

“Christ Says To Those Who Suffer Unjustly”

St. Luke 6:36-42

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SERMON 1923

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Our sermon text is from Luke 6:38, “Give, and it will be given to you: good measure, pressed down, shaken together, and running over will be put into your bosom. For with the same measure that you use, it will be measured back to you.”

Grace and peace to you from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ.

Before we get into the true teaching of this text, let us swat away the false application to which this text has been erroneously applied.

First, this text is not teaching what works need to be one in order to earn our salvation. Nor do we have to do these things in order to retain our salvation. Jesus is not speaking to unbelievers, but commanding those who are already believers how they are to lead a Christian life. You do not become a Christian by being merciful, judging not, condemning not, forgiving others and giving to others. Instead those who have been saved by Christ desire to do good works and lead a Christian life. Out of thankfulness, believers are merciful, judge not, condemn not, forgive others and give to others.

Second, in this Gospel text, Jesus is speaking to believers who are suffering unjustly. The Epistle from Romans 12:14-21 gives a similar situation. These believers are blessing people, even while they are being persecuted. These believers are rejoicing with other believers in the good news of God’s love. They are weeping with other believers at those who have been taken captive by immorality and covetousness. These believers aren’t haughty or conceited, for we too have been saved by grace. We seek to live peaceably with all, nevertheless unbelievers seek to persecute us unjustly. St. Paul says that believers are not to seek revenge, but leave that job to God. Believers are to forgive and give even to our enemies, and in this way overcome evil with good.

There are many supposed Christians who rip these verses out of their context of believers who are suffering unjustly. **They wish to use this text as an excuse in order to prevent those who have been given the office of punishing injustice.**

1. The parent who has been given the office to raise up a child is to reward good and punish evil in his child. The disobedient child who tells his dad, “You have to forgive, and you will be forgiven,” is subverting Christ’s intent. No, the parent must discipline the child.

However, if the child is leading a Christian life and he is being mistreated at school, the parent could tell the child to “bless those who persecute you; bless and do not curse them.... Repay no one evil for evil.” That is the correct context: Luke 6 is for someone who is suffering unjustly despite doing good.

2. The judge who has been given the office to punish those who do evil and break the laws of the governing authority, is not to bless those persecute other citizens. The judge is not to bless those who curse and do evil. God has placed the judge in his office as His agent of wrath to punish the evil doer. It is a misuse of Scripture to apply this text to those who have committed crimes and deserve to pay the penalty.

If however you live in a God-pleasing way and the government persecutes you by fines, taking away your rights and throwing you into jail, then I might tell you not to rebel but to commit your cause to God. St. Paul says, "Beloved, never avenge yourselves, but leave it to the wrath of God."

It would seem to me that a time is coming in which those who hold to Christian principles are going to be persecuted. Those Christians who speak of the sanctity of the nuclear family and do not rejoice in unholy unions will be persecuted. Those Christians who fail to acknowledge the obvious differences between man and woman will be treated poorly. Even those true Christians who seek to live peaceably in society will not be left alone to exercise their Christian religion in the home, at their work, or even in their church. When this persecution comes our way, we are not to behave as the world does, nor should we repay evil for evil.

In today's collect, we prayed, "Grant, O Lord, we implore You, that the course of this world may be so peaceably ordered by Your governance...." We desire what God desires. He desires that those who have been placed in positions of governing might maintain a peaceful ordering of this world. That is, He wants law and order to prevail. Furthermore, this peace which the government maintains is of great benefit to the church. The prayer continues, "...that Your Church may joyfully serve You in all godly quietness...." Where there is peace, the church is able to gather to hear the Word and receive the Sacraments of our Lord Jesus.

3. The pastor who has been given the office to preach the truth and expose and condemn falsehood is not to be told "Judge not, and you will not be judge; condemn not, and you will not be condemned; forgive and you will be forgiven." Jesus is not telling those religious leaders to pervert justice so that anything goes. God sent the pastor to judge and condemn unrepentant sin and forgive those who confess their sins. In Luke 6, Christ is speaking the Gospel to those Christians who are doing right, and yet are suffering unjustly.

When the pastor feeds the flock with the wholesome teaching of God's Word and yet He is maligned by the sheep, who desire to continue in his sin, then we could use this passage. We could tell the pastor to continue to do his job, even if you are persecuted and removed by powerful but unscrupulous layman. We could tell the pastor, not to engage in the same evil practice as others. "Do not be overcome by evil, but overcome evil with good."

My Christian friends, the Lord is warning us ahead of time that there will be those who will persecute you, even though you lead a Scripturally godly life and desire to live peaceably with all. Nevertheless, we need not live in fear. Your heavenly Father always protects and provides for His children. Listen again to the Introit from Psalm 27:1-5. This Old Testament believer reaches us how to respond to unjust suffering.

"The Lord is my light and my salvation; Whom shall I fear? The Lord is the strength of my life; Of whom shall I be afraid? 2When the wicked came against

me To eat up my flesh, My enemies and foes, They stumbled and fell. 3Though an army may encamp against me, My heart shall not fear; Though war should rise against me, In this I will be confident. 4One thing I have desired of the Lord, That will I seek: That I may dwell in the house of the Lord All the days of my life, To behold the beauty of the Lord, And to inquire in His temple. 5For in the time of trouble He shall hide me in His pavilion; In the secret place of His tabernacle He shall hide me; He shall set me high upon a rock.”

First of all, our Lord Jesus Christ has given you his word concerning **the forgiveness of your sins**, “Whoever believes and is baptized shall be saved” (Mk 16:16). Therefore, you need not worry that God has either forsaken you or that He is punishing you. Through faith in Christ, the Lord is your salvation.

Second, that same Lord Jesus Christ has given you **directions concerning how a Christian leads a God-pleasing life**. He is teaching you a life that will be **to your benefit and prosperity**. Marry a godly spouse. Raise up Christian children. Be content with your wages and do not covet your neighbor’s stuff. Do not hurt or harm your neighbor in hate, but love and support your neighbor in his body. Lead a sexually pure and decent life. Attend church and open your ears to the truth. Pray and call upon God in every trouble.

He loves you and wants only the best for you. 1 Timothy 4:8 says, “For bodily exercise profits a little, but godliness is profitable for all things, having promise of the life that now is and of that which is to come.” **Godliness is profitable for all things!**

Third, lest you think that something strange is happening and God’s plan is somehow derailed, **God tells us that His believers will be persecuted**. From the point that sin entered the world, the righteous in God have been persecuted. Cain killed Abel. God spared righteous Noah, lest he be killed by the heathen. Joseph was sold into slavery by his brothers. The prophets were often pursued. John the Baptist was beheaded and Jesus was killed. Saul was likely martyred in Rome.

Fourth, the Triune God has given **further instructions concerning your Christian response to this unjust suffering**. Luke 6:36-38, “Therefore be merciful, just as your Father also is merciful.” Again, the context is that Christians are to be merciful even toward their persecutors. Noah preached in order to try to save men from destruction. Joseph forgave his brothers and provided for them in Egypt. John preached the truth to Herod. Jesus prayed, “Father, forgive them for they do not know what they do.”

Jesus tells us how we are to behave toward our unjust persecutors, “Judge not, and you shall not be judged. Condemn not, and you shall not be condemned. Forgive, and you will be forgiven. ³⁸Give, and it will be given to you: good measure, pressed down, shaken together, and running over will be put into your bosom. For with the same measure that you use, it will be measured back to you.”

Fifth, and with every act of kindness, Jesus has further promised more blessings to encourage us in being merciful and loving our neighbor despite the evil we receive in return. If your persecutor is in need, give to them. The Lord promises, “...and it will be given to you: good measure, pressed down, shaken together, and running over will be put into your bosom.” Yes, I know that worldly wisdom would say that if you give away, then you will have nothing. Nevertheless, the Lord promises that He will give to us. You can’t out give God. Those Christians who are generous, especially to their unjust

persecutors will be the recipients of God's gifts.

Do not be tempted to treat them as they treat you. Do not be enticed to give them a piece of their own medicine. Do not seek to become their judge, nor to be the one who curses them. You are a baptized child of your heavenly Father. Be merciful, even as your Father is merciful.

The Lord has shown you great kindness and compassion. Not only did he bring you to faith, but He has continued to keep you in the faith—daily forgiving your sins. Do not be haughty, but associate with the lowly. Never be conceited. For with the measure you use it will be measured back to you.

With the Lord suffering and dying for you, the Lord is your salvation. With the Lord guiding you in your Christian living, the Lord is your light. With the Lord granting the strength of His promises, you need not be afraid.