

Tough Love and Trumpeted Generosity

Matthew 5:43-6:4
Doug Roman, Bible Baptist Church
Sunday AM, November 8, 2015
Sermon Summary

Introduction

We are sitting at the feet of Jesus as we work through the Sermon on the Mount. Tough love is not an ideal Valentine's Day title, is it? The Sermon on the Mount is the longest recorded discourse we have from Jesus' teaching ministry.

Big Idea

Followers of Jesus should love and give as God loves and gives.

Exposition

We will take up two topics this morning: love and generosity.

I. Tough Love

There is a contrast between two kinds of love.

A. A love that is entirely human (v. 43)

"You have heard it said." Jesus is dealing with a portion of the OT and the oral tradition that has come out of it. The section is "You shall love your neighbor and hate your enemy." Jesus refers to a passage in Leviticus 19:18, "You shall not take vengeance or bear a grudge against the sons of your own people, but you shall love your neighbor as yourself: I am the Lord" (cf. 22:39; Mark 12:31; Luke 10:27; Galatians 5:14; James 2:8).

B. A love that is unmistakably divine (vv. 44-48)

"But I say to you, Love your enemies and pray for those who persecute you." Jesus says the exact opposite of what oral tradition taught: love your enemies (Luke 6:27-28; Romans 12:20; Exodus 23:4; Job 31:29-30; Psalm 7:4). Rather than providing a version of Christianity that is entirely consistent with an our natural make up, Jesus commands what only can be done when a heart is regenerate.

What does this look like? Pray for those who persecute you (Luke 23:34; Acts 7:60; 2 Timothy 4:16; 1 Peter 3:9). This was seen in an example just this weekend when the Church of England (the Anglican Church) tweeted its prayer for Richard Dawkins, who recently suffered a stroke. When we do this, we demonstrate that we are children of God. "so that you may be sons of your Father who is in heaven." This is why it is a love that is unmistakably divine. Unbelievers (Tax collectors and Gentiles) can love those who find favor in our eyes (vv. 46-47).

What Jesus prescribed is *tough love*. I don't mean the tough love a parent may show by enforcing constraints but a kind of love that our flesh screams out against. It flows the heart of the Father (Romans 5:8), into the regenerated heart, and toward others. Jesus makes it clear the heart of the Father with the example of what has been identified as common grace. Common grace is a grace that God bestows on all. This is contrasted to saving grace which is a grace that enables a person to repent and believe in Christ and thus become a child of God. So what does this common grace look like? "For he makes his sun to rise on the just and the

unjust, and sends rain on the just and the unjust. On sunny days, the sun shines on our backyards and it shines on prison yards. The sun warms the godless atheist in the same way it does the godly theist. The rain nourishes the illegal opium poppy fields in Afghanistan and it nourishes the coffee farms in Ethiopia. God has kindly extended many gracious benefits to all people, whether they are regenerate or not.

This oral tradition is so tame. This is truly standard of righteousness attainable by our own capacity (5:20). Who finds it hard to love a person to whom they are drawn? Then comes v. 48. Jesus has been teaching with 5:17 and 5:20 in view. He addresses heart-murder and heart-adultery and other topics that make His hearers fidgety. Then he says “Be *perfect*.” It is a God-kind of perfection. Unblotted. Unstained. Unblemished.

So where does this reservoir of love come from? It requires a regenerated heart. This is a divinely-sourced love giving to us through God’s spirit. This is tough love that is unmistakably divine.

2. Trumpeted Generosity

The sermon the mount pivots from Matthew 5 to Matthew 6, which makes it a good place for a chapter break in our Bibles. Jesus shifts from oral tradition to examples of practicing righteousness before people. Jesus offers a caution in v. 1. He goes on to illustrate it with giving, prayer, and fasting.

A. The warning (v. 1)

Jesus offers a caution, “Beware...” The warning is that when we do good things to be seen by others, the seeing of the actions is our reward. It is no longer an action which God rewards.

B. The illustration (vv. 2-4)

Vv. 2-4 illustrates practicing your righteousness before others with giving. Almsgiving was an act of charitable giving toward the needy (cf. Deuteronomy 15:11; Acts 3:1-10). Notice that Jesus says “*when* you give to the needy” (cf. v. 7, “when you pray,” 16, “when you fast”). There is an obligation for the Christian to engage in this kind of generosity.

The word “hypocrites” is used no fewer than three times in this chapter (v. 2, 5, 16). So it a shorthand way of referring to the one who practices righteousness before others. They want people to know whether in the synagogues or on the streets. “Hypocrites” refers to “one who pretends to be other than he really is” (LN, §88.228; cf. BDAG, 1038; TDNT, 8:559). The Greek *hupokrites* was first an orator and then an actor. So figuratively the word came to be applied to anybody who treats the world as a stage on which he plays a part (129). The Message has “The World is not a Stage” as the header for 6:1-4.

This is a caution that springs from 5:20. This has a particular group in view, viz., the Pharisees. At the same time, it has a general kind of person in view, viz., the kind of person whose righteousness is to be seen by others without regard to God. Therefore, the application extends to anyone who practices religion for others. It is not limited to giving but extended to any kind of religious activity for the sake of being seen by others. The caution then is not blowing trumpets before you give but there is the danger of “tooting your own horn” (cf. Stott. 129). This happens in many different aspects expressed in the phrase “when the cat’s away the mice will play.” When we do what’s right when mom or dad is around. When we talk about God when a pastor is around. When we do our work when the teacher is looking. When we give ourselves to our work when our boss is around. When we avert our looks when our wives are with us. When we pay back taxes after an audit...on and on it goes.

So where does this reservoir of giving come from? Grace. 2 Corinthians 8:1-8.

Conclusion

The “nones” are those who self-identity as religiously unaffiliated (cf. [article](#)). The demographic category of the “nones” is on the rise in America. One intriguing question around this demographic is where are they coming from? The answer is startling. Nones are coming out churches—including churches like ours. Churches are not making disciples but rather spawning “nones.” This is neither a rebuke nor a shock value statement. It is simply a jarring reality to which we must awaken and respond. Ed Stetzer wrote an article titled “Nominals to Nones: 3 Key Takeaways from Pew’s Religious Landscape Survey” on May 12, 2015 ([article](#)). He writes, “Christianity is losing, and will continue to lose, its home field advantage; no one can (or should) deny this.” He observes, “For example, the cultural cost of calling yourself ‘Christian’ is starting to outweigh the cultural benefit, so those who do not identify as a “Christian” according to their convictions are starting to identify as “nones” because it’s more culturally savvy.” So he says, “The big trends are clear, the nominals are becoming the nones, yet the convictional are remaining committed.” Okay, so what we can and should observe from this observation is that there are nominal Christians and there are convictional Christians. Nominal Christians are those who identify as a follower of Christ for loosely held reasons. Convictional Christians are those who are unshakably convinced that the Bible and its message is true and trustworthy. Convictional Christianity is more than being intellectually persuaded about the Christian message. Instead, convictional Christians “live out of this truth and are willing to die for it” (Mohler, *The Conviction to Lead*, 22). The Sermon on the Mount is about convictional Christianity. It is not the path of nominal Christians. It is the way of convictional Christianity. If you can week after week disregard the teachings of Jesus, though you are in a church, you too may find yourself self-identifying as a “none” in a demographic survey in the near future. But perhaps the Sermon of the Mount has moved you. You find that the requirements to be a kingdom constituent is beyond your own moral and spiritual capacity. Let me say that at this point, you are a perfect candidate for God’s grace. You have felt the weight of 5:48. To you, Jesus calls and says, “Come to me” (Matthew 11:28-30). God did in Christ what we could never do for ourselves. This is when we recognize that we have epically failed in achieving God’s standard on our own. This is godly sorrow. We repudiate our own efforts to achieve the righteousness God demands. This is repentance. We place our trust in Christ’s finished work on the cross and His glorious resurrection from the dead on the third day. This is belief. A godly sorry leads to repentance and faith which result in receiving God’s gift of salvation (2 Corinthians 7:10).

Discussion Questions

1. How does the love of v. 43 depend on our own moral capacity?
2. How does the love of v. 45 demonstrate the love of God?
3. How can we make much of God in our generosity?
4. We may not sound trumpets but how can we “toot our own horn” when giving?
5. Read 2 Cor 8:1-8. Listen for the repetition of a word in v. 1, 6, 7. What does this passage teach us about the kind of generosity addresses in 6:1-4?