

# HE IS LORD

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# He Is Lord

Luke 6:37-49

Just to refresh us a bit, we are studying through Jesus' Sermon on the Plain. In Matthew, this sermon is called Jesus' Sermon on the Mount. I also want to remind us that Jesus oftentimes needs to shock us into the truth. He is truly a revolutionary and subversive to the culture in which He lives. I am in a very small group of pastors who don't get involved politically. I say this often, not to convince you of this point of view. I say this to warn you that not many Bible scholars take this position. So as I interpret passages such as we are studying through, you need to know that I don't interpret things in a political way. Many of the scholars that I revere and look up to write and live as political activists. So please watch me carefully as I preach through the Gospels because these scholars use these passages as justification for us to be politically active.

Having said that, no matter how hard I try, I don't see it anywhere. Believe me. I try because I know that they are much smarter and holy than me. Jesus is preaching this to people who have either made a conscious decision to follow Him or are seriously considering it. I believe that Jesus is telling us how we must live and comport ourselves if we want to consider ourselves His disciples. There is nothing easy about what Jesus says. There is no problem defining the words or the meaning. It is relatively simple. It is simple to understand but not easy to live. I have to confess that all throughout my career I have tried to make Christianity palatable to people. But Jesus never did. In today's passage, Jesus is going to make it clear that if we want to be Christians, then we must obey Him. There is no other choice. When it comes to social justice issues, it seems to me that before we go out and get all politically active, we need to be living out social justice in the church. If we are not caring for the poor and the sick in the church, with what kind of moral authority can we speak to politicians? In the words of Jesus in today's passage, it seems to me that we need to get the log out of our own eyes before we attempt to take the splinter out of anyone else's eye.

This morning's text addresses obedience. That is something we are not good at nor do we ever aspire to be obedient. We talk about it a lot. For example, I used to lead a women's group. They had continually talked about their duty as wives. I did not teach this, but they decided it was their duty to obey their husbands. Notice I said they talked a lot about it. One woman's husband was a real miser. He saved every penny he ever made. He told his wife that when he died, he wanted his money buried with him. In fact, as part of his funeral service he wanted his widow to place the money in his casket. Well wouldn't you know it, her husband died and I was anxious to see how willing to obey she really was.

At the funeral service, we were about to close the casket and his wife said, "Wait a moment." She had a small metal lock-box with her which she walked over and

placed inside the casket. The undertakers closed the casket, we went to the cemetery, and buried the guy.

I was impressed. I thought these ladies were just big talkers about obeying their husbands, but she did it. She buried the guy's money with him.

At the luncheon, I overheard some of her friends talking to her. One said, "Girl, I know you were not foolish enough to put all that money in there with your husband." The loyal wife responded, "Look, I'm a Christian wife. I have to obey my husband. I would never go back on my word. I promised him that I would put all the money into the casket with him."

The other women said, "You mean to tell us that you put all that money in the casket with him?"

"I sure did," said the wife, "I got it all together, put it into my bank account, and wrote him a personal check. If he can cash it, then he can spend it."

Isn't that the way it is with us when it comes to obeying God? We take the things we like in the Bible and we obey them. But when it comes to interpreting the hard things Jesus has to say, we either just ignore them or water them down to something we can live with.

The main idea of this morning's text is this. **THERE IS NO REASON TO THINK JESUS IS OUR SAVIOR IF WE ARE NOT WILLING TO OBEY HIM AS LORD.** In other words, we refer to Jesus as our Lord and Savior. If He is not our Lord, then He is also not our Savior. Lord and Savior is a packaged deal. Jesus has told us in this sermon that we are to be humble, to pursue holiness, to love like He loves and not like the world loves. In fact, it seems as if we have to change all of our thinking to be followers of Christ. And as He continues with this sermon, we will see that He continues to turn our values upside down. In verses 37-38 Jesus makes it clear that He is the evaluator. In other words **SINCE JESUS IS THE ONE WHO WILL JUDGE EACH INDIVIDUAL AT THE FINAL JUDGMENT DAY, WE NEED TO UNDERSTAND HOW WE WILL BE EVALUATED.**

Somewhere along the way, we have come to believe that we can make our own rules for religion. Nowhere else in life can we live that way. We can't go to work anytime we feel like it. If the boss says we have to punch in at 8 o'clock, we can't waltz in at 10 o'clock, punch in, and say, "I just felt like coming in at ten today." If we don't feel like paying our tax, the federal and state governments will come in, take all our bank accounts and sell our houses. If we feel like going in a store and taking something without paying for it, the police will arrest us and we'll go to jail. If we have to obey man made laws and suffer the consequences if we refuse to obey, why do we think we can make up our own religious laws? If Jesus is God, and if Jesus tells us how we have to live, what makes us think we have the option to not obey His rules and make up our own? In this section of the sermon, Jesus will string together a bunch of seemingly unrelated topics. It seems strange to us

but this was a speaking technique the rabbis used to use. It was called Charaz. It literally means stringing beads together. The reasoning behind this technique was this. Don't dwell on one topic too long. In order to maintain the interest of your audience, you need to be continually changing topics. If you want to see the innovators of that in children's television, watch Sesame Street. It's fast paced, and teaches in quick snippets. I'm even entertained by it. So Jesus is using a technique used by teachers of the time.

## **HE IS EVALUATOR (VS 37-38)**

In the first half of verse 37 He addresses the topic of judging. He talks about this often. What Jesus hammers home over and over again is this. Our actions in this life have consequences for our next life. In other words, we will be judged in eternity for what we do in this life. The first thing we need to accept is that I am not the judge. You are not judges. God is the One Who makes the rules. God is the One Who judges. Jesus is the One Who will decide who goes to heaven and who goes to hell. If indeed Jesus is the judge, then we would do well to study the Bible carefully and we better put into practice what it tells us to do. Jesus makes it clear that He is the judge. Instead of judging others, our time would be better spent obeying all that Jesus commands us to do.

In the second half of verse 37 Jesus says that if we forgive others He will forgive us. We don't take time thinking about this, but Jesus thinks this concept is very important. In fact, as short and to the point The Lord's Prayer is, He says that we are to pray, "Forgive us our sins, as we forgive those who sin against us." In the parable of the unmerciful servant, Jesus concludes it like this:

"32Then the king called in the man he had forgiven and said, 'You evil servant! I forgave you that tremendous debt because you pleaded with me. 33Shouldn't you have mercy on your fellow servant, just as I had mercy on you?' 34Then the angry king sent the man to prison until he had paid every penny.

35That's what my heavenly Father will do to you if you refuse to forgive your brothers and sisters in your heart" (Matthew 18:32-35 / NLT).

As we continue to study through the Gospels, we need to see that when Jesus talks about final judgment, He almost always links it to some sort of thought, attitude, or behavior. Now before anyone gets crazy, let's affirm that we continue to believe that we are saved by grace through faith. But I'm not sure we understand what faith is. I'll get into it later. But for now let's take seriously what Jesus has just said. If we want to be His followers, we cannot be judgmental and we must forgive those who sin against us. If we are not willing to do this, then we have no reason to call ourselves followers of Christ.

In verse 38 Jesus points out that He is the God of grace. The measurement God uses is grace. This almost sounds like a teaching on giving. Here is what is described here. Did you ever go to the store and buy something that was dry bulk

that you had to pack? Take for instance coffee. Let's say you pay \$5 for a can of coffee. If you were to fill the can, you would fill it with coffee. Then you would shake it and bang the can down on the counter. The coffee would then pack itself down and leave room for more. Then you would shake it and bang it down on the counter again. You would then fill it again until you couldn't fit any more in. Now let's say you were the merchant and you did this for your customer. You would be giving your customer a great deal. You would be ensuring that your customer got absolutely the most for his money. Our family goes to this particular Chinese restaurant. We order a small fried rice for about \$5. The owners of the restaurant pack it so full that they cannot close the cover.

They have to staple the ends shut about 2 inches above the container. We always feel as if we are getting way more than our money's worth. When we offer grace, mercy, and forgiveness to others, do they feel like we are pouring out grace so abundantly that it is overflowing them and overwhelming them? Do they feel so much grace coming from you that they don't think they can hold it all, that it's spilling out all over? Look how Jesus ends this section, "For with the measure you use, it will be measured to you." Here is Jesus' point. First of all He expects us to obey Him. If we don't even try to obey Him, then there is no reason to think we are Christians in any way. However, for those of us who are seriously trying to obey Him, we know that we often find ourselves failing pathetically. We quickly realize that it will take an incredible amount of God's grace to make up for our failure to obey all that He has commanded.

If we realize how much grace we need, then we will gladly be gracious to those around us. If we come to realize how much grace, mercy, and forgiveness we are in need of, then we will be gracious, merciful, and forgiving to those who are need of these things from us. Jesus made it clear what He wants from us. There is no way to get around this. SINCE JESUS IS THE ONE WHO WILL JUDGE EACH INDIVIDUAL AT THE FINAL JUDGMENT DAY, WE NEED TO UNDERSTAND HOW WE WILL BE EVALUATED. Here is where pride can kill a person. If one thinks they are pretty good and not in need of God's forgiveness and mercy, then they will be judgmental of other people. If you find that you tend to be judgmental, that's probably a sign that you don't know how much in need you are of God's grace, mercy, and forgiveness. I hope you discover this before the final judgment day because then it will be too late.

## **HE IS TEACHER (VS 39-45)**

Jesus has just spoken as the One Who evaluates our work and sets the standards. In verses 39-45 He establishes Himself as teacher. JESUS GIVES US SEVERAL SELF-EVALUATION CHECKS TO SEE IF WE ARE ON THE RIGHT PATH. Somewhere along the line, the modern day Christian has come to think that we have the freedom to interpret the Bible any way we want to. In the sixties, a popular kind of Bible study method made its appearance. Several people would gather around a table and read a portion of Scripture. Then the leader would go around the table and say, "What does this passage mean to you?" Let me rebuke and correct that

notion of Bible study as dangerous and heretical. It does not matter what the Bible passage means to you or to me. What matters is what the author of the Bible, God, meant by it. Jesus is going to expose the absurdity of this approach to the Bible.

In verses 39-40 Jesus gives us tools in evaluating our values. Verse 39 starts out, "He also told them this parable." If you are anything like me, you started looking for a story with a moral attached to it. But let me use this opportunity to remind us what the word parable means in Greek. The word is a compound word. Para means to be alongside of. Ballo means to throw. So a parable is a saying that is thrown alongside the truth it is trying to convey. It could be any comparison that stimulates our thinking. It could take the form of a proverb, a riddle, or an allegory. It could be an analogy. Or it could be the kind that we are most familiar with, an example story. In this section Jesus submits questions and answers. In the next section, He will end the sermon with the story of a wise builder and a foolish builder.

In this first section, Jesus invites us to evaluate our values. These are great examples. He says, "Can a blind man lead a blind man? Will they not both fall into a pit?" I know this is a bit cruel to blind people, but at the same time it is meant to be both comical and tragic. If it weren't so tragic, it would be totally comical. The first obvious application is that we often take the lead from our culture, from television, internet, magazines, and other forms of media. We also take our lead from the education we receive in schools as truth. We accept as truth everything we see and hear from sources that claim to be authoritative. When we accept the values of society, we are indeed the blind being led by the blind.

Even more tragic are Christians whose lives are a total mess. And what they do is get themselves involved in other people's lives, trying to solve their problems. I have seen this and you have seen this. Many people will tell you how to live your life while their own lives are in chaos.

When I was a youth pastor, it used to drive me nuts and it still does to hear young people giving each other advice. It truly is a case of the blind leading the blind. It is not our friends, not our culture, our schools, the media or anything else that can lead us to truth. Luke has already informed us that Jesus' teaching is like no other teaching because Jesus' teachings have the authority of heaven behind them. For us today, we have the Bible. Jesus is the only legitimate source of truth.

Why is it so important that we submit to the teachings of God as laid out in Scripture? Because in verse 40 Jesus states that the student will become the ultimate product of his or her teacher. If we follow anyone or anything but God, we will end up in the same pit our teacher ends up in. On the other hand, as we follow the teachings of Jesus as revealed in the Bible, we will become more and more like Jesus every day. In fact, when we see Him face to face, we will be like Him. As we evaluate our values, we must be sure that we are following the teachings of Jesus.

In verses 41-42, we are invited to evaluate our righteousness. I kind of made myself a note that the two concepts that are in conflict here are self evaluation in contrast with self righteousness. This is meant to also be tragic and comical. Can you imagine this? You have a speck of dust in your eye that you can't seem to get out and so you go to the eye doctor. You sit down in the chair and the doctor enters the room. But you notice that the doctor has this huge piece of wood in his eye. He tries to maneuver himself trying to get a good look at your eye, but because of this wood sticking out of his eye, he can't seem to get a good look at it. Wouldn't you start to freak out? I think it is easy to see how each of us is like this doctor, can't we? For some reason, it is always easier to see the faults in others and we are often blind to the problems in our own lives. One interesting thing I have noticed over the years is that oftentimes the very things that we see wrong in others is the exact same thing that we are blind to in our own lives.

Jesus' advice is that we first examine our own lives and correct our own faults before we try and help others with theirs. The New Testament scholar William Barclay put it this way:

"He (Jesus) taught that we have no right to criticize unless we ourselves are free of faults. That simply means that we have no right to criticize at all, because there is so much bad in the best of us and so much good in the worst of us that it ill becomes any of us to find fault with the rest of us."

Instead of spending our energies evaluating others, we would do much better in evaluating ourselves. Let's keep all of this in mind as we remember how Jesus began this passage today. He said don't judge, don't condemn, forgive others and apply a great deal of grace when interacting with them. And then God will be gracious to us. I would like you to put this bookmark in your mind. Jesus is serious about this forgiveness thing. Almost every time He talks about our attitudes concerning forgiving others, He ties it to His forgiving us. I would like to suggest Jesus takes this very seriously. We should too. If we were to honestly evaluate our righteousness based on our thoughts, words, and behaviors, we would have to see how much we are in need of God's forgiveness, grace, and mercy. If that's the case, and we truly desire His grace, mercy, and forgiveness, then we should be pouring out grace, mercy, and forgiveness on to those who have hurt us.

And in verses 43-45, Jesus gives us an interesting way of evaluating our hearts. In verses 43 and 44 we can evaluate our hearts by examining the fruits of our lives. Paul listed the fruit of the Holy Spirit as love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, gentleness, faithfulness, and self-control. Jesus also made this point in several different ways as well. Can you say that people would describe you and me as people filled with joy, people who are at peace, people who are patient, kind, good and gentle, people who are faithful and exhibit self-control? These attitudes are windows to our souls. Did you ever meet angry, cranky, nasty people who claim to be Christians? I'd have to say based on Jesus' words here, they are probably not authentic Christians.

The next test is one that Jesus has worked a great deal on with me. Our words are also a window to our souls. Listen to your words. Are they critical, crude, angry, or hurtful? Do they reflect attitudes of discontentment, jealousy, anger, or hate? Take some time to examine the words you speak to others. Could you say the way you speak to your husband, wife, and children reflect the love of Jesus? When I take time to examine what comes out of my mouth, I am often driven to my knees when I hear Jesus say, "For out of the overflow of your heart John, your mouth speaks."

Jesus wants us to evaluate our attitudes and words to others. How we speak to and treat others is a good evaluation of who we belong to and who we serve. Do we belong to the world and serve the Devil or do we belong to Jesus and do we serve God alone? There are so many people, teachers, reporters, celebrities, and politicians telling us what we should believe and what we ought to be doing. Jesus made it clear that He is the way, the truth, and the light. There is no other way to be reconciled with God but through Him. And here JESUS GIVES US SEVERAL SELF-EVALUATION CHECKS TO SEE IF WE ARE ON THE RIGHT PATH.

## **HE IS LORD (VS 46-49)**

Jesus has given us some very difficult commands. He has made it clear that He is the final Judge. He is the ultimate Teacher in that He has given us self-evaluation tools. In verses 46-49 He makes it crystal clear that He is Lord. This concept is absolutely critical. WE VERIFY THAT JESUS IS OUR SAVIOR BY OBEYING HIM AS LORD. I think that one of the harmful thoughts that we have picked up as a result of the doctrine of salvation by grace through faith alone is that we have made obedience optional. In other words, we have come to think Jesus can be our Savior without being our Lord. I can assure you that nowhere in the Bible is this concept ever affirmed. In order for Jesus to be our Savior, He must be our Lord.

In verses 46 Jesus makes it clear that He alone is Lord. He says, "Why do you call me, 'Lord, Lord,' and do not do what I say?" In other words, for Jesus, obedience and action are parts of faith. In other words, Jesus is saying that if we are not willing to obey Him, then there is no reason to call Him Lord. If we don't call Him Lord, then there is no way to call Him Savior. Faith always manifests itself in obedience to God. Let's review what Jesus has told us in this sermon. He has commanded us to be humble not proud, to pursue holiness not worldliness, to acknowledge our sin and repent of our sins. We must forgive our enemies, love our enemies, do good to our enemies, be kind to our enemies, and be generous to all people. We must love people like God loves people. We must be kind, merciful, and generous, even to our enemies. We must do brutally honest self-evaluation to make sure we are on the right path. These were not suggestions by Jesus to His followers. They are commands to us who want to call ourselves Christians.

In verses 47-48 Jesus makes it clear that He is Lord of those who obey. There is nothing easy about keeping these commands. It is hard work, takes diligence, and it requires us to keep our eyes focused on Jesus and eternity. It is as difficult as a

man building a solid house on a solid foundation. It is difficult to find an appropriate place to build the house. It is difficult to dig down through dirt and debris to hit solid rock. It is back breaking work to chisel out the foundation on the rock and build several courses of stone on the rock. But the point is this. When winds, rain, and floods come, that house will stand firm on top of the solid rock on which it was built.

His point is that when we follow and obey Jesus as Lord and Savior, we have made a good choice. The choice will require a great deal of sacrifice, hard work, and diligence. But we will spend eternity with Jesus in the next life and be able to weather the storms of this life. Obedience is a sign of an authentic follower of Christ.

On the other hand, in verse 49 Jesus states that He is not the Lord of those who do not obey. The foolish man is the man who looks for the easiest and most convenient place to build. He finds a stretch of sand all cleared out. He doesn't stop and think that perhaps it was all clear because a previous flood had cleared all the debris away. So he doesn't bother to locate a good spot nor does he dig down to find solid bedrock. This person is characterized as lazy, short-sighted, and looking always for the path of least resistant. This guy avoids hard work at all cost and thinks his way leads to happiness.

These are people who hear the Christian message and want to be Christians. But they are not willing to follow Jesus. They give lip service to Him but not really willing to obey Him. The end of this person is destruction in hell. Jesus will make point several different ways throughout the Gospel of Luke. He is both Lord and Savior. If He is not our Lord then He is not our Savior. WE VERIFY THAT JESUS IS OUR SAVIOR BY OBEYING HIM AS LORD.

I don't want anyone to be confused. The Bible is clear that we are saved by grace through faith. However, in no way does that mean that obedience to Jesus as Lord is optional. Obedience is the key sign that we do have Jesus as our Lord and Savior. Of course we will never be able to obey perfectly, but we should be trying with all our might. Grace and mercy are applied by Jesus to those failures so we are made completely righteous by His blood. However, we must never forget that THERE IS NO REASON TO THINK JESUS IS OUR SAVIOR IF WE ARE NOT WILLING TO OBEY HIM AS LORD.

A husband and wife were discussing the possibility of taking a trip to the Holy Land. The husband said, "Wouldn't it be fantastic to go to Mount Sinai and shout out the Ten Commandments for the top?"

The wife wisely said, "Wouldn't it be better if we stayed home and obeyed them?"

I'd like to remind us that Jesus addressed the Sermon on the Plain to His disciples. We church people talk a good game of Christianity but Jesus says that talking a good game is not enough. Obedience is mandatory not optional.