

## The Sermon on the Plain

The “Sermon on the Plain” in Luke 6:20–49 mirrors the “Sermon on the Mount” in Matthew chapters 5, 6, and 7. This sermon is the most significant summary of Jesus’ teaching of the Christian faith (catechesis) during His ministry in Galilee.

### Outline

- Part I: Luke 6:20–26     Catechesis: The Two Ways—A Way of Life or a Way of Death
- Part II: Luke 6:27–38    The Imperatives of Catechesis
- Part III: Luke 6:39–49   The Goal of Catechesis

### Read the Sermon on the Plain, Part II: Luke 6:27–38

#### The Setting

- Who is listening to this sermon? See verses 20, 27, 40, 47. What does it mean to “hear” Jesus and His words?
- Are these rules of behavior that we can follow mechanically? Why or why not? If not mechanical, then how do they impact our lives and behavior as Christians?

v. 31 “The Golden Rule” provides the general principle for how Christians are to act. It echoes the words of Leviticus 19:18 to “love your neighbor as yourself.”

- Is the Golden Rule unique to Christianity? To “religious” people?
- How is the Christian to go beyond the Golden Rule? What is the motivation for this?

vv. 35–36 Imitate God—four imperatives

- “Love your enemies,” “do good,” and “lend” repeat things that have already been said in the previous verses. What is added here?
- How should we understand Jesus’ promise of a great “reward”? Does this conflict with the teaching that we are saved by faith? See also v. 23.
- A son is like his father. What is our Father like? What is His Son like? Give some examples. Therefore, who do we become as sons of the Most High? See Titus 3:1–8.
- How does word “merciful” color this entire section?

vv. 37–38 Do not judge—four imperatives

- How does the average “person on the street” understand or use these words?
- Jesus says what His disciples need to hear it. In what ways are we truly tempted to judge and condemn others, both outside and inside the Church?
- How are judging (that is, finding fault and condemning others) and forgiveness (or mercy) opposites? Connect this with Matthew 18:15–18.
- Judge not, and you will not be judged; forgive and you will be forgiven . . . *by whom*? Is God’s forgiveness then based on our forgiveness? If not, how are they related?
- Verse 38 refers to a market practice of packing grain to guarantee a good deal for the recipient. How does God’s forgiveness of us overflow into generosity?

From the Golden Rule (v. 31), Jesus moved to the general application of that principle in becoming merciful like our Father (v. 36), and then to the specific application of giving on the basis of that mercy (v. 38).

### **Read the Sermon on the Plain, Part III: Luke 6:39–49**

vv. 39–42 Enlightenment—sight instead of blindness

- What are disciples to first see about themselves? What is the goal of Jesus’ teaching? What has our Lord come to do for such as these? See Luke 2:30; 4:18; and 18:35–43.

vv. 43–45 Transformation—good fruit instead of bad fruit

- In short, character precedes action. How is a tree/disciple transformed? Where does this put the focus?

vv. 46–49 Foundation—house on the rock instead of house on the ground

- Outwardly the two kinds of houses/hearers may not look different. What kind of hearing does Jesus wish to impress upon us? See Luke 11:28 and James 1:22–25. What will reveal the difference between them?

The foundation is being laid on the person, teaching, and miracles of Jesus. It will be complete only with His suffering, death, resurrection, and ascension.

Reflect on today’s study. What two things do you wish to remember or take home with you?

## Read the Sermon on the Plain, Part II: Luke 6:27–38

### The Setting

- Who is listening to this sermon? See verses 20, 27, 40, 47. What does it mean to “hear” Jesus and His words? *The disciples; “those who hear”; a disciple; those who come to Jesus, hear His words, and do it. This likely include some from among the crowds who had been following Jesus. Hearing doesn’t just mean “in-one-ear-and-out-the-other.” The sound waves hitting the ear drum isn’t “hearing,” but hearing means to hear in faith and follow Him in life.*
  - Are these rules of behavior that we can follow mechanically? Why or why not? If not mechanical, then how do they impact our lives and behavior as Christians? *Not rules of behavior to follow mechanically but stimulus for the mind to draw out the implications for life in general. They make us pray, think, and consider how to respond in the situations we face. Nor can these be done apart from the presence of Christ and the gift of the Holy Spirit.*
- v. 31 “The Golden Rule” provides the general principle for how Christians are to act. It echoes the words of Leviticus 19:18 to “love your neighbor as yourself.”
- Is the Golden Rule unique to Christianity? To “religious” people? *It’s something even unregenerate sinners are capable of doing occasionally. Variations of it can be found in many cultures and law codes. Even those who have no morality tend to observe this in some fashion.*
  - How is the Christian to go beyond the Golden Rule? What is the motivation for this? *Those in Christ are enable by His grace to do what Christ does. They have the ability to give and go above and beyond the Golden Rule. The motivation is the undeserved love that we have received in Christ, not the expectation of getting something in return.*
- vv. 35–36 Imitate God
- “Love your enemies,” “do good,” and “lend” repeat things that have already been said. What is added here? *The promise of a reward, identification/status as sons of God, and likeness to our merciful Father.*
  - How should we understand Jesus’ promise of a great “reward”? Does this conflict with the teaching that we are saved by faith? See also v. 23. *The language of reward does not imply salvation by our good works or by our love. The act of loving one’s enemies follows faith and flows from faith. Jesus promises this reward not as something earned but rather as His free and gracious gift to His disciples as they endure hatred and persecution. We do not love for the sake of the reward, but we have the comfort that Jesus will reward those who love.*
  - A son is like his father. What is our Father like? What is His Son like? Give some examples. Therefore, who do we become as sons of the Most High? See Titus 3:1–8. *Our Father is kind to the ungrateful and evil; He is merciful. His Son is the same. We need their mercy and we receive their mercy. Therefore, we, too, are to exhibit these traits and characteristics. We become merciful—beginning now and fully in the life of the world to come. May our lives, marked by mercy, show who our Father is! Examples: Luke 5:27–39; 7:36–50; 10:30–37; 15:11–32; 18:9–14; 19:1–10; 23:34.*

- How does word “merciful” brighten this entire section? *The mercy of our Father is what we also need! His undeserved and unearned mercy is what makes us His sons and leads us to show mercy. We aren't children of the law or those who live by the law, but children of the Merciful Father.*

vv. 37–38 Do not judge

- How does the average “person on the street” understand or use these words? *They take “do not judge” to mean that every idea, action, or belief should be treated as equally valid and true as every other. Note that what Jesus says also has nothing to do with judicial decisions in court.*
- Jesus says what His disciples need to hear it. In what ways are we truly tempted to judge and condemn others, both outside and inside the Church? *Ironically, sometimes those most focused on love and mercy are the harshest in evaluating and judging others for their failures to love and show mercy! This is, in fact, a critique often leveled against Christians—that we are quick to talk about love but sometimes very poor at actually showing love.*
- How are judging (that is, finding fault and condemning others) and forgiveness (or mercy) opposites? Connect this with Matthew 18:15–18. *Forgiveness/mercy doesn't deny right and wrong or ignore the truth, but it chooses to forgive rather than to condemn. In Mathew 18, the entire reason for calling our neighbor's attention to his sin is so that he can receive forgiveness. So Jesus refers to unauthorized criticizing that we indulge in way too often. “The Christian cannot declare a wrong a good deed, but he can forgive it.”*
- Judge not, and you will not be judged; forgive and you will be forgiven . . . by whom? Is God's forgiveness then based on our forgiveness? If not, how are they related? *The implication is: By God! This is like the Lord's Prayer: “Forgive us our trespasses as we forgive those who trespass against us.” In writing about the Lord's Prayer, Martin Luther describes our forgiveness of others “as our confirmation and assurance, as a sign alongside of the promise” of our being forgiven. God doesn't forgive us because we forgive others. The way of life that makes possible forgiveness and generosity is the life of Christ Himself. His forgiveness flows through us to others.*
- Verse 38 refers to a market practice of packing grain to guarantee a good deal for the recipient. How does God's forgiveness of us overflow into generosity? *God not only forgives our sins, but He also gives us the added blessings of life and salvation, together with our daily bread and earthly provision.*

From the Golden Rule (v. 31), Jesus moved to the general application of that principle in becoming merciful like our Father (v. 36), and then to the specific application of giving on the basis of that mercy (v. 38).

### Read the Sermon on the Plain, Part III: Luke 6:39–49

#### vv. 39–42 Enlightenment—sight instead of blindness

- What are disciples to first see about themselves? What is the goal of Jesus' teaching? What has our Lord come to do for such as these? See Luke 2:30; 4:18; and 18:35–43. **They are to see themselves as blind guides and those who need instruction. Their eyes need to be opened by Christ. His teaching removes gives sight, removed the logs, and enlightens so that they have the proper understanding of mercy and goodness and know how to apply it to their neighbor. The goal is for the disciple to become like Jesus. The Pharisee is the prime example of this kind of hypocrisy—they even thought themselves superior to Jesus!**

#### vv. 43–45 Transformation—good fruit instead of bad fruit

- In short, character precedes action. How is a tree/disciple transformed? Where does this put the focus? **The term “conversion” captures this. Conversion in heart and mind is necessary, and from that flows the good fruit. This is the fruit of faith by which Christ dwells in us. Out of Christ flow actions such as loving your enemy, doing good to those who hate you, lending expecting nothing in return, and being merciful as the Father is merciful. This comes not from us but from the abundance of Christ. It puts the focus on Christ.**

#### vv. 46–49 Foundation—house on the rock instead of house on the ground

- Outwardly the two kinds of houses/hearers may not look different. What kind of hearing does Jesus wish to impress upon us? See Luke 11:28 and James 1:22–25. What will reveal the difference between them? **Hearing accompanied by following and doing. He doesn't want His disciples to forget. He wants them to be built on Himself and His word. When affliction, trials, and suffering come, the difference will be seen. Jesus wishes to preserve His followers from disaster.**

The foundation is being laid on the person, teaching, and miracles of Jesus. It will be complete only with His suffering, death, resurrection, and ascension.

Reflect on today's study. What two things do you wish to remember or take home with you?