our hearts to see if we truly belong to His kingdom.

I was really challenged by one bible teacher’s observations here: “I do not know what obeying Jesus’ [call to love] needs to look like for you, in your specific circumstances, but I do know that it needs to look like something—something tangible, something practical. It does not look like cheering from the sidelines or advocating for political change while not being prepared to actually do something.

If I think that by supporting a welfare package, I've done for others what Jesus calls for, I am wrong, unless I am prepared simultaneously to mentor the children of poverty and draw alongside the boys and the girls who live without fathers.

If I think that by criticizing and arguing against the gay-rights lobby or the trans-rights lobby, I have done what Jesus calls for, I am wrong, unless I am also prepared to bring some measure of kindness and hope to those who are living that lifestyle or in that identity and finding it not to deliver what they had been promised it would, or regretting undergoing irreversible surgery....In previous generations, churches built hospitals and orphanages and libraries. In ours, we build atriums, [concert style auditoriums], and coffee houses.

Our society is not suffering from a surplus of Christians who have read their Bibles and said to themselves, "I'm going to shower with love the people who do not share my faith or my ethics or my approach. I'm going to show people what it means to be loved without having to give anything back." But imagine if it were. Imagine if you said that, and, by the Spirit's power, lived that. What a difference that would make."  
Alistair Begg

## **Conclusion**

Beloved, kingdom love does not only show love to family but to foes, it's not only about our affections, but our actions, and it not only bears with the faults and failures of others, it bears the divine family resemblance. The more this is true of us, the more we will effect positive change in the world.

O may we strive daily to know the deep, deep love of Jesus so that we love Him above all, and show it by loving others the way He loves us.

## Discussion Guide

Read Luke 6:27-30

- How does loving our enemies mark us out as representatives of God's kingdom?
- What does loving our enemies look like?
- What is Jesus teaching His disciples when He exhorts them to offer the other cheek when struck?
- Is defending ourselves or protecting our property wrong according to Jesus (v.29-30)? Why or why not?
- How is today's understanding of the golden rule different than what Jesus was communicating?

Read Luke 6:32-34; Romans 12:10.

- How do we love people in a way that can effect positive change in our world?
- What is the difference between natural love and supernatural love?
- Does loving others in a way that can effect positive change (overcoming evil with good) require waiting for a feeling? Why or why not?
- How do we cultivate loving affection?

Read Luke 6:35-36.

- How does kingdom love, (supernatural love) prove that we are sons and daughters of God—that we belong to His kingdom?
- What is the great reward for the unconventional love described by Jesus?
- Where does the motivation for demonstrating this unconventional love come from?