

Blessing Your Spouse – *Luke 6:27-38*

The Glorious Mystery that is Marriage XII

Introduction – It is often far easier to improve your marriage than you realize. There are two of you in that relationship. We always think of ourselves first and so we are normally thinking of how we could receive refreshment and renewal in our marriage experience. But, if you bless your spouse, if you refresh his or her marriage with your words and actions, then the marriage, considering the two of you as one, improves. And when we do this as an outworking of God's Spirit in us, we are promised that we will find ourselves refreshed and renewed as well.

To Those Who Hear (Luke 6:27-38) – Jesus establishes a new Israel as He preaches to a multitude (vv17-19) who sought to touch Him. They all listened to Him as He taught, but He addresses them, saying, *"I say to you who hear..."* because what He is about to say sounds impossible and ludicrous to those who do not have faith to hear. But to those who hear, He says...

What Love Looks Like – The rest of this section describes how we should act towards those who hate us, who take advantage of us, who act as though they were our enemies. We are to love them – with deeds (v27). We are to bless them and pray for them (v28). With great hyperbole, Jesus instructs us that we are to be known for our sympathy towards those who will not yet hear (vv29-30), acting with an absurd generosity, forgiveness, and longsuffering. We are to apply the Golden Rule (v31). It is no skin off you if you love those love you; where the rubber meets the road is how you act towards those who refuse to do so (vv32-34). When you do this, you will be sons of the Most High, *"For He is kind to the unthankful and evil"* (v35). When we act like our Father in these relationships, we will be merciful, like Him (v36).

The Verse Everyone Else Knows (vv37-38) – *"Judge not!"* – the most quoted Bible verse by the unbelieving world. Our judgment upon others must be in accordance with the Word and be the same standards we apply to ourselves (see also Matt 7:1-2). It is ridiculous to think one can apply this command absolutely – you cannot tell someone to "judge not" without judging them. You cannot call someone "blind" (v39), or point out the speck in their eye (v42), determine the quality of the fruit (v43), or the foundation of one's house (vv46ff) without judging. The point is that we must be qualified to judge and must judge in a qualified way (Gal 6:1).

Where Do These Commands Apply? – All of us are called to love our neighbor as ourselves; all of us are called to love our enemies. The command to put the interests of others first is a universal responsibility (Phil 2:4). Of course these should be applied in the relationship of a husband and wife – but this must be taken further. First, the relationship of husband and wife is the foundational relationship of all of society and so it must begin there, in the home first. The love in a home, or lack thereof, has a profound and potent effect upon the surrounding culture. But this is the very place Christians are often tempted to think they do not have to apply these commands. Like the Pharisees, they are more concerned with externals, dressing themselves up to make sure they look good "out there" while at home they think they have the right to be rude, thoughtless, bitter, angry and demanding. And the excuse often given is that the other one is not obeying the Golden Rule, the other one is refusing to listen to God, the other one is acting like an enemy. Well – what does the Word say?

Refreshing Your Spouse's Marriage – The one "who hears" this will see that this passage applies immediately in their home and in their immediate relationships first. Do you want refreshment, renewal, revival in your marriage? Then give it and especially in the times where it is obvious your spouse needs it. Read through this passage again with your spouse in mind and see if you don't see all kinds of application. What do I do if he is acting like an enemy? What do I do if she is speaking in a vile way towards me? What should I do if he is spiteful? What if she humiliates me (I think the metaphor of striking your cheek is referring to this)? What if he wants more? What credit is it to you if you act this way only if she is being nice, or if he is loving you? Can you give without expecting anything in return – just to be like your Father, who is kind to the unthankful and evil? Are you known in your home, in your relationship towards your spouse, as merciful?

Hypocrisy: The Sin that Stifles the Gift – Notice what it is that stifles the experience of your own refreshment and renewal? You are judging as you would not want to be judged. You are condemning in a way that would condemn you. You are refusing to forgive in a way that would leave you unforgiven before the living God. When you feel like your marriage is stuck, look for the hypocrisy, look for the bitterness, look for the unforgiving spirit, look for the lack of refreshment being given, but look in the mirror first (vv39-42).

Your Refreshment (v38) – Are you in Christ? Then the Father is making a bet with you. See if you can out-give Him. See if you can out-bless Him. See if you can out-give Him. His ladle is far bigger than you can imagine. And what do you think will be the result in your marriage, in your home, and in this world? Jesus tells us about a house built upon this foundation and how it can handle any storm in vv46-49.