



mercy

Luke 6:35–36

35 But love your enemies, do good to them, and lend to them without expecting to get anything back. Then your reward will be great, and you will be children of the Most High, because he is kind to the ungrateful and wicked. 36 Be merciful, just as your Father is merciful.

Reflection

(Today's reflection is given by Craig Tub-

man)

I think it was roughly 30 years of age. 30 years of living, breathing, growing, maturing, before I realised how much I had taken on of my father's own personality. Perhaps it was 35 years of age – when I finally got married, that the likeness shifted from an inner musing to a tangible reality. My dad has a bunch of strengths and a lot of weaknesses and guess what, so do I.

It's not surprising and yet it is so weird that we absorb our parents. Even for those of us with absent parents or parents we've never known, even that has left a mark. Every child bears the marks of their parents.

And I think this is the gateway unto un-

derstanding the teaching of Jesus we are exploring here in Luke chapter 6. You see, the Son of God – Jesus – reflects God the Father. In chapter 5 Jesus had shown power over disease and paralysis, he had declared a sinful man forgiven, he had shared a meal with an isolated and condemned sub-culture and he had called a bunch of people to come follow him as his disciples.

The writer of Hebrews starts his letter this way:

“In the past God spoke to our ancestors through the prophets at many times and in various ways, but in these last days he has spoken to us by his Son, whom he appointed heir of all things, and through whom

also he made the universe.”

In reading through Luke chapter 6 we've already established that God's Kingdom is so very different to our own. But in today's text we see clearer than ever why we, as his followers, would see our own lives changed by this faith journey.

Far from being a prerequisite to entry into God's family, the life Jesus is speaking of is the character of God himself. Now Jesus, the Son already resembles his 'dad' in every way. But in effect he is saying, come follow me and start being shaped by another parent. Not your earthly parent but your heavenly parent. “Be merciful, just as your Father is merciful.”

Of course what Jesus teaches in today's

passage would have been considered bizarre at best, treasonous at worst. I mean, did I read this right? Jesus says; “But love your enemies, do good to them, and lend to them without expecting to get anything back.” Do you realise when Jesus said these words? And where? It was roughly 33AD in the Middle East near Jerusalem. This was a powder keg of political and cultural tension. There was internal conflicts in the Israelite community that led to assassinations and sharp division. There was cultural conflict between Israelites and Samaritans there was national conflict between the Romans and those they had conquered – this was not taught in ‘a time long ago’ when everyone got along. Jesus was teaching in the middle of war zone.

I don't know how the original hearers would have received this teaching. But I guarantee they would have had to do a double-take on what Jesus was saying. This is serious stuff. And the question must have arisen – why should I love my enemies? Why should I love the Samaritans? Why should I seek to love the Romans? And for us today: why should I seek to love my atheist work colleague who mocks my faith? Why should I seek to love my family member who has given me the 'cold shoulder' for the past 5 years? Why should I love ... my enemies?

The answer from Jesus:

“Then your reward will be great, and you will be children of the Most High, because he is kind to the un-

grateful and wicked. Be merciful, just as your Father is merciful.”

Think & Pray

Because when you start loving your enemies you'll know that you are starting to resemble the family likeness. God is kind to the ungrateful and the wicked. Let me read that again to you: “God is kind to the ungrateful and the wicked”.

For some of us hearing these words from Jesus today will be a powerful reminder of who's family we're in and 'how it's done around here'. It's a good reminder that our heavenly dad loves those who are hard to love and I want to grow up to love like him. And I hope you can take this into your day today and live it out in some way.

For others of us hearing these words from Jesus today we feel a sense of dread. Because right now, right this very day we know who our enemy is. We have a name, a face, a turn of phrase that comes to our minds and hearts. And the last thing we want to do is love them. Perhaps we don't feel capable of loving them. And if that is you, then I would say it's okay to sit in that space. It's where you are. It's counterproductive denying your reality. But I also see the gentle arm of a loving heavenly father being put across your shoulder and with a loving voice say: 'What's up kid? Why the hatred? That's not how we do things in this family, how can we move through this?'

Jesus who speaks these words in Luke 6

is inviting you into his family. He already resembles the Father, but he'd love you to be shaped like him as well. And as Jesus shares this new way of life, he does so wanting to walk the journey with you. He promised he'd do this by giving us who follow him his Spirit. And maybe as you set your hearts on God's goodness to you, the Spirit may slowly allow you to love your enemies in ways you never thought possible.

Why not take some time today to reflect on God's love for you. Jesus said; "God is kind to the ungrateful and the wicked". Start reflecting on the character of God that Jesus reveals. Where he has been gracious to you. Where he has been patient with you. Where he has shown forgiveness to you. Why not sit with that thought

for a while and then consider what your day may look like as you slowly grow up to resemble your heavenly father.