



Home : Sermons : Jan 22, 2006

The Ethic of the New Israel – *Luke 6:27-49*

Introduction – Remember the flow of the narrative that gets us to this place. Jesus, cleansing and healing, has gained the scorn of old Israel (represented by the Pharisees). They are not interested in his ‘liberty.’ Jesus goes off to pray for the night, asking God for a new Israel. He comes down from the mountain and selects a new Twelve and then delivers the terms of the New Covenant. Everything seems upside down – the blessed are the poor and downtrodden, and woes fall upon those who appeared to be blessed. Having identified these two groups, Jesus turns to the whole crowd and reinstates the ethic of God’s people – how should we then live?

Hearing – *“I say to you who hear...”* is an interesting phrase that should catch your notice. Those ‘who hear’ are a sub-group of those ‘who listen.’ There is a difference between listening to Jesus and hearing Jesus, between listening to a sermon and hearing a sermon. Listening is something we do with our ears. Hearing is something we do with our heart (Luke 16:31).

Living Out the Law – In Deuteronomy, the Lord gave the Ten Words and the rest of the book seems to be a collection of case-laws on the subjects, fleshing out how the Law is to be lived out among God’s people. Similarly, the way we are to live can be summed up – love.

Describing Love – Jesus teaches that we are to love even our enemies. The closest enemies in this part of the text for Christ and His followers are the Pharisees (6:11). We learn much from Jesus about what this love looks like. It has nothing to do with sentimental feelings towards them (Matt 23), but rather treating them lawfully from the heart. *“Do good...bless those...pray for those...”* describes the kind of Christ-like love we are to imitate. This is nothing new, for the Golden Rule (v31) sums up the Law and the Prophets (Matt 7:12). The first definition of enemies in Jesus’ day is a group of religious zealots who hold the unclean and the Gentiles in derision (1 Thess 2:15-16).

Generosity, not Retaliation – How should we treat them? With generosity and not with retaliation. With great hyperbole (obviously, vv 29-30 cannot be followed woodenly), Jesus instructs us that we are to be known for our sympathy towards those who will not yet hear. Quite the opposite of the Pharisees, we are to be known for a glorious, and even absurd, generosity, forgiveness, and longsuffering.

...Because God is Like That – Why should we be like this (v36)? Be careful to understand the mercy of God like God does and not like the pacifist or the pietist does. For instance, Jesus will be describing those very enemies that we are not to be like in vv 39 and following, and He will do so publicly. God instructs us to be kind, but with an eye to His righteous vengeance (Prov 24:17-18, Rom 12:17-21).

The Verse Everyone Knows (vv37-38) – *“Judge not!”* – the most quoted Bible verse by the unbelieving world. Like Jesus, we are to judge according and only according to the Word, the measure by which we all will be judged. Of course, it is lunacy to think one can apply the command absolutely – you cannot tell someone to “judge not” without judging them. You cannot call someone blind, or point out their speck, or judge the tree by its fruit, without judging. That’s not the point. The point is, however, that one must be qualified to judge (Gal 6:1), something the Pharisees were guilty of not following much of the time.

Examples of Absurdity...to Make a Point (vv37-49) – We are too familiar with these stories; I can tell because they don’t make us laugh. Jesus is using absurd humor to make His point. He is mocking hypocrites and He and the crowd know that He has someone(s) in mind. But His mocking has a very sober purpose, which is where Christ will end this sermon.

Blind Leaders – They aren’t qualified to lead.

Near-sighted Optometrists – They aren’t qualified to point out other’s faults.

Trees Don’t Lie – Fruit reveals the nature of the tree. We are to judge based upon fruit, not upon profession. We can do this because of a certain relationship between hearts, which we cannot see, and fruit, which we can. Scripture determines godly fruit (Gal 5:22-23). True religion comes from the heart, not merely from externalities. It is ridiculous to look for figs on a thorn-bush.

Sand Castles – Faith is ultimately tested with works (James 2:14-24). Lively faith creates a new man who lives in a particular way. So-called “faith” that only “believes” but does not change a man from the heart (foundation) out is – a joke.

Hearing – *“He who hears My sayings and does them,”* vs *“He who heard and did nothing”* – these are the words of Jesus. To simply listen and say, “Yes, Lord, Lord...” is going to result in your destruction. You must take heed if you would call Him “Lord.”

Heart Reconstruction – God had already taught His people these things, and what became of them? Jesus found a people given to a religious snobbery, an external formalism, joyless legalism, and hypocrisy, and we must ask ourselves what will keep us and our children from falling into these same errors. Jesus is the New Israel, and we must be born again – there must be a new heart, a new man, a new nature given to us. This is something bestowed upon us in Jesus Christ and by the Holy Spirit. The evidence of gospel-hearing (Rom 10:14-17) is this – love, forgiveness, generosity, malleability to the Word of God, graciousness towards others, self-control, and all the fruit of the Spirit. This is the ethic of the New Israel.

Dave Hatcher – January 22, 2006