

## Luke 6:12 – 36

<sup>6:12</sup> It was at this time that he went off to the mountain to pray, and he spent the whole night in prayer to God. <sup>13</sup> And when day came, he called his disciples to him and chose twelve of them, whom he also named as apostles: <sup>14</sup> Simon, whom he also named Peter, and Andrew his brother; and James and John; and Philip and Bartholomew; <sup>15</sup> and Matthew and Thomas; James the son of Alphaeus, and Simon who was called the Zealot; <sup>16</sup> Judas the son of James, and Judas Iscariot, who became a traitor. <sup>17</sup> Jesus came down with them and stood on a level place; and there was a large crowd of his disciples, and a great throng of people from all Judea and Jerusalem and the coastal region of Tyre and Sidon, <sup>18</sup> who had come to hear him and to be healed of their diseases; and those who were troubled with unclean spirits were being cured. <sup>19</sup> And all the people were trying to touch him, for power was coming from him and healing them all. <sup>20</sup> And turning his gaze toward his disciples, he began to say, ‘Blessed are you who are poor, for yours is the kingdom of God. <sup>21</sup> Blessed are you who hunger now, for you shall be satisfied. Blessed are you who weep now, for you shall laugh. <sup>22</sup> Blessed are you when men hate you, and ostracize you, and insult you, and scorn your name as evil, for the sake of the Son of Man. <sup>23</sup> Be glad in that day and leap for joy, for behold, your reward is great in heaven. For in the same way their fathers used to treat the prophets. <sup>24</sup> But woe to you who are rich, for you are receiving your comfort in full. <sup>25</sup> Woe to you who are well-fed now, for you shall be hungry. Woe to you who laugh now, for you shall mourn and weep. <sup>26</sup> Woe to you when all men speak well of you, for their fathers used to treat the false prophets in the same way. <sup>27</sup> 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 mistreat you. <sup>29</sup> Whoever hits you on the cheek, offer him the other also; and whoever takes away your coat, do not withhold your shirt from him either. <sup>30</sup> Give to everyone who asks of you, and whoever takes away what is yours, do not demand it back. <sup>31</sup> Treat others the same way you want them to treat you. <sup>32</sup> If you love those who love you, what credit is that to you? For even sinners love those who love them. <sup>33</sup> If you do good to those who do good to you, what credit is that to you? For even sinners do the same. <sup>34</sup> If you lend to those from whom you expect to receive, what credit is that to you? Even sinners lend to sinners in order to receive back the same amount. <sup>35</sup> 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 Himself is kind to ungrateful and evil men. <sup>36</sup> Be merciful, just as your Father is merciful...

### Historical and Cultural Background

- *The twelve disciples:* Israel began with twelve brothers and twelve tribes in Genesis.
- *Jesus came down the mountain to speak:* Jesus was paralleling Mount Sinai. In Exodus 19, God invited Israel up the mountain, but only Moses went up to the top to meet with God (Ex.19:13; Dt.5:5). Moses came down the mountain to speak to Israel. Notice Jesus went up ‘the mountain’ (Lk.6:12, a curious phrase) to meet with God, called the twelve up to him, then ‘came down with them’ to speak (6:17).
- *Turning the other cheek:* A right handed person (assuming that the majority of people are right handed) would slap a person on the left cheek. How would you slap a person on the right cheek? With the back of your hand. So this attack would be a social insult. The Jewish Rabbis had a law based on oral tradition that said you could seek restitution in court for insults.
- *Clothes* were often used as collateral in Jewish culture and law (Ex.22:25 – 27 and Dt.24:10 – 13). It was what you needed at night to stay warm (Ex.22:27, Dt.24:12 – 13). It’s possible that Jesus was calling his disciples to forsake the collateral they had put down in order to borrow something. For example, if the fisherman disciples were borrowing someone else’s nets, or owed money on nets, they had to lose their collateral (clothes) because they were leaving their job to follow Jesus.

### Guiding Questions:

1. Why did Jesus choose these twelve men?
  - a. Is there a symbolic reason for the number 12? Is there a strategic reason? 12 is the number of the tribes of Israel. This is Jesus' new Israel. Jesus is forming a new chosen people. How seriously does Jesus seem to take this? Very seriously. He prays all night about it.
  - b. If you were one of these apostles, how might you feel? Excited! Jesus is doing something that symbolizes the foundations of your ethnic/national heritage. And he's doing it while your nation is enslaved to the Romans, in captivity to them. This has serious political overtones. The kingdom of God is a restoration of Israel in some sense. It demonstrates God's faithfulness to His covenant.
2. For you, what does it mean to be 'blessed'? Why?
  - a. This is Jesus' definition of the good life, or what it means to be blessed. After you've read this teaching of Jesus, what is your reaction?
  - b. Who is blessed? Why? Why are the disciples going to be poor, hungry, sad, and hated?
    - i. Perhaps because they are that way when they come to Jesus; Jesus does offer hope.
    - ii. But certainly because of his own teaching. It's pretty hard to imagine anyone following what Jesus says here and becoming fantastically wealthy.
  - c. Who is Jesus speaking to in v.24 – 26? Perhaps the multitude? Other disciples who aren't really committed? Does it matter?
  - d. Why would Jesus expect his disciples to be persecuted for his sake?
3. What does Jesus perceive about human relationships? He sees that human relationships are reciprocal (Lk.6:32 – 34). Leader: illustrate a reciprocal relationship
4. How does he seek to reshape relationships in his movement? Jesus calls us go beyond reciprocation. His minimum standard for loving others is how we would like to be treated, not the way we are treated.
  - a. Before we interpret this to the extreme of being a doormat, or passively letting others commit evil (e.g. sexual harassment, etc.), let's see what Jesus is actually saying.
  - b. In another place, Jesus teaches about confronting a Christian person who sins (Mt.18:15 – 17 and Lk.17:1 – 10). That's important both for Christians who don't try to live this out, but also for those who try to abuse our generosity and forgiveness. In the church, there are appropriate measures to take to get recourse, be heard, make a case, etc. Presumably if there are appropriate measures outside the church, i.e. with the appropriate legal authorities, those measures can be considered. What Jesus says below will have a bearing on how we do that.
  - c. How is this related to Jesus' own way of treating enemies and material wealth? He loved his enemies, and prayed for them even when they were crucifying him. Ultimately, he is really the standard he gives to his disciples. He lives what it means to be God's true humanity. He calls us to share in his life.
5. Loving enemies (6:27 – 28):
  - a. In a parallel passage in Matthew's Gospel (Mt.5:38 – 48), Jesus contrasts loving your persecutors, who persecute you for your faith (an important definition here), with the Old Testament law of lex talionis, an eye for an eye. This appears in three places in the Torah both as a limit and a just penalty for an injury committed against someone else (Ex.21:22 – 23; Lev.24:19 – 20; Dt.19:21).
  - b. We are not to seek to do the same thing to someone else, i.e. to inflict the same injury on them which they did to us. Also, Jesus had already taught about anger and reconciliation (Mt.5:21 – 26). So, we are supposed to approach someone if they have hurt us, to try to work out what reconciliation would mean.
  - c. Illus: me trying to bless my parents despite their opposition to my faith
6. Cheeks (6:29a)
  - a. What is a slap on the right cheek? A slap on the left?
  - b. What would it mean to make your other (left) cheek vulnerable? What hand would your opponent have to use to slap your left cheek? Back of his left hand. That would be even more awkward.
  - c. What's Jesus' intention here? Calling attention to your opponent's willingness to insult you (presumably for following Jesus, see 5:10 – 12), even if it's awkward for them to do it.
  - d. Practical application: Your reputation is not your own
7. Coats and shirts (6:29b)

- a. Clothes were often used as collateral in Jewish culture and law (Ex.22:25 – 27 and Dt.24:10 – 13). Coats were what you needed at night to stay warm (Ex.22:27, Dt.24:12 – 13). So why would someone want to sue you and take your coat? Because you are following Jesus now and they are upset they lost their investment in you.
  - b. It's possible that Jesus was calling his disciples to forsake the collateral they had put down in order to borrow something. For example, if the fisherman disciples were borrowing someone else's nets, or owed money on nets, they had to lose their collateral (coats) because they were leaving their job to follow Jesus. But Jesus also wants his disciples to part on good terms, as much as possible. Others are losing an investment in us.
  - c. My parents paid for my early life and college education expecting to get a massive return on their investment. This is a typical Confucian expectation that many East Asian parents have, and being Japanese-American, my parents cherished it. But they were very disappointed. Since I gave my life to Jesus late in high school, and then proceeded to let him – and not my greed or self-advancement – lead me in my career decisions, I did not make a lot of money. At different points in time, my mom angrily asked me to pay back the college tuition she and my dad invested in me. I offered to make monthly payments. But eventually she just threw up her hands. Now this was not a lawsuit, and our relationship was far deeper and longer-lasting than any creditor-debtor relationship. Nevertheless, I felt like there was an aspect of Jesus' love that I needed to honor. I needed to step up my expressions of love to my mom, especially, because I had so broken from the value system she held. I began to call home every weekend. And even though I could not agree with every wish they had, or honor many of their values, I made sure I listened very carefully to them and restrained myself from getting angry whenever we disagreed.
  - d. If you are in a job, and have recently come to Jesus, you may need to pray about your relationship with your supervisor. Jesus calls us to be competent enough to fulfill the responsibilities we take on, but not necessarily to be 'the best' at it and to climb the corporate ladder (1 Corinthians 7:17 – 35). He calls us to love others and be involved in his kingdom work in ways that will reorient your life. Loving your family, loving your neighbors, and making disciples with other Christians will surely affect how many hours you can spend in the office.
  - e. If you are dating someone, and have recently come to Jesus, or just recently started taking him seriously, you may need to graciously explain to your significant other about your new commitment to Jesus. If he or she also wants to make that commitment with you, then great! But if that person does not, there is some reflection you need to do: You have probably begun to sense a disconnect with the other person over whether Jesus is welcome as a third party to your relationship, and whether his mission is going to be the framework for how you live your life. Jesus and his apostles call Christians to marry Christians (since Paul counsels believers to get married 'only in the Lord' in 1 Corinthians 7:39, also implied by Ephesians 5:18 – 33 and 2 Corinthians 6:14 – 18). I think the only godly reason for serious dating is a discernment process for marriage (Song of Songs 1:1 – 3:5), because 'mutually using each other' and 'just having fun' are too hedonistic as motivations, and 'self-discovery' comes in the context, not of dating, but of loving Jesus and serving him with other Christians who are growing in the same way (Matthew 5 – 7; Romans 6 – 12; 1 Corinthians 12 – 14). It's emotionally manipulative and harmful to date someone based on some 'potential' – spiritual or otherwise – that you see in them. And, the longer you're together, the more painful it is to break bonds (emotional, physical), so it makes sense to break up sooner rather than later. The path of spiritual integrity, kindness, and honesty is to bring healthy closure to the romance and transition your relationship into friendship if you can. I can explain all this in much greater depth elsewhere. But that is the additional 'coat' which Jesus calls you to give someone who bears some of the cost of you coming to him.
  - f. Application: Your future financial standing and past obligations are not your own. If someone is trying to stop you from following Jesus in a situation like this, you take the appropriate losses.
  - g. Are there ways that Jesus' call on your life strains your past commitments, and even future standing with some people? Is there any gift you can offer others – whether large or small – that will offset commitments that you may have to break?
8. Give to everyone who asks (6:30)
    - a. What would Jesus observe about the way you treat their money and wealth? Is it limited to reciprocity? E.g. buying lunch for someone when you know they will treat you another time

- b. A caveat is that I don't always give to homeless people, and certainly not to telemarketers or people asking for causes that I don't (or that Jesus doesn't) value. Here's my best attempt at honoring Jesus' teaching. First, I think Jesus really does mean for our lives to be one continuous display of generosity. He was radically generous; he gave up the soaring freedom of heaven to be limited as a human man living among a relatively poor and oppressed people. And in his day to day life, he cared for people. If our lives are meant to reflect his love and goodness, by his Spirit living in us, he will do similar things through us.
- c. But second, I think Jesus intends for us to give proportionately more to the poor. Israel, under God's command in the Mosaic Law, already had a strong ethic of helping the poor (Dt.15:7 – 10). And we know that Jesus calls us to go even deeper and further than the Mosaic Law. Look at how similar the language is: Dt.15:7 If there is a poor man with you, one of your brothers, in any of your towns in your land which the LORD your God is giving you, you shall not harden your heart, nor close your hand from your poor brother; 8 but you shall freely open your hand to him, and shall generously lend him sufficient for his need in whatever he lacks...10 You shall generously give to him, and your heart shall not be grieved when you give to him, because for this thing the LORD your God will bless you in all your work and in all your undertakings. 11 For the poor will never cease to be in the land; therefore I command you, saying, 'You shall freely open your hand to your brother, to your needy and poor in your land.'
- d. So that means I probably don't give money to already wealthy people who are irresponsible or people who may be trying to con me. I can try to be generous with my time, energy, and money, but I cannot do everything at once. I have to make real choices between all kinds of people who are asking things of me.
- e. When I graduated from college in 1994, I got a job at Intel, and soon afterwards I moved into a Mexican immigrant community in East Palo Alto, CA to do ministry there. One morning, I was heading out to work, and Graciela Sanchez, a grandmother who was about 50 years old, asked me if I could give her a ride to work. Her usual ride, she told me, had been arrested. So I gave her a ride that day. We spoke in Spanish so I could practice. I gave her a ride the next day. I got to know her family better. I gave her rides to and from her work for over a year. Needless to say, that constrained my work hours. This was during the heyday of the late 90's when the stock price was doubling every year. Employee surveys showed that over 2/3 of all Intel employees worked more than 50 hours a week. Usually, single people lead the rat race because it's not until you're married do other people look at you as if you have a life outside of work. But I wasn't married then; instead, I was doing enjoying what Jesus was doing through me, enjoying my Christian team of friends, and discipling some younger guys. One day my supervisors offered me a promotion. I thought and prayed about it, studied Scripture, and decided NO. It would require too much from me. Some said, 'Really? You'd get more stock, more impact in the company, more visibility. Plus, we could use your help here.' I said, 'I'm sorry. I'm a Christian, and I feel like what Jesus is doing with me outside of work is too valuable – I don't want to cut into that.' Within the next year, they offered me another promotion, and I turned that one down, too. By the time I was there for 4 years or so, I had mastered my job and was working about 30 hours a week. People knew that I loved Jesus and that he mattered to me, not least because every Monday, my co-workers asked me how my weekend was, and I told them about the youth in my apartment, about how we prayed for them, about how we valued spiritual mentoring, about how I saw families that had been transformed. And most importantly in this example, Grandma Graciela had asked me if I could be 'el padrino' – the godfather – to her son Uriel. In Mexican culture, that is a huge privilege, and I felt very honored. I was able to share that. All these opportunities happened because I allowed Jesus to shape my heart and my responses.
- f. That leads me to my third conclusion. I don't think that Jesus means that I have to give people exactly what they ask for. The overall context of Jesus' teaching on the heart and the movement of his kingdom suggest to me that he thinks of giving as a way of starting or deepening a relationship. But it's unmanageable that I give exactly what people ask for. So I have carried apples and oranges in my car to give to homeless people on the street; I feel better about that than giving money, although they haven't always taken fruit. I do try to be flexible when people borrow money from me and wind up owing me, but I politely ask them to repay me, too, because I think it's good for resourced American people to be respectful of their commitments, so that I can give more money to overseas ministries.

- g. Fourth, all this helps me to not be just reactive, and give when people ask me, but to study my giving options and set priorities beforehand. I want my family to be proactive, and give a significant amount of money especially to the poor. My wife and I periodically re-evaluate where we're giving to, and how much. I also offer my opinion to my church that we give to effective ministries in poor countries, to a homeless ministry in Boston, and to a youth summer job fund to give urban kids the chance to work.
  - h. I just hope, when I meet Jesus face to face, that he will say, 'Well done in this area, good and faithful servant.' I hope you make it a spiritual discipline to learn about organizations especially helping the poor around the world. Start with Opportunity International, the Mennonite Central Committee, and World Vision. I also hope you get to know someone who is homeless. Understand their story. And check out this newspaper article about Christians living simply, to give more generously, in community: <http://www.csmonitor.com/Business/2009/0201/a-spiritual-approach-to-money>. Is there an organization working in the field of global poverty that you feel led to give towards?
9. How is Jesus' teaching different from our expectations?
- a. He's not a 'prosperity gospel' teacher. He doesn't say that we'll become rich. He says he leads us into a life of sacrifice and generosity. We will become rich in a spiritual sense, in character and in relationship with God and others.
  - b. He's not a triumphalist or military leader. He sets our expectations that we'll have to deal with persecution, struggle, and wrestling with one's self. But he believes that this is the blessed life. To not is to face the woes.
  - c. This is radical stuff! Francis of Assisi, Dietrich Bonhoeffer, Leo Tolstoy, Mohandas Gandhi, and Martin Luther King Jr. saw this section as fundamental to Jesus' message.