

Introduction: Starting today, I will give four messages on the prayer Jesus taught His disciples from Luke's gospel (Luke 11:2-4). You all just heard it read from the King James Bible. It has three phrases that are not found in texts from before the fifth century, but are found in all texts of the gospel of Matthew. *** It also appears that Jesus gave this 'sermon on the plain' (Luke 6:17-49) after He gave His Kingdom of God inauguration 'sermon on the mount' (Matthew 5-7). Jesus chose the 'twelve' after the 'sermon on the mount' (Matthew 10:1) but before the 'sermon on the plain' (Luke 6:12). And, He cleansed a leper after the 'sermon on the mount' (Matthew 8:1-4) but before the 'sermon on the plain' (Luke 5:12-14). *** Today's first message focuses on God as The Father to whom Jesus' disciples pray. We will consider the character of God as a perfect father and what He expects from His children. We will also consider the grace He gives His children in His Son because of His LOVE and Mercy.

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In the weeks to come we will consider together, first the effects of God's holiness on people. Then we will examine His Kingdom as it is now coming into our world and lives. Finally, we will see how God's forgiveness of us in His Son enables us to forgive others and to have all our basic needs met including deliverance from what is evil. *** This morning we focus on how Jesus taught His disciples about His Father through a series of nine commands He gives them to be like The God in whose image all are created (Genesis 1:27). This is necessary because even the best human fathers fall short of God The Father in their love and mercy. And, tragically some human fathers are abusive so their children struggle to know the LOVE and Mercy of Father God.

I. Jesus gives His disciples commands about attitudes and actions towards those who mistreat them. (Luke 6:27-31)

A. Jesus gives His disciples four commands about loving their enemies. (Verses 27-28)

1. First, they must be loving their enemies. (Verse 27a)
2. Second, they must be doing good to those who are hating them. (Verse 27b)
3. Third, they must be blessing those who are cursing them. (Verse 28a)
4. Fourth, they must be praying for those who are mistreating them. (Verse 28b)

Collectively: All four of these actions must be done all the time without ceasing. And, all four are un-natural in that we all find it difficult to respond in the way Jesus is commanding His disciples to enemies who are constantly hating us, cursing us and mistreating us. To obey these commands requires supernatural help. We need the empowerment that comes only from The Holy Spirit given to all who surrender to Jesus in faith.

Jesus on Cross: Jesus modeled His final command that we must be praying for those who are mistreating us when from The Cross He was saying, 'Father forgive them for they do not know what they are doing' (Luke 23:34). However, there is some doubt about this prayer as it does not occur in texts before the fourth century. But, supporting this as the original text is what Luke was inspired to write in his account of Stephen's dying prayer: 'Lord, do not hold against them this sin' (Acts 7:59-60). It makes no sense Stephen would pray in this way if he was not sure his Savior prayed the same way for those killing Him on The Cross.

B. Jesus gives four commands about His disciples' reaction to actions of others against them. (Verses 29-30)

1. To the one smiting thee on the cheek, thou must bring about also the other. (Verse 29a)
2. And to the one taking up thy cloak, also the coat thou may not forbid. (Verse 29b)
3. To everyone requesting thee, thou must be giving. (Verse 30a)
4. And of the one taking up thy goods, thou must not demand. (Verse 30b)

Technical: Jesus does not command His disciple to forbid the taking of his coat, but he says His disciple may not move to stop the taking of his coat after his cloak is taken. True disciples do not forbid.

Practical and personal: Jesus' first four commands were to His disciples as a group and dealt with attitudes. These commands are for individual disciples concerning specific and practical unjust actions that happen to people. It is humanly difficult to impossible to respond to an unjust striking of the face with body language saying hit me again. How can anyone respond to the theft of one article of covering clothing by allowing the last article to also be taken? Or how can anyone give to every person who asks, and possibly end up with nothing? Or how can anyone have all earthly goods taken away and not demand their return?

Summary: And as you all would that all men would do to you all, you all must be doing likewise to them. (Verse 31)

Nine total commands: This ninth and final command is what we now call the 'golden rule'. It is not likely the human authors of the Gospels and New Testament linked these nine difficult to impossible commands to the nine-fold fruit of the Holy Spirit (Galatians 5:22-25). But God knows that only those who have been filled with The Holy Spirit through the faith of Jesus can do all these commands.

II. Those loving to get a return receive no thanks; but, those loving without expectations will be rewarded for being merciful as their Father is Merciful. (Luke 6:32-37)

A. Jesus tells His disciples that if they love as sinners, by expecting something in return, God will not thank them. (Verses 32-34)

1. And if you all are loving those who are loving you all, what thanks is being to you all? the sinners are also doing the same. (Verse 32)

Love: It is too easy to love people who love us. In one of our prayers of confession, we confess this as a sin: 'only with those who make it easy for us to do so'.

2. Therefore, if you all may be doing good to them who are doing good to you all, what thanks is being to you all? the sinners also are doing the same. (*Verse 33*)

'Transactional' Golden Rule: Jesus commands His disciples, who are saints IN Him, to be the ones who initiate doing good so they receive what they want. Here Jesus says that sinners are people who demand others to do good before they respond. They say do for me and I may do for you.

3. And if you all may lend to those of whom you all are hoping to receive, what thanks is being to you all? the sinners also are lending to sinners in order that they may receive the same. (*Verse 34*)

Give as 'investment': Jesus commanded His disciples to give to everyone requesting (verse 30a). Sinners only give if they expect a return on their 'investment', not out of love to God or people.

All three: In all three of Jesus' concrete comparisons of sinners and disciples, the sinners are always asking 'what's in it for me?' They make decisions based on cold calculations, not love. They are egotistical.

B. But, those who love generously, with no expectations, will have a great reward, and their motivation for being obediently merciful is that their Father IS Merciful. (*Verses 35-36*)

1. But, you all must be loving your enemies, and you all must be doing good. (*Verses 35ab*)

Correspondence: Jesus returns to His first two commands about the attitudes of His disciples to emphasize how they are different from sinners. Sinners are selfish 'me first' egoists. Disciples must be loving their enemies and doing good by faith in Him out of love for His love.

2. And you all must be lending being expecting nothing, and it will be great, your reward. (*Verse 35c*)

No strings: This is one of the paradoxes of God. Only those who can meet the needs of others for their sake and expect nothing for doing what is right before their God, will receive the reward sinners 'scheme' to receive. This is Jesus' first promise.

3. And you all will be called children of The Highest. (*Verse 35d*)

Children of Highest: This is the second promise Jesus gives to His disciples who are always loving their enemies and doing good by faith in Him. He says they will be children with Him of the exalted God of glory.

4. For He is being kind unto the unthankful and the evil. (*Verse 35e*)

Kind to the unthankful and evil: God's gracious kindness is the antidote to cold, calculating and ungrateful people. Because of God's gracious kindness, disciples of Jesus are empowered to love evil enemies who hate, curse and mistreat them. The kindness of God is part of His nine-fold LOVE. Jesus has now set the stage for the declaration of His final truth about God, namely:

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Bottom Line: You all must be becoming merciful, just as also your Father is being Merciful. (*Verse 36*)

Command: Jesus' thirteenth and final command is that because His disciples are also children of the highest God, they must have compassionate mercy on their enemies.

Children of God have mercy on enemies

Like Father, like children: The reason for the baker's dozen of commands Jesus gave His disciples is so they would be aware of and grateful for their Father God's great Mercy and LOVE for them; and, and they would also be empowered by the joy of living in His LOVE and Mercy to be merciful to others, even enemies. We can also live by God's impossible standard of love because of ...

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Exodus self-revelation: When Yahweh descended in cloud and stood with Moses, He declared: 'The LORD, The LORD God, merciful and gracious, longsuffering, and abundant in goodness (kindness, loving-kindness) and truth'. (*Exodus 34:5-6 KJV*)

In the Septuagint the word for merciful is the same word Jesus used to describe God as His Father and the Father of His disciples. And, the Hebrew word for goodness (kindness, loving-kindness) is used for God's covenant LOVE.

By using the word for 'merciful' from a declaration where the covenant God used the word for His covenant LOVE as a declaration of His Father's character, Jesus is also saying His Father has covenant LOVE for His children.

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Conclusion: Jesus commands His disciples to love their enemies, especially by their reactions to being mistreated. He contrasts godly love with calculating love which requires a return on investment. He concludes by saying those loving generously without expectations will have a great return because they are being merciful as their Father IS Merciful because of His steadfast LOVE. We begin our prayers by addressing God as Father because of:

God's Father LOVE

Whenever we pray, let us always remember how much Father God loves us.