

We're continuing our series in the Gospel of Luke, and we're currently in Luke's version of the Sermon on the Mount. And I reckon we've probably already realised, that these words of Jesus, are some of the most challenging and the most confronting we're ever going to hear.

Last week we were given a picture of the extraordinary love of God – the love and mercy that we've received (even though we didn't deserve it) (And that's wonderful to hear). But of course, the teaching that goes along with that, is that because we've **received** this extraordinary love and mercy from God, Disciples of Jesus are to love others, and we are to be merciful toward **others** in the same way (even though **they** don't deserve it), and so Jesus says outlandish things like:

- love your enemies;
- pray for those who persecute you;
- turn the other cheek;
- If someone takes your coat, give them your shirt as well;
- give, expecting nothing in return...

And we finished off last week with V36, which not only summed up last week, but it also sets the tone for what we read today: ³⁶ **Be merciful, even as your Father is merciful.**

Righto.

So, in **today's** bible reading, there are:

- several commands;
- a couple of parables; and
- a metaphor

And with them all flowing, one into the other, they take us on a journey to personal Godliness/Christ-likeness.

We gotta remember, this is a sermon. And it's a well-constructed sermon. And that's what a sermon does – it takes us on a journey – it uses commandments; stories; metaphors to shift us from a human mindset, to the things of God.

So, let's begin with the commands, and these commands are in keeping with the tone set by ³⁶ **Be merciful, even as your Father is merciful.**

The commands:...

- ³⁷ **"Judge not, and you will not be judged;**
- **condemn not, and you will not be condemned;**
- **forgive, and you will be forgiven;**
- ³⁸ **give, and it will be given to you....**

This is all about being merciful, as our Heavenly Father is merciful.

Mercy begins by **not** criticising and not condemning one's neighbours. At this point, we're talking about how we relate to **un**believers (people of the world). That's going to change:- when we get down to the parable, Jesus talks about how we relate to our "brother" (which is a little different). But for **now**, we're talking about how we relate to non-Christians.

And it is **not** the role of Christians to judge those who are **not** Christians. Their day of judgment will come, at which point,

Jesus Himself will do the judging – not us... And so, we don't have to worry about that. Our role, is **not** to judge outsiders.

I quite like Christian radio – Vision FM – I like it... But there are a couple of segments and commentators whose constant commentary is condemnational judgment upon unbelievers; and upon our unbelieving society... And I suspect they are popular segments for some, because they tap in to a self-righteous judgmental spirit that we sometimes find hanging around the church... And sadly, some Christians get their satisfaction by condemning the sinful...

But having a self-righteous judgmental spirit towards the unsaved is **not** Christian, because it is not Christ-like... A self-righteous judgmental spirit, is what the scribes and the pharisees were known for. What's Christ known for? Mercy and love...

And so we are **not** to judge/condemn. In fact, Christians who are vocal in their condemnation of others will quickly be condemned themselves. *You've seen this happen – Those who are loud in their condemnation of others,,, **others** come down hard on them.,,,* And not only that – they are inviting the condemnation of **God** upon themselves – that's what Jesus is telling us.

- **37 "Judge not, and you will not be judged;**
- **condemn not, and you will not be condemned;**
- **forgive, and you will be forgiven;**

Does that offend your theology???

You see, as good evangelical protestants, we've had it hammered into us "Saved by grace; Saved by faith; Not saved by works"... But the danger is, with our theology so firmly in our minds, we may skip over words like these – we may write them off... But these are the words of Jesus – We ignore them at our peril...

You see, Disciples of Jesus **have** been forgiven, and Disciples of Jesus have been filled with the Spirit of God. Therefore we have a **forgiving** spirit. And when we are open to forgive others, we ourselves will be forgiven. And because we **have** been given so much by our Heavenly Father, we ourselves have a generous spirit, and we **will** give.

And we're going to talk about this more next week – about the **evidence** of being a Christian: **each tree is known by its own fruit**. Am I a Christian? Well, where's the fruit of that? Being merciful like our Heavenly Father is merciful.

And when we **do** give, our generosity is rewarded with God's generosity. And let me give you a sure and certain fact – when it comes to giving, no one can out-give God.

When Jesus described how God generously rewards the giver, He gives us an image of a full and overflowing measure.

It's a bit like when I go to a Chinese takeaway buffet...

I haven't been for a while – have the Asian Pearl started doing their smorgasbord take-aways yet?

It's quite an art – how much can you fit into a Chinese container... And it's also about how skilful are you at taking a scoop that gathers up mostly meat and leaves all of those pesky vegetables behind and especially that manages to avoid celery... What is it about celery??? Who ever decided that celery was a food??? I'd rather chew on a black oats stalk (and that's considered a weed)...

But there's a method isn't there – to pack in as much into that Chinese container as you can manage... And then able to get the lid on. And if it goes on too easy, you go "Oh no, I could've got another piece of sweet&sour pork into that..."

*I want you to think of that – a Chinese container that's been packed by Michael or one of his sons... **Good measure, pressed down, shaken together, running over***

That's how God gives, when we give. We cannot out-give God... Now of course, an **unspiritual** person will think in terms of worldly stuff – (*and you will have heard the prosperity messages – when you put money in the plate, God's going to bless you with more money yourself – it turns "generosity" into some kind of obscene get-rich-quick scheme*) – If I give, God's going to give me more stuff... That's how an **unspiritual** person sees this... But a **spiritual** man/woman well understands that Jesus is talking about a heavenly reward(v23).

But giving and receiving, also cuts both ways. When Jesus said: **For with the measure you use it will be measured back to you.**

Yes, that goes for the good: When we are generous, God will be overflowingly generous to us – Great will be our reward in Heaven.

But it also goes for the bad. When I'm quick to judge; when I am quick to condemn; when I am stingy in my giving, that same measure's going to be measured right back to me...

Alright, so that's the commandments – which are about being merciful as our Heavenly Father is merciful.

Next comes a parable about discipleship. It is one thing to be commanded to do something, but for us as Christians, we don't merely follow commands – we follow a person – we are Disciples. We follow our Lord/Master.

And the first lesson about discipleship, is “Be careful whom you follow,, because if we follow the wrong leader, that leads to destruction.”

Jesus said, “**Can a blind man lead a blind man?** “Won't they both fall into a great big hole???”

And that is so true. The Scribes and the Pharisees, they had their own disciples, but it was a case of the blind leading the blind. In Matthew, Jesus described them as being “blind guides” and He calls them hypocrites... You see, they believed that they were godly, but what they did and what they taught, in no way represented the mercy of God. And they were so blind they rejected Jesus (who is the **Son** of God).

And even today, there are some very popular church leaders who have many followers, and yet what they teach is not the Word of God, and the reason that they are so popular and the reason why so many people follow their teaching, is because it appeals to the flesh – it appeals to the **sinful** nature...

So, how can we know if we're following the right leader? I'll tell you how: Do not ever become a follower of Michael. Be a follower of Jesus. And if you and I together follow the teachings of Jesus and the teachings of His Apostles, we can't go wrong...

The second thing we learn about discipleship, is “Disciples don't remain the same. They become like the one they follow”.

Jesus said: ⁴⁰ **A disciple is not above his teacher, but everyone when he is fully trained will be like his teacher.**

And that's why it's important that **I'm** not your teacher. **Jesus** is your teacher. Yes, I do have a gift of teaching. But what that means, is God helps me to explain what Jesus and His Apostles have already taught. As soon as I start adding to that, or taking away from it, stop listening because **A disciple is not above his teacher**. I can't add anything. And likewise, any teacher who does not bring to remembrance the whole teaching of Jesus and His Apostles, is giving a deficient picture of what being a Disciples of Jesus is about.

As Disciples of Jesus – as we follow Jesus, and as we walk with Jesus, day by day,, **and every importantly**, as we learn from Jesus, and as we apply what we learn to our lives, we become like Him.

Jesus talks about a disciple being **fully trained** to **be like his teacher**

That’s why here at Bush Disciples, our main ministry is “teaching”. A disciple being **fully trained** to **be like his teacher** –

Who is our teacher? Jesus.

How are we going with that? Is anyone here fully Christ-like yet??? No??? Well, keep up the training.

This is interesting isn’t it. *I don’t get to them very often, but whenever I do get to a minister’s conference, do you know what we pastors and ministers like to talk about?*

- *Cotton farmers talk about micronaire & turnout & bales/Ha;*
- *Wheat farmers talk about protein & t/Ha;*
- *Wool growers talk about microns & kg;*
- *Cattle farmers talk about how growth rates and marbling and fat scores;*

Pastors & ministers,, talk about conversions.

“We had 165 decisions for Jesus last month; 120 the month before...”

“How many people in your church?”

“Oh, about 60...”

I always feel a bit of miserable failure, being a pastor in a small country church... But you know what? Jesus never told us to get conversions – He told us to make disciples. But I haven't yet been amongst a bunch of pastors who have talked about the increasing Christ-likeness of their congregations...

I might start doing that, because that's a sign of a congregation who are growing spiritually.

We are to notice our own deficiencies, and follow Christ, and be transformed to be more and more like our Lord.

And so we now move on to a second parable. And the picture Jesus is painting here is comically absurd... Jesus has a sharp wit and some really funny stories..

“You've got a bit of dust or a speck of chaff in your eye there – Let me help you get that out” — You notice that speck of chaff in somebody else's eye, but you're completely oblivious to a dirty great big log (big enough to be a main bearer) sticking out of your own eye...

It's absurd...

But oh how common it is – so often, those who are the **most** negative, and who constantly point out every little fault in other people in the church – they're completely unaware and totally blind to their own sins/faults/ and how they are often downright unpleasant to be around...

Now, I know when I said that, you all thought of someone didn't you.... Go on admit it – you know somebody who points out the specks in everybody else's eye, but they've got that dirty great big log in their own...

I bet it wasn't you!!! You thought of somebody else didn't you...

You see, the thing is, what Jesus is trying to get us to do, is to inspect ourselves. **You hypocrite** (Jesus' words – not mine). **first take the log out of your own eye, and then you will see clearly to take out the speck that is in your brother's eye.**

You see, in Jesus' Sermon on the Plain, He's taking us on a journey to personal Godliness/Christ-likeness.

- Be merciful.
And He gives us commands to teach us what mercy looks like.
- Be a disciple
and choose well who you follow – follow Jesus; and
- As we learn from Jesus, we will become like Jesus;
- But we need to notice our own faults. Don't be a hypocrite. Notice the log that is in your own eye. And get it out.

It's a journey to personal holiness. If there's one thing Jesus hates, it's hypocrites – people who say one thing, and do the

other – it's the person who is quick to see the faults in others, but blinded to their own faults (that are far worse).....

BTW,

Usually whenever I hear someone quoting this parable of getting the speck out of somebody's eye when you've got a log in your own eye, usually the message gets left at "Get the log out of your own eye"... But did you notice, that's not where Jesus finishes. And the reason for this, is because he's now talking about our brother (another Christian)... Once you get the log out of your own eye, **then you will see clearly to take out the speck that is in your brother's eye.**

Our **first** concern should be with our own holiness – get yourself right with God. Search yourself; repent of sin; be forgiven.... And then we're in a position to help our brothers and sisters with their sin... Are you with me???

The judgmental fault-finder will tell you what's wrong with you... A Disciple of Jesus deals with their own personal sin, and then they help others to do the same.

That's where we're going to leave it today. It's hard dividing this up, because it was all one sermon.

But let me leave you with this:

Disciples of Jesus:

- follow Him;
- Learn from Him;
- Become like Him; And

- then Disciples can help lead others to follow Him too.

Let's pray:

Lord Jesus Christ,

A simple prayer this morning:

Forgive us for when we have not been merciful.

And help us to be merciful like our Heavenly Father is merciful.

Lord, help us to follow You,

and to not only hear Your teaching,

but to apply it,

That we may be trained in the ways of righteousness,

and by Your Holy Spirit,

may we become Christ-like.

Amen.