

To Do Good or Harm

Luke, Pt. 17

Luke 6:1-11

Allan McCullough

Grace Hill Church

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I. INTRODUCTION

a. This morning, I would like to pose a challenging question to all of us...

- To the church as an institution.
- To Grace Hill as a local church.
- To each of us as individual followers of Jesus.

- i. Is it possible that the way we practice our faith...the way we practice Christianity...does more harm to our neighbor than it does good?

b. This morning, we are going to be studying Luke 6:1-11 together and Jesus is going to compel us to consider this question.

- i. Last week, Monte McCullough got us back into our sermon series on the Gospel of Luke.

- We've been studying the Gospel of Luke verse by verse for several months and then we took a long break through the Spring and part of the Summer.
- But now, it is time to re-enter our study of Luke.
 1. And remember, the Gospel of Luke is an account of the life and the teachings of Jesus Christ.

c. And one of the themes that we have already seen in our study so far and one that will keep coming up over and over again through our study is that of the Kingdom of God.



- i. While Jesus was walking on this planet, he spent his time teaching about the Kingdom of God and demonstrating the way of the Kingdom of God.
- ii. And when I say the Kingdom of God, I want you to think about...
 - A kingdom. A place where God is the political ruler over a society.
 - Because when Christ returns, the Kingdom of God will begin in its fullness.
 - God will rule. He'll be the leader.
 - And Jesus spent much of his time here on earth teaching people about what that is going to be like and why God is worthy of your submission to Him as King.

d. And so, as we pick up the text here in Luke 6, Jesus has been spending some time contrasting the Kingdom of God to what has become of the Jewish religion of the day...

- i. Jesus had many conversations and run-ins with a group of religious leaders called the Pharisees.
 - The Pharisees were very conservative and very strict and they took the Old Testament Law very seriously.
 1. The Pharisees had a very simple theology.
 2. God has given a law. Keep the law perfectly...and you'll be good.
 3. Break the law, then you will be judged.
 4. In the mind of a Pharisee, this is what the Kingdom of God would be like.
 5. A strict, comprehensive, elaborate law.



6. And to the Pharisees, the Messiah would impose this strict law on the whole world.
- ii. But Jesus sought to make a very clear distinction between the actual Kingdom of God and this other kingdom defined by law.
- And in our text this morning, Jesus is going to continue to help us understand what the Kingdom of God is like.
- iii. Read Luke 6:1-11.
- *“On a Sabbath, while he was going through the grainfields, his disciples plucked and ate some heads of grain, rubbing them in their hands. ² But some of the Pharisees said, “Why are you doing what is not lawful to do on the Sabbath?” ³ And Jesus answered them, “Have you not read what David did when he was hungry, he and those who were with him: ⁴ how he entered the house of God and took and ate the bread of the Presence, which is not lawful for any but the priests to eat, and also gave it to those with him?” ⁵ And he said to them, “The Son of Man is lord of the Sabbath.”*
- iv. Let’s pause here for just a second...
- God commanded his people to work six days a week and to rest one day a week...a day called the Sabbath.
 1. And in the OT, there are all kinds of laws surrounding the Sabbath...including the fourth commandment.
 - But one thing you need to know about God’s laws and commandments is that they are not arbitrary.



1. God doesn't make His people do a song and dance just because he has the power to do so and it puffs up his pride.
 2. No...all of God's laws and commands have a loving purpose behind them that is for our good and our joy.
- Now, you might remember, two months ago on May 24, I preached on Mark 2:23-28, which is the same passage and account about the Sabbath as this one here in Luke 6.
 1. And in that sermon, I unpack what God's true purpose is behind the Sabbath and why it is good for us.
 2. So, I am not going to re-hash it here this morning, but if you're interested, you can find that on our Podcast as a part of our "Healthy Soul" sermon series.
 - But what I want us to take away from this one encounter between Jesus and the Pharisees about the Sabbath day...is that it is clear that the Pharisees, in their desire to perfectly keep the law, have forgotten God's purpose behind the Sabbath laws.
 1. In their zeal to perfectly perform the WHAT they forgot the WHY.
 2. Keep that in mind as we continue reading in the text....
 - ***6 On another Sabbath, he entered the synagogue and was teaching, and a man was there whose right hand was withered. 7 And the scribes and the Pharisees watched him, to see whether he would heal on the Sabbath, so that they might find a reason to accuse him. 8 But he knew their thoughts, and he said to the man with the withered hand, "Come and stand here." And***



he rose and stood there. ⁹ And Jesus said to them, "I ask you, is it lawful on the Sabbath to do good or to do harm, to save life or to destroy it?" ¹⁰ And after looking around at them all he said to him, "Stretch out your hand." And he did so, and his hand was restored. ¹¹ But they were filled with fury and discussed with one another what they might do to Jesus."

II. THREE WAYS TO USE OUR FAITH TO HARM OUR NEIGHBOR

a. Jesus asks a very probing question in v.9...is it lawful on the Sabbath day to do good or to do harm?

- i. In other words...as you seek to follow the Sabbath laws, are you still keeping the law if your "law-keeping" is harmful to another person.
 - Are you still keeping the law, if your "law-keeping" causes you not to have compassion and empathy on another person...like this man with the withered hand.
- ii. One of the ways Jesus most challenged the Pharisees was by showing them how their religion became their excuse not to have to love their neighbor...and this is an example.
 - At some point, the Pharisees forgot about God's true purposes behind the law (that they're for our good and our joy)...and the law itself became their religion.
 - Even if it meant harming others.



b. And, I think we need to ask ourselves the same question....

- i. Is it possible that the way we practice our faith...the way we practice Christianity...does more harm to our neighbor than it does good?
 - And looking at our text this morning, I think there are three ways we can use our faith to bring harm to our neighbor rather than good.

c. #1 – We bring harm to our neighbor when we use our faith to push people down.

- i. In our text, the Pharisees were looking for a reason to accuse Jesus of breaking Sabbath laws.
 - They were looking to catch Jesus in an unlawful act so they could push Jesus down, condemn him, judge him, sneer at him, and tarnish Jesus' reputation.
 1. And the Pharisees were notorious for publicly shaming and condemning people for their sin.
 - I actually find it fascinating that the Pharisees knew that this situation would be a perfect setup for Jesus.
 1. They knew Jesus would be compassionate and empathetic to this man with the withered hand.
 2. It never crossed their minds to be compassionate themselves. Rather, this man was just a pawn in the Pharisees scheme.



- So, you have the faith of the Pharisees, which is on a mission to condemn and you have Jesus, who is on a mission to show compassion.
 1. The Pharisees want to enforce law.
 2. Jesus wants to engage people in love.
- ii. **If we were to be honest, does the church and do Christians have more of a reputation in our country for pushing people down in condemnation or engaging people out of compassion?**
- Now, we do practice an ethical faith. God has given us His Word and He has revealed to us what is good and not good, what is right and wrong.
 1. Christians should have high standards when it comes to our conduct and way of life.
 - But our mission is not to impose and enforce those standards on our neighbor.
 1. Our mission is to love our neighbor.
- iii. **Now, I want to challenge us this morning in how we might do this in the privacy of our head.**
- How easily do we condemn, pass judgement, look for reasons to accuse, form opinions about other people in our head?
 1. How easily do we write someone off because they say or do something that we don't approve of.
 2. And because we have formed an opinion of that person, instead of being willing to engage that person in love, we avoid that person because of the judgement we have already pronounced over them.



- Maybe it's a neighbor, co-worker, or family member of yours...
 1. That's gay...
 2. Or it's the man who sits on his front porch stoop everyday smoking a cigarette...
 3. Or the day laborers standing by the 7-11 waiting for work...
 4. Or that guy covered in tattoos...
 5. That panhandler looking for some change...
 6. Or that person at work who doesn't work as hard as you think they should work...
 7. Or that person from church who posts things on Facebook you don't like...
 - See, when we push people down in our head and form judgmental opinions about others based on our own faith and standards of living...
 1. We easily become just like the Pharisees...
 2. Watching people and waiting to accuse them of their wrongdoing...
 3. Instead of engaging our neighbor in love like Jesus consistently demonstrated.
- iv. **Do you see the contrast between the two Kingdoms?**
- One is waiting for people to mess up and to punish them for it.
 - The other engages people out of love.



d. #2 - We bring harm to our neighbor when we use our faith to elevate ourselves above others.

- i. It's no secret that the Pharisees were trying to demonstrate how they were more faithful than Jesus.
 - They wanted to convince the people that Jesus was not the Messiah and that He was not worth following.
 1. Instead, the people should be following them, the Pharisees.
 - The reason the Pharisees were trying to trap Jesus in unlawful acts was so that they could elevate themselves above Jesus and all the other people at the Synagogue.
- ii. **See, when our faith becomes centered on the law like the Pharisees...or centered on our behavior and enforcing our standards of living...it becomes easy to boast in our works and see ourselves as better than other people.**
 - We look to the Christian things that we do as confirmation that we are more righteous than our neighbor.
 1. And just like pushing people down, this is something that is so easily done in our head.
 - This could be happening in your marriage right now.
 1. You see yourself as more righteous than your spouse...and you have a list of things in your head about all the ways your spouse could be better.



2. And because you have elevated yourself above your spouse, you actually minimize your own sin and have become blind to the ways where you need to change.
 3. Unwilling to consider your own sin and no compassion in your heart.
 4. Just like the Pharisees.
- This could be happening in your workplace right now...
 1. You see yourself as more righteous than your co-workers...and you have this list in your head of all the ways your co-workers could be better.
 2. And because you have elevated yourself above your co-workers, you actually are deaf to the ways that you need to change and, again, no compassion in your heart.
 - When we elevate ourselves above other people, we use our faith to create a class system and we place ourselves in a class where we become blind to our own sin and areas where we need to change.
 1. If anyone was in a class above his neighbors, it was Jesus.
 2. Who was constantly ridiculed by the Pharisees for spending time with sinners.
 3. And yet again, we have an example where the Pharisees used their faith to ridicule, not love their neighbor.
- iii. **Do you see the contrast between the two kingdoms?**



e. #3 – We bring harm to our neighbor when we use our faith to separate ourselves from others.

- i. It was clear that the Pharisees wanted to create a very clear distinction between them and the rest of the people.
 - And so instead of loving and engaging their neighbors, they disengaged and sheltered themselves from their neighbors so they wouldn't be stained by them.
 - Galatians 5:14 says – *“For the whole law is fulfilled in one word: “You shall love your neighbor as yourself.”*
 1. And here is my question, how do we love our neighbors if we shelter ourselves from our neighbors?
 2. How can we have compassion on our neighbors, serve our neighbors, carry burdens for our neighbors, enter into the suffering of our neighbors, if we don't engage with our neighbors?
 3. Notice how the mission of the Pharisees to enforce the law made them completely unmoved by the suffering of this man with a withered hand.
 - Sometimes I think that the reason why the church can be tone-deaf and blind to the suffering and injustice of our world is because we have separated ourselves from the world for the purpose of faithfulness and yet what actually has happened is we have given up our ability to love our neighbor...and according to Galatians 5:14...fulfill any part of the law.



ii. **And yet, watch Jesus...**

- He walks into the Synagogue and He moves with compassion toward the suffering.
- The most controversial thing Jesus did while He was on this planet was He engaged and loved His neighbors...
 1. To the point that it made the religious leaders of the day uneasy.

iii. **Do we love our neighbors and our co-workers like this?**

- Do we engage?
- Are we aware of where they are hurting, suffering, and in need?
- Do we care?

III. THE GOSPEL AND THE KINGDOM

a. **Grace Hill, what would it look like if we as a church and if we as individual followers of Jesus flipped the script!**

- i. The church has a reputation of condemning people, being self-righteous, and disengaging from the culture for the sake of our comfort.
- But this is not what the Kingdom of God is like!
 - What if we followed Jesus and demonstrated to the world what the actual Kingdom of God is like!
 1. What if we engaged people before we pass judgement?
 2. What if we didn't compare ourselves to our neighbor when it comes to our behavior?



3. What if we didn't shelter ourselves from our neighbors, but we got involved to the point where we can love our neighbors with the kind of compassion that Jesus modeled for us?

b. And Grace Hill, don't forget, this is the Gospel!

- i. This is how Jesus has loved you and me!
- ii. We were dead in our trespasses and sin. Enemies of God. Unclean. Condemned.
 - And yet Jesus, instead of passing judgement and pushing us down further, decided to engage instead of separating Himself from us.
- iii. Instead of remaining in Heaven, elevated above us, He became one of us.
 - He became a man, walked this earth, felt our temptations, entered into our pain.
 - He didn't shelter Himself from the brokenness of our world but He subjected Himself to it!
- iv. And because Jesus has loved us in this way, he is able to empathize with us, show compassion to us, and rescue us.
 - Jesus demonstrates true love to us...by offering Himself on the cross so that we could be forgiven of our sin.
 - He cares for us as His own expense.
- v. And this is how Jesus calls His church to love their neighbors. This is how we use our faith for the good of our neighbor and not for harm.



1. Engage them. Know them. Spend time with them.
 2. Be able to empathize with their struggles and pain.
 3. And help carry their burdens and bind their wounds at your own expense.
- vi. **What would it look like if instead of writing people off in our heads, instead of elevating ourselves, instead of sheltering ourselves...**
- What if we loved people like Jesus loved people?

IV. PRAY

