

THE DIFFICULT GOSPEL OF JESUS: KINGDOM LOVING AND LIVING LUKE 6:27-49

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Introduction

Jesus has laid the foundation of the reconstruction of Israel and he has begun to proclaim the gospel of the New Jerusalem in Luke 6:12-26. Jesus has pronounced blessings on those who are poor, those who are hungry, those who weep, and those who are hated because of their association with Jesus. He has also pronounced woes on the self-reliant, the selfish, those who haughtily laugh at others and are spoken well of. What the world thinks are blessings, Jesus pronounces them as woes or curses.

Jesus continues to preach his “Sermon on the Plain” to the Apostles, the disciples, and the crowds by teaching them more about the gospel of the Kingdom, and what the people of the New Jerusalem will look like in him. In the continuation of Jesus’ Kingdom sermon, he tells more about how the gospel of the New Jerusalem will change one’s way of loving and living, and he contrasts this gospel to the teaching of the Pharisees and the Teachers of the Law because they have begun to oppose he and his Kingdom ministry (6:11).

We must understand this portion of Scripture in the context of the opposition of the Pharisees and Scribes who represent “old Jerusalem” and the proclamation of a “gospel” that was no gospel at all (cf. Gal. 1:6-9), to the gospel of the New Jerusalem and the gospel of Jesus that truly saves- *-as well as changes us from the inside out.*

Jesus’ teaching continues to be paradoxical and in contrast to the “wisdom of this world” and what the world supposes is strength. In the Kingdom economy, God’s wisdom seems foolish, and the strength of God revealed through grace seems weak to the world’s way of doing things. Jesus’ sermon reveals to us the power and beauty of the gospel of the Lord Jesus!

Let me say up front that this is an extremely challenging portion of Scripture. As John MacArthur wrote a few years back in *The Gospel According to Jesus*, this sermon reveals that Jesus’ gospel message is not easily believed, or a kind of “easy-believeism” or mere act of one’s decision and will to be his follower, but must be a powerful work of God’s Spirit in raising a sinner from the dead and giving them new life *in order for them to believe!*

In Jesus’ sermon there is no room for boasting in one’s works, or one’s own supposed righteousness, or any hope found in cooperating with God; we are only left bending our knees before a holy God asking him for his mercy found in Christ!

In fact, the hard teaching of Jesus found in Luke 6:27-49 is summarized by Jesus words in Matthew 5:48:

You therefore must be perfect, as your heavenly Father is perfect.

Do you realize that God requires perfection in order for you to be saved? People quickly dismiss this saying “Nobody’s perfect! God doesn’t expect perfection, only our best attempts at pleasing him. This thinking will damn you. God indeed requires perfection, and so we seek our perfection not in ourselves, or what we have supposedly done for God- ***-but in Christ alone!***

As we celebrate the 490th anniversary of the Reformation of the 16th century this week, let us be reminded by this Kingdom sermon that most of the teachers of the Roman Catholic Church before Martin Luther thought that Jesus was teaching these Kingdom ethics in order that a man might work with, or cooperate with God with hopes of achieving his salvation. The Medieval Church had essentially believed the Pharisaical “Gospel” that is no gospel at all, rather than the hard Gospel of Jesus Christ, or the “narrow way” that leads to life (cf. Matt. 7).

Pelagianism (or “works righteousness”) in all its Pharisaical, Medieval or even Evangelical forms steals the glory of God’s grace away from Christ and places the true merit or accomplishment on man.

Jesus’ Kingdom sermon is designed and aimed to make sinners helpless and hopeless without him. Jesus’ intent is to show that salvation is all of God’s grace, and it takes a mighty and powerful work of God’s Resurrection Spirit to enable those in Christ to live this way!

In this sermon, Jesus’ intent is to bring all self-righteous and sinful people to the end of themselves in repentance, and finding their only hope of righteousness before God in Christ alone, as well as the ability to love and live as Kingdom people.

This Kingdom sermon of Jesus should hammer the last nail in the coffin holding any dead works-righteousness or Pelagianism!

I. Kingdom Love and Generosity (Luke 6:27-34)

Jesus teaches that in contrast to the world reciprocating with hate to those who hate them, the Christian is to bless and not curse, to pray for those who abuse them. ***The heart of the sermon is how to love as Kingdom people.*** In this sermon there could be many misunderstandings concerning what Jesus is saying, but we must seek the “spirit” of his instructions.

Jesus begins showing how weak, sinful, and incapable we are to do this without him. In this “Sermon on the Plain” Jesus demands absolute and

perfect love from his followers! You can imagine the 12 Apostles who have just been called specifically by Jesus, and who have “left everything to follow him” (5:11) thinking to themselves:

“What have we gotten ourselves into?” Perhaps we also think this sometimes as Christians. I am not sure who started the rumor that the Christian life was easy! In fact, it is downright impossible without the grace of God in Christ! As Augustine prayed, so this sermon should make us pray: “O, Lord, command what you will, and grant by your grace what you command.”

None of us can love as Jesus calls us to without understanding what he has done for us (his love and mercy), and what he is doing in us by His Spirit (his continuing love and mercy to us).

Jesus is not only our Law-Keeper (and therefore why we are “blessed” rather than condemned, cf. 6:19-26), but he is the One who has perfectly loved God and neighbor as himself earning a righteousness for those who believe, and setting an example for us to follow in his footsteps.

It is important to note that Jesus begins with **“But I say to you who hear...”** (v. 27a) which is addressed to everyone. This teaches us that this Kingdom loving and living is expected of every human being, and if you are not loving and living like this, you are under the judgment of God. Only in Christ can you escape his wrath and punishment.

- a. **How should our love as Christians be displayed?:** “Love you enemies, do good to those who hate you” (v.27)
 - i. The world says: “Hate your enemies and seek to take revenge on those who hate you”. Think of the “rules of war” that Sun Tzu and Machiavelli wrote about.
 - ii. Jesus says: “Love” and “do good”: Jesus teaches we are not to be selective in our love toward others, and we not to merely refrain from hostile acts but to positively “do good” to them.
 - iii. **Leviticus 19:18:** the Mosaic Law taught all Israelites in the Old Covenant to love their neighbor. At the time of Jesus this passage was interpreted to mean that neighbor was only fellow Israelites, and so they had an excuse to hate the “outsiders”. In fact, many of the Jewish leaders of this time hated their Roman leaders and oppressors and sought to do them harm (especially a group known as the Zealots who sought to overthrow Rome by force, and at least one of the Apostles was a former Zealot, cf. Luke 6:15; Acts 1:13).

- iv. Jesus rejects this interpretation outright because this is another example of the Pharisaical “fencing” or “hedging” of the Law in order that they might merely externally keep it (The Pharisees were undermining the force of this command).
- v. **Application:** Think of those who are your enemies, those who hate you. Now, go and love them, showing them mercy, because this is what Jesus is telling us.

You might say: “What have I gotten myself into?” Only by the grace of God!

- b. **Examples of what Kingdom love and living looks like:** “Bless those who curse you, pray for those who abuse you” (v. 28)

If you are cursed- -don’t curse back, but bless; if you are abused- -don’t seek vengeance, but pray. This is Jesus’ examples of active “doing good” like blessing and praying. Only a heart shaped and molded by God’s mercy in Christ can do this!

- c. “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” (v. 29).

Jesus gives practical examples of the love that only Christ can give in verses 28-30: when someone strikes us, offer the other cheek as well; when someone takes our cloak, give him the “shirt off our backs” as well. He tells us that we are to be giving, generous people, not expecting a return for our generosity. The principle rule in love is: “As you wish that others would do to you, do so to them.” (cf. Matthew 7:12)

- i. The world says: “Don’t get mad, get even.” “Keep your friends close and your enemies closer” (implying that they will be close enough when you’re ready to enact vengeance upon them!).

- ii. Jesus says: Love strongly by God’s grace!

To be slapped on the face in the ancient culture as well as in our culture today is the height of disrespect and dishonor. A slap usually was (and is) followed by a fist- -or a hammer- -or a gun!

In this command, and example of Kingdom loving and living, Jesus is not telling us to be merely weak, or to let other run over us, or that self-defense at times is necessarily wrong; Jesus is teaching that we should always seek to show love by His grace no matter how we are treated.

Jesus is teaching us of an attitude we ought to have toward others by using this example of extreme demonstration of hatred.

Theologian Leon Morris reminded me of a saying of the wise: “Always forgive your enemies. Nothing infuriates them more” (Luke, 143).

You will be reminded that Jesus when literally was slapped on the cheek, he wisely rebuked the man, but he willingly offered him his other cheek for those whom he loved. This should serve as an example of grace to others as we are enabled by Jesus:

^{ESV} **John 18:22-23:** When he had said these things, one of the officers standing by struck Jesus with his hand, saying, "Is that how you answer the high priest?" ²³ Jesus answered him, "If what I said is wrong, bear witness about the wrong; but if what I said is right, why do you strike me?"

In Christ, we will always seek to do the best for our enemies, without seeking our own vengeance, or trying to mete out the punishment that we think our enemies deserve from God. In Christ, we let God be God, and we imitate God in his common grace and mercy to all sinners.

The Apostle Paul teaches us in Romans 12 (in the section where he is teaching Christians how NOT to be conformed to the pattern of this present world, cf. 12:1-2):

^{ESV} **Romans 12:17-21:** Repay no one evil for evil, but give thought to do what is honorable in the sight of all. ¹⁸ If possible, so far as it depends on you, live peaceably with all. ¹⁹ Beloved, never avenge yourselves, but leave it to the wrath of God, for it is written, "Vengeance is mine, I will repay, says the Lord." ²⁰ To the contrary, "if your enemy is hungry, feed him; if he is thirsty, give him something to drink; for by so doing you will heap burning coals on his head." ²¹ Do not be overcome by evil, but overcome evil with good.

The Kingdom principle Jesus is teaching here is that there should be a consistent demonstration of God’s love and mercy in the Christian in order that God might use it as means to bring the sinner to repentance and that evil might be conquered by the good.

As Geldenhuys wrote: “Enmity on the part of others must always stimulate us to greater manifestations of love” (Luke, 212).

- d. “Give to everyone who begs from you, and from one who takes away your goods do not demand them back” (v. 30).

- i. **The principle:** Give, give, give, and be willing to give more. Remember to seek the spirit of what Jesus is saying here. If you take this literally then all Christians would necessarily be paupers, owning nothing. Jesus is teaching us that to love is to give, without expecting anything in return. **Recipe:** Take this passage literally, mix with two parts semi-Pelagianism and you've got Medieval Monasticism.
- ii. Many are willing to give if they can get something back. In fact the world says: "Give so that you will get!"

What is impossible to do here and why Christians constantly need to hear and believe the gospel and be drenched in God's grace is that Jesus is calling to leave our "rights" and self-centered interests behind for the sake of the Kingdom. Jesus is truly calling us to "leave everything" to follow him, and *showing our ultimate dependence upon him with how we give and how we are generous*- especially giving to those who do not deserve it!

Leon Morris wrote: "Love must be ready to be deprived of everything if need be." (Luke, 143). The reason for this is that our true reward is in heaven.

- e. "If you love those who love you, what benefit 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 benefit is that to you? For even sinners do the same. ³⁴And 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" (vv. 32-34).

Loving those who love us is easy for all sinners; loving those who do not love us, and who are not really loveable is much harder! Jesus says even sinners love those who love them. Jesus says to lend only to those who have good credit is not taking the financial risks that we should in the Kingdom economy.

- i. The Gospel of Unselfishness: Love those who do not love you...
- ii. The No-Gospel of Selfishness: Love only those who love you; pay no mind to those who do not...
- iii. The Gospel of Others-Interestedness (or Generosity): Lend to those who might not pay it back (and might not really appreciate it either!)

- iv. The No-Gospel of Self-Interest: It's your money, lend only to those you know will repay you...and charge interest!
- v. **The principle:** Our love will prove genuine or false by how we act and especially react to our enemies.

f. **Summary of Jesus' teaching on love and generosity**

- i. *"And as you wish that others would do to you, do so to them"* (v. 31).
- ii. The Pharisees did not exactly teach love in this way. Instead of the positive command of Jesus to "Do to others what you would have them do to you, accentuating the action or doing of love (cf. Matthew 7:12), they said more negatively "What you do not want others to do unto you do not unto them." This missed the point of love.

Self-centered, selfish people naturally avoid doing something to someone else in order that they might not be treated in the same way, but the motive in the Pharisaical interpretation is not love, but avoidance of one's own misery and the possibility of conflict.

Application: Do you live positively "doing good", or do you just merely avoid your enemies and conflict altogether?

- iii. Jesus says this positively in such a way that makes us realize that if love is the motivation to "do to others what we would have them do to us" then we need his grace and strength to do so, and we are easily condemned because we realize we often do not.
- iv. Our hope is in the righteousness that God supplies to us in Christ alone- -this righteousness that God requires to be saved is not found in us as this sermon of Jesus will hopefully prove to you!

II. **Kingdom Mercy (Luke 6:35-38)**

- a. "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." (vv. 35-36).

Mercy in Lending (Jesus gets in our pocketbooks and wallets here!): Lending expecting nothing in return is something that a sinner can only do because of the work of Christ within them. Jesus says that to be a lover of the unloving, and a lender to those who cannot necessarily pay you back shows you to be sons of the Most High. Jesus says that we are to reflect

God's glory because God is kind to the ungrateful and evil (common grace), and God is merciful, so we should be merciful.

- i. The world says: "It's your money, you worked for it, and the other bums haven't done anything to deserve it; it's mine- -and if they want something they can get it for themselves."
- ii. Jesus says: "Show your love for enemies and your good deeds by merciful generosity and pity that expects nothing in return, but realizes that your reward is in heaven (cf. Matthew 6:19-21):

Matthew 6:19-21: "Do not lay up for yourselves treasures on earth, where moth and rust destroy and where thieves break in and steal,²⁰ but lay up for yourselves treasures in heaven, where neither moth nor rust destroys and where thieves do not break in and steal.²¹ For where your treasure is, there your heart will be also.

- iii. As sinners we naturally hoard our wealth, keeping it to ourselves. We do not naturally want to give, or to lend, especially if we do not think we can make a profit. We especially do not think of all we have as examples of the mercies of God, and so we say in the name of good "stewardship" that we will be stingy. But Jesus calls us to be reflections of God's mercy and love toward us (vv. 35-36).

In Christ, our generosity is never wasted if we do so because of God's generosity towards us. We might think of times we have given and it wasn't appreciated, or perhaps it wasn't used as we thought it should have been used; Jesus is teaching that your reward is in heaven, and that God knows the motives of your heart, and if you have done good and shown mercy and pity, you will surely be rewarded.

- iv. **Common Grace:** We should understand Jesus' teaching on common grace here. Common grace is the goodness and mercy of God that all human beings receive that should cause them to worship and serve their Creator for his goodness (but they do not love him, but rather sin against him).

^{ESV} **Matthew 5:44-45:** But I say to you, Love your enemies and pray for those who persecute you,⁴⁵ so that you may be sons of your Father who is in heaven. *For he makes his sun rise on the evil and on the good, and sends rain on the just and on the unjust.*

- v. **Special-Redeeming Grace:** In contrast to common grace is the special grace and mercy of God to be called “sons of the Most High” and to be like God a merciful person (vv. 35-36)- -but this comes only through God’s grace to us (Eph. 2:4-10). This understanding of God’s special grace to us should make us even more loving in our lives!

If we are recipients of God’s special-redeeming grace in Christ, and we realize that our Heavenly Father takes care of those who oppose, hate, and sin against him, then *so should we- -that we might reveal ourselves to be “Sons of the Most High”*.

- b. "Judge not, and you will not be judged; condemn not, and you will not be condemned; forgive, and you will be forgiven; ³⁸ give, and it will be given to you. Good measure, pressed down, shaken together, running over, will be put into your lap. For with the measure you use it will be measured back to you" (vv. 37-38).

Mercy in Judgment: Jesus teaches us not to judge others (which is so easy for sinners to naturally do); Jesus teaches us not to condemn others. But rather, to forgive as we have been forgiven. This command reveals our love, and also reveals whether we truly understand the love of God toward us.

If we judge and condemn others, we have yet to understand God’s grace and mercy to us! If we judge and condemn others, we have yet fully to understand our sinfulness before God.

- i. The world says: “That person treated me unfair, and I deserve nothing but fairness and respect.” “I have expectations of other people, and they have not lived up to my expectations, and therefore they are under my judgment and punishment- -and I will get even eventually- -I’ll show them what they will suffer for crossing me.”
- ii. Jesus says: “Do not judge and do not condemn *because if you truly understand what God has done for you in Christ, then you will do also to others.* God has not judged and condemned you as your sins deserve; rather he has judged and condemned Christ on your behalf. Therefore, you must live loving and forgiving.
- iii. Jesus is not forbidding just judgment of making the distinction between good and evil as in a courtroom setting. Jesus is saying that sinners have no right to act as judges over their fellow men, since they too are guilty in God’s sight for their sins. The logic is:

Since all men deserve God's wrath and condemnation, we should not judge and condemn others in this manner, especially as we have been forgiven, and this has been all because of God's grace.

- iv. ***Give this forgiveness in good measure (v. 38)***, not merely a little forgiveness now and then with reservations, but let this generous giving of forgiveness characterize your life and reveal your true love for God. This is only by God's grace!

Colossians 3:12-13: Put on then, as God's chosen ones, holy and beloved, compassion, kindness, humility, meekness, and patience,¹³ bearing with one another and, if one has a complaint against another, forgiving each other; as the Lord has forgiven you, so you also must forgive.

As we pray in the Lord's Prayer:

"Forgive us our debts as we forgive our debtors."

How many times have you prayed the Lord's Prayer with unforgiveness or even hatred in your heart?

- v. **Principle:** The person who judges another invites the judgment of God upon himself. Jesus says "Give to others the forgiveness that they do not deserve, or you will not be forgiven." Another way we could put this is: "If you do not forgive others, you have not been forgiven by God." ***A forgiving spirit is evidence or fruit that one has been forgiven by God.***

^{ESV} **Matthew 6:14-15:** For if you forgive men their trespasses, your heavenly Father will also forgive you. ***But if you do not forgive others their trespasses, neither will your Father forgive your trespasses.***

^{ESV} **Matthew 18:33-35:** And should not you have had mercy on your fellow servant, as I had mercy on you?'³⁴ And in anger his master delivered him to the jailers, until he should pay all his debt.³⁵ So also my heavenly Father will do to every one of you, if you do not forgive your brother from your heart."

- c. **Summary of Jesus' teaching on mercy:** "Be merciful, even as your Father is merciful." (vv. 35-36). Jesus is teaching us to be reflections of the grace and mercy of God toward us.
- d. **The principle:** Our love will prove genuine or false by how we show mercy and especially to our enemies.

III. The Power of the Gospel of the Kingdom (Luke 6:39-49)

A Parabolic Conclusion- v. 39a

a. “The blind leading the blind” (vv. 39-40): Clear Biblical Teaching of the Gospel.

Here we need to keep in mind Jesus is comparing his Kingdom teaching with the blind Pharisees and Teachers of the Law who have begun to oppose him (Luke 6:11). He is saying that a disciple will be like his teacher and if his teacher is blind, then the followers will be blind as well.

The disciples of the Pharisees and Teachers of the Law will demonstrate a love only for those who love them, mercy to only those they deem worthy of mercy, and they will be judgmental and condemn those who they think are not living as “righteously” as they are (cf. Luke 5:32-33).

Being “fully trained” as Jesus says in v. 40 can only happen as one follows Christ the Messiah of the Kingdom; Jesus is promising that as the disciples by faith trust him and learn from him, by His Spirit they will become like him. But the blind disciples following the blind Pharisees will both fall into the pit.

A disciple is not above his teacher, but everyone when he is fully trained will be like his teacher. – v. 40

Principle: If the teacher does not know, or is blind to the true gospel, neither will the disciple-student know the true gospel –both will be blind!

Application: If we do not show forth love how can we guide others to the only hope found in Christ?

This sermon should humble us all; none of us can ever live in this manner without the regenerating work of God’s Spirit, and the constant help of Jesus each day of our lives. We should be humbled and give all the glory to God if we can see, and if we do see fruits, and if we are able to love and not to condemn.

b. “Removing specks” (vv. 41-42): Clarity and Charity in Helping Others to Live the Gospel for Themselves

Jesus in Luke’s context is speaking of the Pharisees here who have logs in their own eyes and seek to remove specks out of their disciples’ eyes. Although the Pharisees and the leaders of Israel were blind, they insisted on

teaching and continuing to lead, “removing specks” out of the eyes of the people- -but they could not see clearly because they had logs in their eyes (which are much greater than mere specks).

Humorous Picture: Outward religious teachers with heads cocked high strutting around town in flowing robes while blind as bats, and have huge logs sticking out of their eyes (that they cannot see!!!).

Jesus gives wisdom on keeping loving relationships with others. Rather than judging others in the Kingdom, we should seek to remove the log that is in our own eyes and blurs our field of vision, making it difficult for us to see our own sinful contributions to a situation, or our own sinful habits and faults, and so we judge and are busy removing other specks out of other’s eyes, while we are blind ourselves- -and cannot see clearly.

As Leon Morris wrote in his excellent commentary: “The slight imperfection in other people is often more apparent to us than the large imperfection in ourselves. Jesus is exhorting us to rigid self-examination before we engage in judgment.” (Luke, 147).

Application: If we cannot see our own sins clearly, then how can we help others to see their sins clearly?

c. Bearing fruit (vv. 43-45): The Good Fruits of the Gospel

Jesus continues by showing that true Kingdom disciples will bear good fruit and a person who is truly “good” by God’s definition will produce good from a heart that has been changed by the gospel of Jesus Christ. The evil person, or one who rejects the Kingdom, produces evil and the mouth reveals the sinful heart for all to see.

Like the Pharisees, some desire to lead others and show an example of what it means to be a Christian, but they themselves still produce bad fruit. In this context, those who judge others and condemn them (like the Pharisees) are not examples of bearing good fruit because of God’s grace, but those who are bearing rotten and evil fruit from a heart that has not been changed and deeply penetrated by the grace of God.

As Geldenhuys wrote: “...It is impossible for one who himself is still bad to attempt to improve others (taking the speck out of their eye). First his own life should be reshaped to real righteousness and holiness” (Luke, 214).

And when one’s heart is reshaped to righteousness and holiness by the gospel, we can truly see clearly to remove the speck from other’s eyes,

but we dare not forget the sin from which we have been forgiven, and the sovereign grace and mercy God has extended to us in Christ!

Matthew 7:1-5: "Judge not, that you be not judged. ² For with the judgment you pronounce you will be judged, and with the measure you use it will be measured to you. ³ Why do you see the speck that is in your brother's eye, but do not notice the log that is in your own eye? ⁴ Or how can you say to your brother, 'Let me take the speck out of your eye,' when there is the log in your own eye? ⁵ You hypocrite, first take the log out of your own eye, and then you will see clearly to take the speck out of your brother's eye.

d. Following Jesus as Lord of the Kingdom (vv. 46-49): The Only Foundation of the Gospel is Christ Alone.

Jesus tells the people who have ears to hear to build upon the foundation that he is laying upon the Apostles and Prophets (cf. Eph. 2:20). This is the foundation of the reconstructed Israel and he is telling the people to build the house of their lives upon this rock, rather than the sand of the Pharisees and Teachers of the Law.

The Temple in Jerusalem was built on a rock, but the New Temple that Jesus is building in His Kingdom People will be on a stronger foundation or the rock of His Word, having the foundation in Christ alone!

Application: The only foundation is upon the Word of God communicated by the Apostles and Prophets, Christ Jesus being the chief cornerstone. Our only hope is to believe the gospel of the Kingdom that in Christ we have one who has kept the Law on our behalf and loved God and neighbor on our behalf!

But the power of the gospel does not end there. The power of the gospel as we believe it and live it make us more and more like Christ so that we become "fully trained" by the gospel and are more conformed to his holy image.

Principle: True obedience to Christ will be a good fruit of believing the true gospel. We take great confidence in the gospel promise found in Philippians 1:6:

^{NAS} **Philippians 1:6** *For I am confident of this very thing, that He who began a good work in you will perfect it until the day of Christ Jesus.*

And...

^{ESV} **Ephesians 2:8-10**: For by grace you have been saved through faith. And this is not your own doing; it is the gift of God,⁹ not a result of works, so that no one may boast.¹⁰ For we are his workmanship, created in Christ Jesus for good works, which God prepared beforehand, that we should walk in them.

Conclusion

When we are confronted with a challenging sermon like this one (as the people back then were as well), we are left with nothing in our own hands to offer up to God. We are left with only the hope of finding our righteousness in Christ alone; we are left utterly needy before God and dependent upon his mercy.

This Kingdom sermon reminds us upon this 490th anniversary of the Reformation of the 16th century that we do not need a return to Medieval “trying harder” kind-of-Christianity, but we need a Sovereign work of God’s Spirit and grace in our hearts- - a realization with Isaiah that we are “undone” and in great need of atonement for our sins against God and man!

But when we have received his grace and mercy for the many times we have hated God and our enemies, we are reminded that God has loved us in Christ before the foundation of the world (Eph. 1:3-11), that there is no condemnation in those who are in Christ Jesus (Rom. 8:31), and that he has set us free from our bondage to sin to enable us to love God and our neighbor as ourselves.

In Christ, we realize still how sinful we are (*simil Justus et peccator*), and we still must find our gospel hope in him. When the Apostle Paul wrestled with the sins that still beset him even as a Christian, his only hope was the gospel and the righteousness of God found in Christ alone:

Wretched man that I am! Who will deliver me from this body of death?²⁵ Thanks be to God through Jesus Christ our Lord!

As Martin Luther’s “Father Confessor” and friend said to him about our hope in Christ:
“Why do you torment yourself with all these speculations and these high thoughts of your works before God? Look at the wounds of Jesus Christ, to the blood that he has shed for you: it is there that the grace of God will appear to you.

Instead of torturing yourself on account of your sins, throw yourself in your Redeemer’s arms. Trust in him- - in the righteousness and merits of his life- -in the atonement of his death. Do not shrink back; God is not angry with you, it is you who are angry with God.

Listen to the Son of God not your own thoughts; meditate on His Word to you. Jesus became man to give you the assurance of divine favor. He says to you: You are my sheep; you hear my voice; no man shall pluck you out of my strong hand.” –John Staupitz to Martin Luther, ca.1509.

In Christ we have been set free from slavery to our sins and our hatred of God and others; we have been freed from our slavery to be Sons of the Most High and to reflect his love and glory to all the world- -particularly to those who are our enemies.

But we ever need his grace, and so God provides it for us in his Word and in the Sacrament of the Lord's Supper. Let all the Sons of the Most High come and partake by faith of the body and blood of Jesus! Let us discern the body of the Lord Jesus by reminding ourselves that he who had no sin became sin for us so that we might have a righteousness that was not of our own, but found in him alone (cf. 2 Cor. 5:21).

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Scripture Lesson

Leviticus 19:16-18: You shall not go around as a slanderer among your people, and you shall not stand up against the life of your neighbor: I am the LORD. ¹⁷ "You shall not hate your brother in your heart, but you shall reason frankly with your neighbor, lest you incur sin because of him. ¹⁸ You shall not take vengeance or bear a grudge against the sons of your own people, but you shall love your neighbor as yourself: I am the LORD.

Matthew 6:19-21: "Do not lay up for yourselves treasures on earth, where moth and rust destroy and where thieves break in and steal, ²⁰ but lay up for yourselves treasures in heaven, where neither moth nor rust destroys and where thieves do not break in and steal. ²¹ For where your treasure is, there your heart will be also.

Matthew 7:1-5: "Judge not, that you be not judged. ² For with the judgment you pronounce you will be judged, and with the measure you use it will be measured to you. ³ Why do you see the speck that is in your brother's eye, but do not notice the log that is in your own eye? ⁴ Or how can you say to your brother, 'Let me take the speck out of your eye,' when there is the log in your own eye? ⁵ You hypocrite, first take the log out of your own eye, and then you will see clearly to take the speck out of your brother's eye.

Matthew 7:11-21: If you then, who are evil, know how to give good gifts to your children, how much more will your Father who is in heaven give good things to those who ask him! ¹² "So whatever you wish that others would do to you, do also to them, for this is the Law and the Prophets. ¹³ "Enter by the narrow gate. For the gate is wide and the way is easy that leads to destruction, and those who enter by it are many. ¹⁴ For the gate is narrow and the way is hard that leads to life, and those who find it are few. ¹⁵ "Beware of false prophets, who come to you in sheep's clothing but inwardly are ravenous wolves. ¹⁶ You will recognize them by their fruits. Are grapes gathered from thornbushes, or figs from thistles? ¹⁷ So, every healthy tree bears good fruit, but the diseased tree bears bad fruit. ¹⁸ A healthy tree cannot bear bad fruit, nor can a diseased tree bear good fruit. ¹⁹ Every tree that does not bear good fruit is cut down and thrown into the fire. ²⁰ Thus you will recognize them by their fruits. ²¹ "Not everyone who says to me, 'Lord, Lord,' will enter the kingdom of heaven, but the one who does the will of my Father who is in heaven.

Matthew 18:21-35: Then Peter came up and said to him, "Lord, how often will my brother sin against me, and I forgive him? As many as seven times?" ²² Jesus said to him, "I do not say to you seven times, but seventy times seven. ²³ "Therefore the kingdom of heaven may be compared to a king who wished to settle accounts with his servants. ²⁴ When he began to settle, one was brought to him who owed him ten thousand talents. ²⁵ And since he could not pay, his master ordered him to be sold, with his wife and children and all that he had, and payment to be made. ²⁶ So the servant fell on his knees, imploring him, 'Have patience with me, and I will pay you everything.' ²⁷ And out of pity for him, the master of that servant released him and forgave him the debt. ²⁸ But when that same servant went out, he found one of his fellow servants who owed him a hundred denarii, and seizing him, he began to choke him, saying, 'Pay what you owe.' ²⁹ So his fellow servant fell down and pleaded with him, 'Have patience with me, and I will pay you.' ³⁰

He refused and went and put him in prison until he should pay the debt. ³¹ When his fellow servants saw what had taken place, they were greatly distressed, and they went and reported to their master all that had taken place. ³² Then his master summoned him and said to him, 'You wicked servant! I forgave you all that debt because you pleaded with me. ³³ And should not you have had mercy on your fellow servant, as I had mercy on you?' ³⁴ And in anger his master delivered him to the jailers, until he should pay all his debt. ³⁵ So also my heavenly Father will do to every one of you, if you do not forgive your brother from your heart."

Exegetical Notes

"But I say to you who hear, Love your enemies, do good to those who hate you, ²⁸ bless those who curse you, pray for those who abuse you. [Jesus teaches that in contrast to the world reciprocating with hate to those who hate them, the Christian is to bless and not curse, to pray for those who abuse us. Jesus begins showing how weak, sinful, and incapable we are to do this without him. None of us can love as Jesus calls us to without understanding what he has done for us (his love and mercy), and what he is doing in us by His Spirit (his continuing love and mercy to us).]

²⁹ 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. ³¹ And as you wish that others would do to you, do so to them. [Jesus gives an example of the love that only Christ can give: when someone strikes us, offer the other cheek as well; when someone takes our cloak, give him the "shirt off our backs" as well. He tells us that we are to be giving, generous people, not expecting a return for our generosity. The principle rule in love is: "As you wish that others would do to you, do so to them." (cf. Matthew 7:12)]

³² "If you love those who love you, what benefit is that to you? For even sinners love those who love them. ³³ And if you do good to those who do good to you, what benefit is that to you? For even sinners do the same. ³⁴ 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. [Loving those who love us is easy for all sinners; loving those who do not love us, and who are not really loveable is much harder! Jesus says even sinners love those who love them. Jesus says to lend only to those who have good credit is not taking the financial risks that we should in the Kingdom economy.]

³⁵ 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. ³⁶ Be merciful, even as your Father is merciful. [Lending expecting nothing in return is something that a sinner can only do because of the work of Christ within them. Jesus says that to be a lover of the unloving, and a lender to those who cannot necessarily pay you back shows you to be sons of the Most High. Jesus says that we are to reflect God's glory because God is kind to the ungrateful and evil (common grace), and God is merciful, so we should be merciful.]

³⁷, "Judge not, and you will not be judged; condemn not, and you will not be condemned; forgive, and you will be forgiven; ³⁸ give, and it will be given to you. Good measure, pressed down, shaken together, running over, will be put into your lap. For with the measure you use it will be measured back to you." [Jesus teaches us not to judge others (which is so easy for sinners to naturally do); Jesus teaches us not to condemn others. But rather, to forgive as we have been forgiven.]

³⁹ He also told them a parable: "Can a blind man lead a blind man? Will they not both fall into a pit? ⁴⁰ A disciple is not above his teacher, but everyone when he is fully trained will be like his teacher. [Here we need to keep in mind Jesus is comparing his Kingdom teaching with the Pharisees and Teachers of the Law who have begun to oppose him. He is saying that a disciple will be like his teacher. Being "fully trained" can only happen as one follows Christ the Messiah of the Kingdom; Jesus is promising that as the disciples by faith trust him and learn from him, by His Spirit they will become like him. But the blind disciples following the blind Pharisees will both fall into the pit.]

⁴¹ Why do you see the speck that is in your brother's eye, but do not notice the log that is in your own eye? ⁴² 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. [Jesus gives wisdom on keeping loving relationships with others. Rather than judging others in the Kingdom, we should seek to remove the log that is in our own eyes and blurs our field of vision, making it difficult for us to see our own sinful contributions to a situation, or our own sinful habits and faults, and so we judge and are busy removing other specks out of other's eyes, while we are blind ourselves- -and cannot see clearly. Jesus in Luke's context is speaking of the Pharisees here who have logs in their own eyes and seek to remove specks out of their disciples' eye.]

⁴³ "For no good tree bears bad fruit, nor again does a bad tree bear good fruit, ⁴⁴ for each tree is known by its own fruit. For figs are not gathered from thornbushes, nor are grapes picked from a bramble bush. ⁴⁵ The good person out of the good treasure of his heart produces good, and the evil person out of his evil treasure produces evil, for out of the abundance of the heart his mouth speaks. [Jesus continues by showing that true Kingdom disciples will bear good fruit and a person who is truly "good" by God's definition will produce good from a heart that has been changed by the gospel of Jesus Christ. The evil person, or one who rejects the Kingdom, produces evil and the mouth reveals the sinful heart for all to see.]

⁴⁶ "Why do you call me 'Lord, Lord,' and not do what I tell you? ⁴⁷ Everyone who comes to me and hears my words and does them, I will show you what he is like: ⁴⁸ he is like a man building a house, who dug deep and laid the foundation on the rock. And when a flood arose, the stream broke against that house and could not shake it, because it had been well built. ⁴⁹ But the one who hears and does not do them is like a man who built a house on the ground without a foundation. When the stream broke against it, immediately it fell, and the ruin of that house was great." [Jesus tells the people who have ears to hear

to build upon the foundation that he is laying upon the Apostles and Prophets (cf. Eph. 2:20). This is the foundation of the reconstructed Israel and he is telling the people to build the house of their lives upon this rock, rather than the sand of the Pharisees and Teachers of the Law.]