

The Commandments of Jesus Series

"Living with Others"

1/25/2020

We began this series looking at Jesus' commands centered around following Him as a disciple. Last week we looked at Jesus' commands focused on living like Jesus. And one of the key commands was *"Be perfect as your Heavenly Father is perfect."* That had to have dropped out of Jesus' mouth like a giant bombshell. For who could possibly ever achieve that level. And what we discovered last week was that it is impossible with our own will and strength but that Jesus told his disciples: *"with man this is impossible, but with God all things are possible."*

And we need to remember that foundational principle as we continue to move on through many of Jesus' commands.

This morning we're going to look at several of Jesus' commands centered on living with others. And while I'm fairly confident that most of you get along with most people fairly easily – there are likely individuals that you find difficult to get along with or who have hurt you deeply that are an ongoing challenge. And for those situations some of these commands are going to likely be a challenge as well.

One of the things you'll notice as we study these various commands, is that it's obvious that **relationships matter to Jesus**. Your relationship with your Heavenly Father matters tremendously to Him as do your relationships with one another. In fact your relationships with others are intended, by God, to naturally flow out of the foundation of your relationship with God.

There are only two times in all of Jesus' teaching when he said that all of the teaching of the Law and the Prophets is summarized in this teaching, and both times it had to do with our relationships with others.

1. The first came in response to Jesus being questioned *"what's the greatest commandment."* Jesus replied: *"Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind." 38 This is the first and greatest commandment. And the second is like it: 'Love your neighbor as yourself.' All the Law and the Prophets hang on these two commandments.* (Matthew 22:37-40)
2. The second instance comes in what many refer to as **The Golden Rule**. *"So in everything, do to others what you would have them do to you, for this sums up the Law and the Prophets."* (Mt 7:12) Did you notice how this command begins? **"So"** That means that this command flows out of what precedes it (**put up verses 7-11 on the Powerpoint**). And what precedes it is Jesus talking about how God is generous in His response to the requests of His children. And the Golden Rule is the inference that if God is that generous to you – then you should be equally as generous to the *"others"* around us. Who qualifies as the *"other"*? Anyone who isn't *"you"*. While others can't see your love for God, they can see it evidenced by your love for others. **Your love for the *"others"* is the visible manifestation of your love for God.**

I began with this because it's the foundation for understanding the other commands of Jesus in this section. But let's move on to another challenging command of Jesus in regards to relationships.

How many of you like to be judged by others? I doubt any of us do. So, Jesus says:

"Do not judge, or you too will be judged. 2 For in the same way you judge others, you will be judged, and with the measure you use, it will be measured to you. 3 'Why do you look at the speck of sawdust in your brother's eye and pay no attention to the plank in your own eye? 4 How can you say to your brother, 'Let me take the speck out of your eye,' when all the time there is a plank in your own eye? 5 You hypocrite, first take the plank out of your own eye, and then you will see clearly to remove the speck from your brother's eye. (Matthew 7:1-5)

The verb **"judge"** means to separate right from wrong. And there are times that needs to be done within caring relationships. But that's the key. The foundation needs to be that God has forgiven each of us way more than you'll ever be asked to forgive in someone else. And God doesn't sit up in Heaven and

jump all over us in condemnation every time we mess up. He lovingly forgives us and strives to get us back on the right path. So, out of the foundation of gratitude for all God has already done for you, then lovingly and gently help keep one another on the path to an ever deepening relationship with God. But the first focus needs to be on you and your relationship with God and then from there help keep each other going in the right direction.

Cautions in judging:

1. **Often judgment of others is done to make you feel better about yourself.** For, if we can find something obvious wrong in them then we somehow feel better about ourselves.
2. **Be cautious not to define someone by their sin.** What a person is struggling with or what they've done, which may have hurt you, doesn't define them. They are still a person created in the image of God with eternal value. They are loved by God and God desires for them to be in His family. That's their core identity – not an action they've done or a sin they've lapsed into.

Beyond the caution regarding judging - Jesus directs us to work towards reconciliation with people who have hurt us in some way.

Matthew 5:21-22 (NIV) *"You have heard that it was said to the people long ago, 'You shall not murder, and anyone who murders will be subject to judgment.' 22 But I tell you that anyone who is angry with a brother or sister will be subject to judgment. Again, anyone who says to a brother or sister, 'Raca,' is answerable to the court. And anyone who says, 'You fool!' will be in danger of the fire of hell.*

So, the backdrop is that someone has done or said something to hurt you and you've chosen to become angry, and stay angry long enough to respond in inappropriate ways. Jesus continues on with an appropriate, God honoring response.

Matthew 5:23-24 (NIV) *"Therefore, if you are offering your gift at the altar and there remember that your brother or sister has something against you, 24 leave your gift there in front of the altar. First go and be reconciled to them; then come and offer your gift.*

Notice that Jesus doesn't say: *"Wait until they come to you and ask for forgiveness."* Even though they may have hurt you, he puts the responsibility upon you to initiate the reconciliation. Now, I would add a necessary disclaimer here. When Jesus says, *"If your brother or sister has something against you"* I believe he's referring to a **legitimate offense** against something you've said or done. Because if we had to do that with anyone who has something against us – then Jesus would have had to seek out the Pharisees and teachers of the Law constantly and try to reconcile with them, because they were always mad at him. And there were also people who were angry at Jesus because of His difficult teachings and he didn't attempt to reconcile with them. So, I think Jesus is referring to people who have a legitimate reason to be angry at you because you've behaved inappropriately – in a less than God honoring way. But perhaps someone has hurt you and you've chosen to become angry with them and are refusing to forgive them until they come and repent and ask for forgiveness. That unforgiving spirit is going to negatively affect your relationship with God. And it certainly will affect your acceptable worship to God. So, Jesus instructs us, to put a priority on resolving this issue before you come and go through the motions of worshipping God. You may be fooling others but you're not fooling God.

Anyone a bit uncomfortable yet with Jesus' commands regarding relationships with others. Well, Jesus isn't done yet. Let's take another step deeper in challenging how we often respond to others.

Luke 6:37-38 (NIV) *"Do not judge, and you will not be judged. Do not condemn, and you will not be condemned. Forgive, and you will be forgiven. 38 Give, and it will be given to you. A good measure, pressed down, shaken together and running over, will be poured into your lap. For with the measure you use, it will be measured to you."*

The highlighted words are the 4 commands of Jesus in this section. So, in this section – Jesus sums up our previous sections and then takes it one step further. Think about someone who has hurt you. Here Jesus commands you to **not judge them, not condemn them, forgive them** and to **bless them by giving to them**. And then Jesus says, with the same degree of blessing you give to them will be the measure God will bless your life with. Wow. You see, if someone has hurt me – I could see it being difficult enough to not judge them and not to condemn them and to release them by forgiving them. But to actually bless their lives in a tangible way – that seems ridiculous. But if that's what God's requiring of me – then

maybe I could send them a short card – but no more. Is that the level you want God to bless your life with? I know I want more than that. I want all of God's many blessings He has in store for me to receive.

How many of you would say that this is a bar too high to achieve. And just when you think that – I want to both encourage and challenge you with this verse:

Ephesians 4:32 (NIV) *Be kind and compassionate to one another, forgiving each other, **just as** in Christ God forgave you.*

Or if you don't like that one try this one.

Colossians 3:13 (NIV) *Bear with each other and forgive one another if any of you has a grievance against someone. Forgive **as the Lord forgave you.***

We've all sinned and broken God's heart. And yet, was God cheap or generous with His response to us? I'd say He was pretty generous when Jesus willingly died on a cross for your sins. And He wants to continue to bless your life both here and into eternity. So, can I not also be generous with blessing those who have hurt you? I would argue that it might indeed be the last step towards being set free from your bitterness and resentment.

Will this be easy. Probably not – but Jesus never commanded us to do the easy thing. And you might not even want to do this, despite your commitment to following Jesus.

So, let me introduce you to another verse to understand and empower you in your relationships.

Philippians 2:12-13 (NIV) *Therefore, (what we're about to read occurs right after that fabulous passage where we're instructed to have the same mindset toward each other as Jesus had toward us when he willingly left heaven and came down to earth to give his life up for our sins.*

*my dear friends, as you have always obeyed—not only in my presence, but now much more in my absence—continue to work out your salvation with fear and trembling, 13 for it is God who works in you to **will** and to **act** in order to fulfill his good purpose.*

Paul's saying – now that you've accepted Jesus Christ as your Lord and Savior – live your life like it. Live out your salvation in radical life transforming ways. And he gives us the reason to live like this.

*"God is working in you to both **"will"** and **"act"** to fulfill His good purpose.*

That means that God wants to work in you to live out His amazing purposes in and through your life. And He does this in two ways.

- **First, by changing your will** in such a way that you want to live differently. Perhaps many of us are on the **"will"** level. You don't want to forgive and you certainly don't want to bless someone who's hurt you. So, maybe you're at that level and need to begin immediately asking God to change your **"will"** to obey His commands. Jesus knows that what he's calling us to isn't going to be easy but it's going to set you free from your pain and hurt.
- Secondly, He wants empowers you to do what seems impossible. And it likely is impossible without the power of God working inside of you. In your case this morning – Jesus wants to change your desires and empower you to: **not judge, not condemn, to forgive and to bless generously** those individuals who have hurt you deeply.

I know to some of you, this seems ridiculous and impossible. But God wants you to live free of the burden of unforgiveness and bitterness and He knows what it's going to take to release you from it. Jesus demonstrated this when he asked the Father to forgive those who nailed him to the cross, while at the same time writhing in pain. I visited with someone recently who's putting this command into practice in their own life by meeting with someone who hurt them deeply and teaching them how to take care of a task that needs to get done. For some of you, the person you're still angry with is no longer in your life or maybe even has passed away. Then I would suggest to take a piece of paper and take some time writing down what was good about that person. Very few people are completely evil. And what that will do is often redefine this person in your mind and heart. Because, as I said earlier, we often devalue someone based on the pain they've caused us. And by rediscovering the good qualities of that person, it causes us to see them in a whole different light and hopefully free you from that prison of

unforgiveness you've been living in for way too long. And perhaps you find yourself sitting in front of that blank sheet of paper drawing a blank as to what to say. Then ask God to help you see them as He sees them.

God doesn't want any of us to live in unforgiveness and bitterness – because it prevents us from living the life of joy and purpose and adventure that He has in store for you. So, you need to be active, not passive, in rooting out any bitterness that resides deep in your soul.

There are a couple of more commands listed in your outline this morning and I would certainly encourage you to discover and follow those as well. But for this morning, I think this is enough for us to try to tackle. For some of you this might seem overwhelming. But remember, that God is living inside of you ready to empower you to live a life of obedience to His commands and in the process to be set free from bitterness and deep hurt. Perhaps God is leading you to ask for the help of this body of believers as well. We're going to sing a closing hymn of invitation. And if that's you, I invite you to come forward and just ask for help in tackling this very challenging step in your walk with Jesus. God didn't intend for us to do the transformation into Christ-likeness on our own. That's why He invented the church – as a body of like minded believers who are all on this journey together. We're instructed in **Galatians 6:2** *Carry each other's burdens, and in this way you will fulfill the law of Christ.* The Law of Christ is the Law of love expressed within the safety of relationships with people who are all striving to reflect God's character to a hurting world. And often that can be a challenge.

Or, if you don't feel like coming up front, then speak to me privately as you leave this morning. Or fill out a visitor card and just say, I need prayers, please call me – and hand it to me as you leave and I'll call you. Or, it doesn't have to be me either. Most of you have relationships with a couple of people here at Knollwood. Ask them to pray for you or with you even yet this morning for God's strength to live in obedience to these commands. We want to live free transformed and blessed lives and it might very well require others in your life helping you with this.

Invitation hymn

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- _____ matter to Jesus.
- Your relationships with others are intended to be an _____ from your relationship with God.

What does the Golden Rule flow from?

While others may not be able to see your love for God = they can see it in _____

Matthew 7:1-5:

Think of a time you’ve been judged by someone else. How did that feel?

The word “judge” means to discern _____ from _____.

Cautions in Judging:

1. Often judgments of others is done in a way to make you feel _____ about _____
2. Be cautious not to _____ someone by their sins.

Matthew 5:21-24 Working toward _____

Who is supposed to take the initiative towards reconciliation?

Luke 6:37-38

What are the four commands Jesus gives?

Who do you need to “*bless*”?

What form is that blessing going to take?

What’s the most challenging aspect of these commands? Why?

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