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Luke 6:12-49  
February 15, 2026

### Jesus' Sermon on the Plain

Today we come to one of the most important teachings of Jesus. In Matthew's gospel we know it as a much longer version called The Sermon on the Mount. In Luke, which we will hear today, we know it as The Sermon on the Plain. Matthew describes the setting as up on a mountainside where Jesus sat down to teach his disciples. Luke tells us that Jesus came down from the mountainside after a night of solitude and prayer and then stood on a level place to teach. In both cases, Jesus was teaching his disciples along with large crowds that had come to follow him.

Matthew was an eye witness. Luke retold the story as it was passed down to him from others.

Matthew wrote primarily for Jewish hearers. Luke wrote for Gentile, non-Jewish hearers.

Two different stories of the same account.

I love how Luke sets the stage.

More and more attention was being drawn to Jesus and his disciples for the things he taught, the miracles he performed, and the crowds he drew. Jesus must have known that this would garner both support from the people and opposition from the religious leaders who felt threatened by his position of spiritual authority. Jesus also knew how important it would be for him to get away from the hubbub of ministry and retreat to quiet places where he could hear from God and discern what was most important to share first.

Author Alan Fadling in his book, *An Unhurried Life, Following Jesus' Rhythm of Work and Rest*, states that in Luke's gospel, Jesus withdrew to quiet places, no less than nine times. "You can chart Jesus' life among two axis points: the busier and more in demand and famous Jesus became, the more he withdrew to his quiet place to pray."<sup>1</sup>

And so that is from where Jesus had just come. His quiet place to pray. This teaching was birthed from deep communion with God the Father and the Holy Spirit.

So join me as we hear from Jesus in Luke 6:12-49 and we hear for ourselves from the Spirit of God. Luke wrote...

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<sup>1</sup> Alan Fadling, *An Unhurried Life, Following Jesus' Rhythms of Work and Rest* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2020), 130.

**12** On one of those days, Jesus went out to a mountainside to pray. He spent the night praying to God. **13** When morning came, he called for his disciples to come to him. He chose 12 of them and made them apostles. Here are their names.

**14** Simon, whom Jesus named Peter, and his brother Andrew, James, John, Philip, Bartholomew, **15** Matthew, Thomas, James, son of Alphaeus, Simon who was called the Zealot, **16** Judas, son of James and Judas Iscariot who would later hand Jesus over to his enemies.

**17** Jesus went down the mountain with them and stood on a level place. A large crowd of his disciples was there. A large number of other people were there too. They came from all over Judea, including Jerusalem. They also came from the coastland around Tyre and Sidon. **18** They had all come to hear Jesus and to be healed of their sicknesses. People who were troubled by evil spirits were made well. **19** Everyone tried to touch Jesus. Power was coming from him and healing them all.

**20** Jesus looked at his disciples. He said to them,  
“Blessed are you who are needy.

God’s kingdom belongs to you.

**21** Blessed are you who are hungry now.

You will be satisfied.

Blessed are you who are sad now.

You will laugh.

**22** Blessed are you when people hate you,  
when they have nothing to do with you  
and say bad things about you,  
and when they treat your name as something evil.

They do all this because you are followers of the Son of Man.

**23** “The prophets of long ago were treated the same way. When these things happen to you, be glad and jump for joy. You will receive many blessings in heaven.

**24** “But how terrible it will be for you who are rich!

You have already had your easy life.

**25** How terrible for you who are well fed now!

You will go hungry.

How terrible for you who laugh now!

You will cry and be sad.

**26** How terrible for you when everyone says good things about you!

Their people treated the false prophets the same way long ago.

**27** “But here is what I tell you who are listening. Love your enemies. Do good to those who hate you. **28** Bless those who call down curses on you. And pray for those who treat you badly. **29** Suppose someone slaps you on one cheek. Let them slap you on the other cheek as well. Suppose someone takes your coat. Don’t stop them from taking your shirt as well. **30** Give to everyone who asks you. And if anyone takes what belongs to you, don’t ask to get it back. **31** Do to others as you want them to do to you.

**32** “Suppose you love those who love you. Should anyone praise you for that? Even sinners love those who love them. **33** And suppose you do good to those who are good to you. Should anyone praise you for that? Even sinners do that. **34** And suppose you lend money to those who can pay you back. Should anyone praise you for that? Even a sinner lends to sinners, expecting them to pay everything back. **35** But love your enemies. Do good to them. Lend to them without expecting to get anything back. Then you will receive a lot in return. And you will be children of the Most High God. He is kind to people who are evil and are not thankful. **36** So have mercy, just as your Father has mercy.

**37** “If you do not judge other people, then you will not be judged. If you do not find others guilty, then you will not be found guilty. Forgive, and you will be forgiven. **38** Give, and it will be given to you. A good amount will be poured into your lap. It will be pressed down, shaken together, and running over. The same amount you give will be measured out to you.”

**39** Jesus also gave them another example. He asked, “Can a blind person lead another blind person? Won’t they both fall into a pit? **40** The student is not better than the teacher. But everyone who is completely trained will be like their teacher.

**41** “You look at the bit of sawdust in your friend’s eye. But you pay no attention to the piece of wood in your own eye. **42** How can you say to your friend, ‘Let me take the bit of sawdust out of your eye’? How can you say this while there is a piece of wood in your own eye? You pretender! First take the piece of wood out of your own eye. Then you will be able to see clearly to take the bit of sawdust out of your friend’s eye.

**43** “A good tree doesn’t bear bad fruit. And a bad tree doesn’t bear good fruit. **44** You can tell each tree by the kind of fruit it bears. People do not pick figs from thorns. And they don’t pick grapes from bushes. **45** A good man says good things. These come from the good that is stored up in his heart. An evil man says evil things. These come from the evil that is stored up in his heart. A person’s mouth says everything that is in their heart.

**46** “Why do you call me, ‘Lord, Lord,’ and still don’t do what I say? **47** Some people come and listen to me and do what I say. I will show you what they are like. **48** They are like a man who builds a house. He digs down deep and sets it on solid rock. When a flood comes, the river rushes against the house. But the water can’t shake it. The house is well built. **49** But here is what happens when people listen to my words and do not obey them. They are like a man who builds a house on soft ground instead of solid rock. The moment the river rushes against that house, it falls down. It is completely destroyed.”

Let us prayer. Prayer of Illumination.

Ok. That’s a lot to take in. But I want to zero in on several things. Who were Jesus disciples? What did he teach them here? Why did he think it was so important for them to learn this? And finally, what should we take away ourselves as Jesus’ disciples in our present context?

Jesus’ disciples were a mixed bag of marbles.

There was Simon which Jesus renamed Peter. Peter was a fisherman. I imagine him as a little rough around the edges. Passionate at heart. But not so good on the follow through. Peter was not very careful with his words. Insert foot in mouth, Peter.

Then there was James and John, two more fishermen, who Jesus nicknames “Sons of Thunder” most likely reflecting their impetuous, zealous, and temperamental nature. Two guys, like Peter, who were quick to judge and shoot off at the mouth. But John also refers to himself often as “the disciple who Jesus loved.” Those are hard things to reconcile.

Then there was Matthew, the tax collector. Boo! Hiss! People hated tax collectors because they were seen as Rome’s dirty men. They were Jews who often cheated their own people by charging exorbitant fees for the taxes they collected for Rome. Honesty and trustworthiness were not their strong suits.

Then there was Thomas...doubting Thomas. The one after Jesus’ resurrection who just would not believe that Jesus had risen from the dead based on other’s testimonies unless he could touch Jesus himself.

Then there was Simon the Zealot. Zealots were Galilean political revolutionaries who sought to overthrow the occupying Roman government. Their violent tactics labeled them as some of the world’s first terrorists. Zealots were known for carrying out assassinations by stabbing people in the back and then disappearing in the crowd. Yup. Simon was a follower of Jesus. And we can bet that he didn’t care for Matthew very much.

And finally there was Judas Iscariot, who betrayed Jesus and turned him into the religious authorities for a few silver coins.

There were others, but we just don’t know much about them.

As I said, this was a mixed bag. Probably not the shiniest coins in the lot. But Jesus knew what would become of them and how he would transform them over time.

But we can imagine that at this point in their discipleship that there was a lot of tension, division, and backstabbing within the group. They naturally would not have gotten along very well.

Today's lesson was sort of a Come to Jesus 101.

Don't think of yourself more highly than you ought. But lift up those who are poor.

Don't hate each other. But love even those enemies who hate you.

Don't judge one another. But look at yourself more carefully.

Don't be careless with your words. But watch what you say. Words are more powerful and harmful than you think.

And finally, don't just listen to what I tell you. Do it!

Very simple. And yet, o' so hard to live out. Right?

I'm sure that if Jesus ever gave a children's sermon back then, it would have been based off of Else Minarik's book, *No Fighting, No Biting*, about two little alligators siblings who just could not get along. I'm sure that was a favorite one of ours when our kids were little.

You see children's sermons are just as much for adults as they are for kids. Amen?

The same could have been said about Jesus' messages to the crowds. He could teach his disciples indirectly while he was teaching others.

So why was this important for them to learn? I think the reasons are two.

One, so that they would not kill each other!

But two, and most importantly, because people were watching how they would treat one another and ask, "Is theirs the life I want for myself?"

Just before his arrest and crucifixion, Jesus gathered these same disciples and told them, "A new command I give you: Love one another. As I have loved you, so you must love one another. By this all people will know you are my disciples, if you love one another."<sup>2</sup>

Jesus' message was intentional.

He knew how each of his disciples were wired. They were as different as night and day. And yet, Jesus still expected them to have the same character. To be kind. To love. To not judge. To watch their words.

He thought this was so important, but so hard to live out that he went one step further. He put his Holy Spirit in us so that we would reflect his character to the world.

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<sup>2</sup> John 13:34-35

But sadly throughout the ages, the Church has failed time and time again to live out these very simple commands.

Why? Because of sin, and the way Satan tries to destroy the unity that Jesus longed for his disciples by puffing us up with pride so that we think that somehow we are better than anyone else. That we have corner on faith, purity and love. That we have God's favor, but no-one else.

My friends, we are living in a day where many Christians are more aligned with their politics than Jesus' command to love. We've seen it ourselves in the news this past week when racist memes were used to demean the image of God in fellow Americans. This is not right. Any kindergartner could tell us that. And if we just laugh them off as harmless and not say something about them, then we are as complicit as if those comments came from ourselves. It has been said, "The only thing necessary for evil to triumph, is for good people to say nothing."

My friends, racism, racist jokes, or any sort of meme that demeans the image of God in anyone has no place within the lives of Christ followers. And they will have no place here in our church.

Confronting in love those who say or do things that conflict with Jesus' teaching is not judgement. It is accountability. The intent is not to punish, but to repent and restore. And it must all be couched in a spirit of gentleness, humility, and love. Not pride or this sense that we know better. But simply because we have all fallen short of loving our enemy from time to time.

Jesus closed this important lesson by telling his disciples an parable of a person who builds their house upon a rock foundation as opposed to one who did not. When, not if, but when, the storms of life blew against the house, the one with the solid rock foundation of Jesus' teachings will stand. But the one without collapses and it's destruction will be complete.

Jesus' teaching here is our rock. And if we base our lives off it, then we will be able to withstand any adversity that may come our way.

So friends, may we take heed of Jesus' words, remove the planks from our own eyes, so that we can then see clearly to point out the speck of dust in another's. "May we let no unwholesome talk come out of our mouths, but only what is helpful for building others up according to the their needs."<sup>3</sup> And may the world see that we are truly Jesus' disciples by the way we love another and so that they desire to follow Jesus themselves.

Maybe Bad Bunny got it right at the Super Bowl after all... The only thing more powerful than hate is love. Amen.

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<sup>3</sup> Ephesians 4:29