

Of Fundamentals, Fruit, and Foundations
Luke 6:37-49

Pondering this Scripture throughout the week I have come to the conclusion that this is a difficult passage, difficult not in the sense of understanding it, but difficult in practice. There are some hard principles to be sure that we must wrestle with if we are going to be a committed disciple of Jesus. But then Jesus says if we are going to follow Him, there will be difficult choices that we must make. We can either take the low road and be like everyone else in society and do what everyone else is doing or we can take the high road and go against the norm or what is tolerated as acceptable behavior. Either way, the choice is ours and in both cases we can expect certain results. Jesus says so. In Luke's synopsis of the Sermon on the Mount, he captures the essence of what Jesus is teaching by noting that when a person chooses to follow the path of true righteousness there will be a significant and noticeable change in behavior because of the change that has taken place in the heart. Last week we talked about such change being radical.

Jesus is calling each of us to live transformed radical lives. In this section as we conclude the Sermon on the Plateau we see this call in three ways:

There is a call for the right fundamentals
There is a call for the right fruit
There is a call for the right foundation

I. A CALL FOR THE RIGHT
FUNDAMENTALS – v. 37-42

A. There is a Note on Judging – v. 37a

What Jesus says really hits us right where we live. If there is something we can do well, it's judging others.

While shopping for groceries we judge the mother who has the unruly kids or judge the kids.

While at the gas station we judge the person with the old clunker that blows smoke when he starts it up and drives off.

While at school we judge others because they aren't pretty enough or maybe they're too pretty or maybe we judge them because they aren't athletic or they are too nerdy or because they failed the test.

While in the doctor's office we judge the doctor because we are now 45 minutes past our appointment time.

We judge the person on the street corner holding up the cardboard sign.

We judge the person who doesn't keep their yard up the way you think they should or we judge them because all they do is spend time on the yard.

We judge people at work based on how they work or what they talk about or what TV shows or movies they watch or the kind of music they listen to or stuff they read.

We judge people based on political views.

We judge on so many levels and in so many ways.

A woman wrote a letter to the advice column of a local paper complaining about the woman who came through her checkout line at the grocery store. The cashier thought it was outrageous and inappropriate that the other woman had used her food stamps to buy a pre-made cake. Food stamps should not have been used on such a frivolous commodity.

Several days later, the same newspaper included comments from readers. One lady wrote that her husband had been out of work for over a year and she bought it to celebrate their anniversary. Another lady stated that she had bought the cake for her daughter's birthday, which would likely be her last as she was dying from cancer.

It is easy to judge, especially without all the facts.

We even judge people at church.

We judge if someone sings too loudly or off key or if they don't sing at all.

We judge the selection of music.

We judge people by what they wear to church or if they talk during the sermon.

We judge people by whether or not they are in church or when they arrive at church.

Chuck Swindoll tells about a time he spoke at a pastor's conference at a California Christian camp. On the first day a man approached him and said how greatly he had looked forward to hearing Dr. Swindoll speak and his delight at now finally being able to realize that desire. That evening Swindoll noticed the man sitting near the front. After only a few minutes into the message the man was sound asleep. Swindoll thought to himself that perhaps he was tired after a long day's drive and couldn't help himself. But the same thing happened the next few nights, and Dr. Swindoll found his exasperation with the man growing. On the last night the man's wife came up and apologized for her husband's inattention to the messages. She explained that he had recently been diagnosed with terminal cancer and the medication he was taking to ease the pain made him extremely sleepy. But it had been one of his life-long ambitions to hear Dr. Swindoll speak before he died, and now he had fulfilled that goal.

How easy it is for us to judge without knowing all the facts. We even judge someone for sin they may have committed. F. B. Meyer once said. When we see a brother or sister in sin, there are two things we do not know: First, we do not know how hard he or she tried not to sin. And second, we do not know the power of the forces that assailed him or her. We also do not know what we would have done in the same circumstances.

I began by saying this is a difficult passage to practice. In theory it sounds great and we would like it if others didn't judge us, but to apply it is another story. It's a very difficult command. "Do not judge others, and you will not be judged."

This is a passage the world loves to quote, at least the part that says "Don't judge others." They like to

throw that back in our teeth and tell us how unchristian it is of us to cast judgment on them for their choice of lifestyle. They like to misinterpret the verse and take it out of context. But is that what Jesus is saying? Is He telling us that we shouldn't judge others at all? Certainly when we look at the ministry years of Jesus what He said at times seems inconsistent with this verse.

When Jesus met the woman at the well and began to describe her sordid life, wasn't He casting judgment?

When he healed the man at the pool of Bethesda and told him to go and sin no more, was He not judging?

On more than one occasion Jesus gave a scathing rebuke to the Pharisees for their blatant disregard for the true Word of God calling them white washed graves, hypocrites, and blind leaders of the blind. Is that not judging?

In writing to the churches in Revelation did He not on several occasions state "I have this against you"? Isn't that judgmental?

So what does Jesus mean by this statement here: "Do not judge, and you will not be judged?"

The word judge means to conclude, to pronounce judgment, to decide or determine and implies trying and condemning.

Here's what Jesus is saying in His first command of the passage. We need to first consider our own actions. We need to weigh them out before we judge someone else. We have no right to judge or condemn others if our own behavior is not right.

Paul said something similar in Galatians 6:1. "Brothers if someone is caught in a sin, you who are *spiritual* (emphasis added) should restore him gently. But watch yourself, or you also may be tempted."

Jesus did not tell His followers that they should no longer cast judgment; that it was not the proper thing for them to do as His followers. Later on as

He sends them out He tells them that if a town they visit does not receive them they are to shake the dust off their feet as a way of casting judgment for the rejection of the gospel message. I believe that Jesus is condemning the behavior of unjustly and hypocritically judging others. In essence He's saying that we need to be careful about the standard we use to judge.

A woman is seen standing before St. Peter at the pearly gates. He is carefully looking over her records in a large book. Finally, he comments "I see you never so much as colored outside the lines, but, boy, you had a lot to say about those who did.

A young couple moved into a new neighborhood. The next morning while eating breakfast, the young woman saw her neighbor hanging the wash outside. She remarked how dirty the laundry looked and how the other woman needed to learn to wash correctly or maybe needs to change the brand of soap. Her husband remained silent and looked on.

Every time her neighbor hung her wash to dry, the young woman would make the same comments. About a month later, the woman was surprised to see a nice clean wash on the line and told her husband that she must have finally learned how to wash correctly. The husband said, "I got up early this morning and cleaned our windows."

Jesus is telling us that we should not form opinions about others rashly, unfairly, or out of prejudice. We are to stop such bad behavior, because the same standard we use on others is the same standard that we will be judged with. It forbids such judgmental attitudes as if we had the final word of judgment. Besides, whose standards are we judging others by anyways: ours or God's? The yardstick we use to measure others is the same yardstick we should use to measure our own behavior. When it comes down to the final judgment, the only standard to be used will be God's.

There is a note on judging.

B. There is a Note on Condemning – v. 37b

I'm only going to say a word here because it is very similar to the previous thought with the addition that it takes judging a step further where we are not only the judge, but the jury and the executioner. The word condemn means to exercise right or law against anyone, hence to pronounce judgment.

We all know what a Judge does, right? He hears the evidence of a case from both sides and then decides what punishment should be given to the person if any is merited. He has the authority to pronounce judgment and then see that it gets carried out. Jesus says we don't have the right to condemn someone. Again, only God has the final authority to bring both the sentence and execution of that sentence. Don't judge. Don't condemn.

C. There is a Note on Forgiving – v. 37c

The first two commands are negative. The next two are positive. The first positive command states that we are to forgive others. Forgiveness is the act of dismissal or release, to free fully, to give pardon. Forgiveness implies that there was something done to us by another by which we were hurt emotionally, physically, spiritually whether it was intentional or not or something that we perceive. In Jesus' command there are to be no exceptions and there are to be no excuses. We are to forgive. Sometimes we conclude that we can forgive someone of some things but not other things. We can't say "I'll forgive them for that comment they made or that act they did, but I can never forgive them for that."

Jesus said we are to forgive and if we don't then guess what? We are disobedient and disobedience is a sin. If we say we can't forgive someone, we are really saying that we won't forgive them. If we are in Christ as a new creation, then we have the capacity in us through Christ to forgive and we can only forgive by the power of God in us.

Ephesians 4:32
Colossians 3:13

What grievances have you received at the hands of someone else?
A neighbor who continues to let the pet poodle dig up your bignonias,
Someone who said something unkind about you,
The boss who made you look bad in front of your peers for something that was not your fault or that you did not do,
The classmate who spread vicious rumors about you to your friends,
The parent who took away privileges,
The spouse who criticized you in front of friends.

The ways someone else can upset us are myriad upon myriad and we are commanded to forgive. It's not a matter of can you. It's a matter of will you. We are to forgive others just as often and in the same way God has forgiven us.

Remember when Jesus was asked how often we should forgive. Lord, is 7 times enough? What was Jesus' response? Not 7 times, but 70X7 or as many times as you are wronged, that's how many times you are to forgive. It is to be without end. Paul adds in I Corinthians 13 that someone who truly loves with God's love will keep no record of wrongs. That means we are to be forgiving. God will never say to us "Whoops, that one did it, you crossed the line once too many times." He continues to forgive. We are to forgive in the same way.

D. There is a Note About Giving – v. 38

We know about giving right? It means to turn over the possession of, to hand or pass over. If I tell you I'm going to give you a \$100, then it's yours to keep. I'm not expecting it back, I have relinquished ownership of it. Notice what He says will be ours in return for our generosity: "a good measure, pressed down, shaken together and running over."

Here's how one scholar describes it. The measuring of the corn is a process which is carried out according to an established pattern. The seller crouches on the ground with the measure between his legs. First of all he fills the measure three-quarters full and gives it a good shake with a rotary motion to make the grains settle down. Then he fills the measure to the top and gives it another shake. Next he presses the corn together strongly with both hands. Finally he heaps it into a cone, tapping it carefully to press the grains together; from time to time he bores a hole into the corn and pours a few more grains into it, until there is literally no more room for a single grain. In this way, the purchaser is guaranteed an absolutely full measure; it cannot hold more."

Jesus says when you are generous what you will receive will overflow. Be generous. Don't be stingy. It's the principle of sowing and reaping. I really like soft serve ice-cream. There's a little place just south of Perry on 52 that I used to like to visit whenever I passed through town. I liked to stop there and get a medium soft-serve vanilla cone because they were very generous.

Last week we saw that we are to love our enemies, we are to do good to those who hate us, we are to bless those who curse us, and we are to pray for those who mistreat us. Jesus concluded that section by stating that we are to show mercy just as God the Father has shown mercy. In the same way we could say that not being judgmental or condemning, but being forgiving and generous are ways to show mercy.

James 5:1-11

Instead of being critical we are to forgive and give to others and then Jesus told them a parable. It seems to be an abstract thought until you connect it all together.

He begins with a question, something to make them think. It was something that they would be familiar with. He asked about blind men. Apparently there

were a fair number of blind people in the region where Jesus lived. “Can a blind man lead another blind?” When they both fall into the pit?

Growing up at Barakel we had a week designated for handicapped people. There were a variety of disabilities including a few who were blind. One summer one of the young men, in his early 20’s asked about staying to help in the kitchen with dishes. His name was Darrell. And they let him. I was always amazed watching him walk down the paths at Camp – by himself. He could get from the Dining hall to the dorm, from the bathhouse to the chapel, from the Camp store to the lake – all on his own. He could manage the paths, but you couldn’t drop him off in the middle of the adjacent National forest and expect him to lead anyone, especially another blind person back into Camp.

Jesus then seems to change topics again by talking about teachers and students, that a student is not above His teacher, but that when fully trained he will be just like his teacher. We cannot hide the fact that we will be just like those who teach us. Jesus was pointing out the fallacy of the Pharisees and other religious leaders who believed they were teaching others the right way to live and the right way of righteousness. Blindness is often used metaphorically to speak of spiritual blindness and the religious leaders were spiritually blind and He uses a very humorous analogy to relate what He means.

Two people are talking. The one has observed that the other has a small speck of sawdust in his eye and attempts to remove it all the while he himself has this huge log in his own eye. Our house was built somewhere early to middle 1800’s as far as we know from the original title deed of the property. Running through the middle of the floor is a huge 12x12 beam for support. Picture a 12x12 log sticking out from the eye that’s about 30’ long. The beam or log Jesus was speaking about was just that. It was either the

support beam in the roof or in the floor and it would be ridiculous to think that someone who had a huge beam sticking out their eye socket could see to remove a little speck of sawdust in someone else’s eye. Jesus says that in order to successfully remove the speck from someone else’s eye, the person needs to first of all remove the beam from his own eye. Notice that the speck of sawdust and the log are of the same material indicating that we may be guilty in a greater degree of the same sin we are attempting to help the other person get rid of.

Jesus uses these illustrations to neatly wrap it all up. In essence Jesus is saying that if you follow those who themselves are spiritually blind you will never get to heaven. Blinded by their own massive sin, they are unqualified to lead someone else out of their sin. You must take care of your own spiritual walk before you can help someone else with their spiritual walk.

Today there are a lot of spiritually blind people trying to lead others spiritually, but they will all end up in the same spiritual plight unless someone else intervenes to tell them the truth.

Jesus gives a call to the right fundamentals. All of this sets up the finale to the passage and His sermon.

II. A CALL FOR THE RIGHT FRUIT – v. 43-45

In a nutshell you can tell what a person is like by what they say. Eventually the veneer will wear through and you will see what is really underneath. We expect our cherry tree to bear cherries. We expect our pear tree to bear pears. I don’t expect this summer to go out to pick a nice, big, juicy, red tomato for a couple BLT’s and find that onions are growing instead. I don’t expect in the fall to dig up Brussel sprouts where Robyn planted potatoes. You know the tree by its fruit.

And so it is with people. A person who is unregenerate, who has never experienced the life changing grace of Christ where all things are made new, cannot produce fruit that is good. Oh, they might do some benevolent things and we might hear someone say that if anyone deserved to go to heaven it should be that person because of all the good they did. To that I say baloney because eventually the true nature comes out. Jesus uses the principle of the harvest to illustrate that what is in our heart is what will come out in our fruit, our life, our character.

By what fruit are you known? Good or bad? Jesus gives a call to the right fruit, fruit that is good.

The capstone of the Sermon is in this final section. Jesus calls us to the right fundamentals. Jesus calls us to the right fruit. Jesus calls us to the right foundation.

III. A CALL FOR THE RIGHT FOUNDATION – v. 46-49

In this section Jesus sums it all up. Jesus concludes His sermon with a daunting question and then illustrates it by saying that you can only build on two types of foundation. One will be secure and withstand the tempest, the other will not. Unfortunately for some, they think they have built on the right foundation. Others try to build on both foundations thinking that is secure. “Why do you call Me, ‘Lord, Lord,’ and do not do what I say?”

How is it that you claim I am your Master but you don’t obey Me? Then Jesus says that the person who obeys Him is like someone who builds their house on a solid foundation.

In High school I took a building trades class in High school and we built a house. We had to dig the footings for the foundation to be poured.

To conclude His sermon, Jesus states that there are only two types of foundation that you can build on: one that is solid, or one that is soft.

Of course we know that the solid foundation He is referring to is Himself. He is the solid rock. It is a term that is used of Jesus on different occasions in the New Testament and it is a term used in the Old Testament to speak of God.

How many people are going to show up at the judgment thinking they are headed for the glory land only to find out that they built on the wrong foundation? “Why do you call Lord, when you don’t obey me?” How is it you think you can build on both foundations?

Back in 2005 former professional boxer Mike Tyson sat down with USA Today for an interview. They talked about his life and future. Here’s what he said in the interview: “I’ll never be happy. I believe I’ll die alone. I would want it that way. I’ve been a loner all my lie with my secrets and my pain. I’m really lost, but I’m trying to find myself. I just want to escape. I’m really embarrassed with myself and my life. I want to be a missionary. I think I could do that while keeping my dignity. I’m not going to be a Jesus freak. But that’s what I’m going to give my life to. I love Jesus, and I believe in Jesus, too.”

It sounds like Mike Tyson has made some serious life changes where he’ll spend eternity in heaven, and God only truly knows his heart and it sounds like he’s finally built his life on the right foundation, but there’s more to the interview.

“I’m not going to be a Jesus freak. But that’s what I’m going to give my life to. I love Jesus, and I believe in Jesus, too – and I’m a Muslim. Listen, I got a Imam, I got a Rabbi, I got a priest, I got a reverend – I got ‘em all.”

Today people think that the right foundation is to have all your spiritual bases covered.

In a recent interview with pop-singer/actress Selena Gomez following a trip to the far-east she exclaimed that the experience was very spiritual for her. But on what foundation do you think she has built her hopes for heaven?

Like so many others who think that they are building on a solid foundation, they are going to find that in the end, that foundation they believed to be so secure will just crumble away.

I've built my fair share of sand castles at the beach only to watch the tide come in wash it away.

Many people are building on sand. Lord, didn't we do miracles in your name? Didn't we do great deeds in your name? Didn't we teach in your name? In the end those things won't matter because like Mike Tyson and so many others, they built their house on the sandy land. They are betting on something they think is secure but will erode. Appearances can be indistinguishable until judgment because God knows the fruit, God's knows the foundation on which you have built.

Of Himself, Jesus said in John 14:6 "I am the way, the truth, and the life, no one comes to the Father but by Me."

In His first epistle, John would couch the two foundations this way: "If you have the Son, you have life, if you don't have the Son, you don't have life."

If your life is built on the foundation of Christ, when the storms of life assault, you will stand firm and when the day of judgment comes your hope, your security is in the solid rock of Jesus Christ. What foundation have you built on today? Do you know for sure Christ is that foundation? Is the foundation you have built on evident in the

fundamentals you practice and in the fruit you produce? It will be evident in the end, so you better be sure.

There is no better fitting end to our service today than by singing a great hymn of assurance "The Solid Rock." As we sing ask yourself which foundation you are building on. If it's not on the solid Rock I encourage you today to come so that we can make sure your house won't be destroyed.