

MINISTRY BY MAIL
Lutheran Conference of Confessional Fellowship
www.lutheranlccf.org
Sexagesima Sunday, February 12, 2023

✠ ✠ ✠

(Hymns found in The Lutheran Hymnal, CPH, 1941)

Hymns: 394, 401, 412, 396, 391.

Lessons: Isaiah 55:10-13, 1 Timothy 6:6-19, Luke 6:17-36.

Sermon Text: Luke 6:27-31.

Sermon by Pastor Robert Mehlretter

In the name of Jesus Christ, Dear Fellow Redeemed,

I think that most of you have heard of “the Golden Rule”. It is a principle that is found in most religions and cultures. Our Bible text today says ***“Do to others as you would have them do to you.”***

So, what good does it do for you if you follow this “rule” or even try to follow this “rule? Well, in everyday life, I think we could hope that if we are nice to other people, they will be nice to us. We would hope that if we treat them well, they will treat us well. Maybe in a perfect world that might be true.

But what kind of world are we living in? If you think that we are living in a perfect world, or even in a “good” world you have not been paying any attention to what is really happening in the world. You are forgetting about sin. Every human sins daily and much and we in our worship service just confessed our sins to God and received the assurance of the forgiveness of our sins.

Even our children know that other people don’t always want to be nice to them.

But some people have thought that because those words are found in the Bible, it must be something that we should do and then we will be rewarded by God.

Today, let’s look at what Jesus really has to say when he gives us what people have called the golden rule, something that many people think you should and must follow and obey so that good things happen to you.

WHAT ABOUT “THE GOLDEN RULE”?

- 1. What does this really mean?**
- 2. What does this earn for us?**
- 3. How can it apply to our lives?**

I think that most of you have also heard the worldly proverb that “turnabout is fair play”. That means that if someone has harmed you, it is fair and OK for a person to do something to harm them. That idea is used to justify ‘paying someone back’ with evil even if you might think that you have been harmed in some way. “He did it to me first.” “She wasn’t nice to me so I don’t have to be nice to her.” “They deserve it because they really were mean to me.” Those are all expressions used to justify what is really wicked, sinful behavior, words and attitudes

But Jesus tells us just the opposite when he ends our sermon text with the words ***“Do to others as you would have them do to you.”***

Jesus’ words are encouraging you to be good. It is encouraging you to be nice to others and to treat them well. And it is sort of hinting that you might want to do this so that they are nice to you and treat you well in return.

For many people, this is a way to earn favor or merit with God. If we consider this Bible passage as a command from God or as a law, this is one of the most obvious examples of work-righteousness. You know, the false idea that “if I am good, God will reward me.” “If I work hard enough at being good, I will be considered a good person, even in God’s eyes.” But that is not what Jesus is saying.

Jesus had just told his disciples that they are blessed, and that they will be blessed in the future. He told them that ***“yours is the kingdom of God. Blessed are you who hunger now, for you will be satisfied. Blessed are***

you who weep now, for you will laugh. Blessed are you when men hate you, when they exclude you and insult you and reject your name as evil, because of the Son of Man. Rejoice in that day and leap for joy, because great is your reward in heaven.” Luke 6:20-23 (NIV)

You – and everyone who believes in Jesus Christ as the only Savior from all their sins – will receive, and actually have received, the kingdom of God. The ultimate gift is ***“your reward in heaven.”***

Because of the faith, the trust, the confidence God has placed into your hearts, the kingdom of God, God ruling in your hearts is yours now.

He even reminds us that men will hate you, exclude you, and insult you and reject you as if you were evil because of Jesus Christ. Throughout the world believers in Jesus Christ are persecuted. In our own nation believers in Jesus Christ are persecuted when they proclaim and seek to live the truth of God’s Word. Sometimes even among people you know personally, Satan takes over hearts and words and fights against the truth of God’s Word. Jesus even reminds his disciples that the prophets who taught God’s Word were treated in this way: hate, exclusion, insults, and rejection. ***“For that is how their fathers treated the prophets.”***

Then he told them that those who seek their lives in this world will receive woe, sadness, and destruction. ***“But woe to you who are rich, for you have already received your comfort. Woe to you who are well fed now, for you will go hungry. Woe to you who laugh now, for you will mourn and weep. Woe to you when all men speak well of you, for that is how their fathers treated the false prophets.”*** Luke 6:24-26 (NIV) That ultimate woe, sadness and destruction will be eternal damnation in hell.

So what about that ‘golden rule’, the guideline, the proverb ***“Treat others the same way you want them to treat you”*** Luke 6:31 (NASB)?

Listen again to what Jesus tells us what we are to do with our lives: ***“But I tell you who hear me: Love your enemies, do good to those who hate you, bless those who curse you, pray for those who mistreat you. If someone strikes you on one cheek, turn to him the other also. If someone takes your cloak, do not stop him from taking your tunic. Give to everyone who asks you, and if anyone takes what belongs to you, do not demand it back. Do to others as you would have them do to you.”*** Luke 6:27-31 (NIV)

You know, because of our sinful flesh, our “old man” which is always clinging to us, we really don’t want to live like Jesus tells us here. We don’t want to love those who hate us. We don’t want to pray for those who curse and mistreat us. We want to strike back when someone strikes us, whether it is physical striking, or attacking us in any other way. If someone takes something from us, we don’t want to encourage him by giving more.

So if we actually do think and especially do such things, then what? What will it earn us?

Well, it doesn’t earn heaven. How many times have you heard these words from Ephesians? ***“For it is by grace you have been saved, through faith--and this not from yourselves, it is the gift of God--not by works, so that no one can boast.”*** Ephesians 2:8-9 (NIV)

Being good, saying the right words, thinking good thoughts doesn’t get us to heaven.

So what place does the golden rule have in our lives when Jesus tells us ***“Do to others as you would have them do to you”***? Luke 6:31 (NIV)

Such attitudes, words, and behavior are fruits of faith. They grow out of faith in Jesus Christ who redeemed you from the eternal damnation you deserve because of your sins. They are evidence of faith. They may then be seen by others as fruits that Jesus Christ is living in your heart, that you are a member of his kingdom.

The purpose for which our Savior gave us these words is to guide our fruits of faith. We don’t earn any favor or merit from God by doing these things. We don’t earn our way into heaven. These words give us some practical wisdom for life, so that we may be fully prepared for serving our Savior and our fellow man.

In this way our lives ***“declare the praises of [our God] who called you out of darkness into his wonderful light.”*** 1 Peter 2:9 (NIV)

Jesus even gives specific examples of how such thoughts, words, and actions without faith in him are no different from unbelievers, from those who reject Jesus as Savior, from pagans.

“If you love those who love you, what credit is that to you? Even ‘sinners’ love those who love them. And if you do good to those who are good to you, what credit is that to you? Even ‘sinners’ do that. 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. 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 sons of the Most High, because he is kind to the ungrateful and wicked. Be merciful, just as your Father is merciful.” Luke 6:17-36 (NIV)

So our text does show us the will of God. It is a guide for sanctification, of living God-pleasing lives. It reminds us of what God has done for us in love and is a guide for serving God and our fellow mankind. Jesus is even very specific: ***“bless those who curse you, pray for those who mistreat you. If someone strikes you on one cheek, turn to him the other also. If someone takes your cloak, do not stop him from taking your tunic. Give to everyone who asks you, and if anyone takes what belongs to you, do not demand it back.”***

Remember how much Jesus loved us. He suffered for us. Isaiah tells us ***“He was oppressed and afflicted, yet he did not open his mouth; he was led like a lamb to the slaughter, and as a sheep before her shearers is silent, so he did not open his mouth.”*** Isaiah 53:7 (NIV) The apostle Paul and other heroes of faith suffered even unjustly because of their faith and seeking to serve Jesus. Paul wrote to Christians in Corinth: ***“As God's fellow workers we urge you not to receive God's grace in vain. We put no stumbling block in anyone's path, so that our ministry will not be discredited. Rather, as servants of God we [have placed ourselves] in troubles, hardships and distresses; in beatings, imprisonments and riots; in hard work, sleepless nights and hunger.”*** 2 Corinthians 6:1,3-5 (NIV) He tells them he has ***“been exposed to death again and again. Five times I received from the Jews the forty lashes minus one. Three times I was beaten with rods, once I was stoned., I have been ... in danger from my own countrymen, in danger from Gentiles; in danger in the city, in danger in the country, in danger at sea; and in danger from false brothers.”*** 2 Corinthians 11:23-26 (NIV)

Paul also wrote ***“as we have opportunity, let us do good to all people, especially to those who belong to the family of believers.”*** Galatians 6:10 (NIV)

No matter how badly anyone treats us, “payback” is not to be part of our lives. Instead, we are to give, to share, to serve.

In our lives of sanctification, we must always ask ourselves ‘what can I do for others out of love for Jesus?’

Jesus is even more specific in the verses following our text: ***“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 sons of the Most High, because he is kind to the ungrateful and wicked. Be merciful, just as your Father is merciful.”*** Luke 6:35-36 (NIV)

So as we “do unto others” we are always conscious of our heavenly Father’s gift of grace. Amen.