

Luke 6:32-36

32 "If you love those who love you, what credit is that to you? For even sinners love those who love them. 33 If you do good to those who do good to you, what credit is that to you? For even sinners do the same. 34 If you lend to those from whom you hope to receive, what credit is that to you? Even sinners lend to sinners, to receive as much again. 35 But love your enemies, do good, and lend, expecting nothing in return. Your reward will be great, and you will be children of the Most High; for he is kind to the ungrateful and the wicked. 36 Be merciful, just as your Father is merciful.

Introduction

Today's Scripture picks up where we left off last week, in the middle of a sermon from Jesus. This is his most famous sermon. It is referred to as the *Sermon on the Plain* in Luke and the *Sermon on the Mount* in Matthew. It is loaded with wisdom and advice. It also teaches us to stretch beyond a normal human comfort level into a realm of divine approval. It is very hard to achieve this standard of excellence. However, you are a child of God and you are made in God's image. You are a sibling of Christ, adopted into the family of God. So, you are a person of divine genetics. When you have worldview that you are one with Christ with a divine soul then following Jesus becomes a natural thing to do.

Last week I mentioned that following these tough lessons from Jesus is one of the hardest things to do. It is hard if you take each lesson as a bullet point of rules and think of them as regulations requiring obedience. However, when you look at Jesus from a perspective of love then it is easy to follow him because love does not disappoint. Jesus is the perfect example of love and that love is to be reciprocated. If you try to remember to do each one of these - love your enemies, do good to those who hate you, bless those who curse you, pray for those who abuse you, and turn the other cheek – then the result is most likely failure. We slip up, pledge to do better next time, just to fail once again. The concept is similar to a smoker that can't quit smoking; when you see yourself as someone that wants to quit smoking then you struggle to quit smoking. However, when you see yourself as non smoker, then you will be someone that does not smoke. It is a matter of your worldview. If you make your worldview a divine view then there will be no trouble following these lessons from Jesus.

There are some guidelines to live by that will allow us to successfully follow Jesus. The 1st guideline is love. I remember a movie where a blind man watches TV with his girlfriend. The protagonist asks him "Why do you watch TV if you are blind?" The blind man responded "She wants me to watch it with her and I don't want to disappoint her." His motivation is love. His behavior is ruled by love. This then is not something that he does out of duty; it is something that he wants to do. With love as your guide, you are motivated to follow all of the lessons from Jesus.

The 2nd guideline is seeking approval. Your number one goal in life should be receiving divine approval. We all want to get to heaven but what we really want is to have God's approval. Jesus cautions us that the road is wide but the gate is narrow and asks his audience "Why do you call me Lord and not do what I say?" Divine approval cannot be assumed or taken for granted because divine approval is not measured by

human standards. When we seek divine approval, our desire to do what Jesus teaches. Our obedience draws us closer to God.

The 3rd guideline is your identity. You perform and behave according to your identity - your perception of who you are. When you see yourself as a child of God, you identify as a member of God's family, you take on a divine persona. You have the Holy Spirit in you. Knowing you are a child of God enables you to be like Jesus. The more you understand this, the more motivated you are to be like Jesus and follow Jesus. Following the lessons from Jesus are hard to do when you focus on them as commandments. However, when your focus is love, your motivation is divine approval, and you identify yourself as a child of God, then following Jesus comes natural.

The beauty of it all is the reward. We go through life with an ultimate goal of seeking divine approval. Jesus says that when you actually do these things that he teaches then "your reward will be great and you will be children of the Most High." It is quite hard to follow the more difficult teachings of Jesus when you look them as rules and something that you should do. But it is easy to follow the hard lessons of Jesus when you are ruled by love. As children of God, there is great joy and satisfaction in living according to our genetic disposition.