



Luke 6:32–34

32 'If you love those who love you, what credit is that to you? Even sinners love those who love them. 33 And if you do good to those who are good to you, what credit is that to you? Even sinners do that. 34 And if you lend to those from whom you expect repayment, what credit is that to you? Even sinners lend to sinners, expecting to be repaid in full.

Reflection

(Today's reflection is given by Justin Mof-fatt)

My text today is part of a section where Jesus says that being 'like your Heavenly Father changes' how you live and deal with those who hate you, and how you love your enemies. He says in Luke 6:32-34 (my text today):

“If you love those who love you, what credit is that to you? Even sinners love those who love them. 33 And if you do good to those who are good to you, what credit is that to you? Even sinners do that. 34 And if you lend to those from whom you expect repayment, what credit

is that to you? Even sinners lend to sinners, expecting to be repaid in full.

Pastor Paul Tripp once wrote this about the Bible:

“God also knew that in this fallen world, there would be a din of voices, all vying for our hearts, all considering the same set of facts, yet each giving them a very different meaning. God’s Word was given to cut through all the confusion and exegete life for us.”

Nowhere is this more important than in the area of how we treat our enemies. There is a din of voices on how you treat those you don’t like. Because you could argue that

the problem with our world isn't just sin. (Sin is the stubbornness we have towards God. It is a cynical heart. It is our wilfulness that results in destructive behaviours). It's not just sin that hurts, but cycles of sin: a race to the bottom in how we live, and treat each other. 'I'm hurt, so I'll hurt you.' 'I was bullied, so I'll bully you.' 'You did wrong, I'll get you back.' 'You threw a rock and me, and I'll throw you a bigger one back!' Author Philip Yancey called them Cycles of Ungrace.

These last few days (and tomorrow), we are asking a simple question: Is there a better way? Is there a more excellent way? There is. It is called 'the way of love' in the Corinthian correspondence. In Ephesians 5:1 Paul writes:

5:1 'Follow God's example, therefore, as dearly loved children 2 and walk in the way of love, just as Christ loved us and gave himself up for us as a fragrant offering and sacrifice to God.'

Jesus says (you'll hear this tomorrow):

6:35 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.

Jesus lays the groundwork for such a remark with these three observations (in

our text today) about unremarkable living. Namely: if you love those who love you; if you 'do good' to those who are good to you; and if you lend to those who pose no risk of default, then don't pat yourself on the back! You think you've done something good: you've loved someone; you've done good to someone; you've helped someone out financially! But don't pat yourself on the back. You've done only what sinner's easily do; what anyone can easily do.

So clearly, Jesus is saying, his followers must be different to this. They must go beyond this. They must be 'like your heavenly father'.

Think

If we reflect carefully on this, we will be awakened to a few more questions: How do I live wisely when I'm hurt? How do I treat an enemy? How do I handle my heart in such situations? And what is the fuel for such behaviour?

And what about Jesus? How will the paradigm of the death of Jesus help me? How will the resurrection of Jesus drive me? Is there something even more powerful in this world than my need for justice right now?

The Apostle Peter first heard these words from the lips of Jesus. Then he saw it modelled when Christ went to the cross. Then he wrote about it in his first Epistle. His words echo Jesus' words:

But how is it to your credit if you receive a beating for doing wrong and endure it? But if you suffer for doing good and you endure it, this is commendable before God. 21 To this you were called, because Christ suffered for you, leaving you an example, that you should follow in his steps.

22 “He committed no sin,
and no deceit was found in his mouth.”

23 When they hurled their insults at him, he did not retaliate; when he suffered, he made no threats. Instead, he entrusted himself to him who judges justly. 24 “He himself bore our sins” in his body on the

cross, so that we might die to sins and live for righteousness; “by his wounds you have been healed.”
25 For “you were like sheep going astray,” but now you have returned to the Shepherd and Overseer of your souls. 1 Pet 2:20–25

The reason I can love people who hate me is that Jesus loved people who hated him. But he also knew that God would judge them. He left that judgement in God’s hands. And he really believed that God really would judge them. And this freed him to say nothing when they insulted him. This knowledge, and the knowledge of the joy on the other side of death, helped him to be different.

So what we have here is the process of

short-circuiting anger, of short-circuiting judgmentalism, of short-circuiting the bitterness, the ugliness, the injustice, and the bullying in the world. We don't add fuel to the flame. We douse it, like our Saviour did.

And rising from such behaviour is a new and better world. Jesus called it the Kingdom of God. Enacted and ushered in now, but with decisive fulfilment at his appearing.

Pray

So pray: 'Maranatha'. Come Lord Jesus. Come and usher in your Kingdom. And may it start with me and my heart. Come and show me how to live and love. Show me how to do it without becoming a doormat.

Show me how to do it with strength. Show me how to do life so it's not just repaying kind for kind. Show me how to short-circuit all the anger and the judgement. The Apostle James urges his readers in 2:12:

“Speak and act as those who are going to be judged by the law that gives freedom, because judgment without mercy will be shown to anyone who has not been merciful. Mercy triumphs over judgment!”

Show me how to be different.