

Luke 6:27-49

Kingdom living is absurd, but it is good.

“Your nearest exit may be behind you!”

That’s an appropriate announcement as we dive into today’s text, one about Kingdom living, the life that is extra.

But this phrase comes from one of humanity's favorite things to ignore. The pre-flight safety demonstration.

On your first flight, you pay attention - kids shush you to hear what is being said and described - you need to know this information in case of a loss of cabin pressure. It is serious stuff and really is a matter of life or death. But the more you fly, the more you believe you have the spiel memorized, this three minutes of the flight becomes prime time to assume you know and to block it out.

We take a cavalier approach to it; “it’s not that big of a deal,” “it’s just so routine...” and go about our business looking forward to, or dreading the destination.

It is a bit of a silly illustration, but I wonder how much we treat preaching in the same way. I will often ask friends for a recounting of what they heard in the sermon and I am usually met with a blank stare before they blurt out something like “Jesus... yeah Jesus was in the sermon, he is great!”

Now, my point is not a gripe or guilt about paying attention to sermons, or the values of the church! But to get us to think about how we hear the Word, in all the spaces we approach it, and whether we listen may be indicated in how we respond.

Here is one such sermon. The Sermon on the Plain. It is for those that would listen, that would follow Jesus. Those that are of the Kingdom he has come to proclaim and bring forth.

Jesus is laying out who His Kingdom belongs to, it might surprise us. And now he describes how citizens of His Kingdom live.

This is a pivot in the sermon. The audience was made up of the twelve - his closest followers (apostles) - more of his disciples, and the larger crowd (those who came out to witness the excitement around Jesus, to be healed, or to see others be healed).

Their eagerness to listen probably diminished the further away from Jesus they got... after all he has just rallied the poor, the hungry, and the weeping over the rich and full. Some ears would turn off at that point, like they had heard it all before but didn't have time for it now.

“I say to you who listen...” is how he begins.

And he lays out an ethic for the Kingdom. That which we dove deeper into as we studied the sermon on the mount. And to be honest, it's a lot. To the average Joe this way of living may even be unreasonable...absurd.

Even for those of us who know better, who have heard the talk before, it can seem a little much. But it is the way. It is different. It is good. It is otherworldly love, mercy, and resilience.

Absurd Love

(I would have called this reckless love but some of you would have emailed me!)

Jesus has so far in his ministry shown how the Kingdom he is bringing completes but goes further than the order before. He has taken on the mantle of forgiveness. His disciples are freed from restrictions around the Sabbath. “You have heard it said, but I say...”

But it is all built on what they were meant to know... Leviticus

“Do not steal. Do not act deceptively or lie to one another. 12 Do not swear falsely by my name, profaning the name of your God; I am the Lord.

13 “Do not oppress your neighbor or rob him. The wages due a hired worker must not remain with you until morning. 14 Do not curse the deaf or put a stumbling block in front of the blind, but you are to fear your God; I am the Lord.

15 “Do not act unjustly when deciding a case. Do not be partial to the poor or give preference to the rich; judge your neighbor fairly. 16 Do not go about spreading slander among your people; do not jeopardize your neighbor’s life; I am the Lord.

17 “Do not harbor hatred against your brother. Rebuke your neighbor directly, and you will not incur guilt because of him. 18 Do not take revenge or bear a grudge against members of your community, but love your neighbor as yourself; I am the Lord.” -- **Leviticus 19:11-18** (CSB)

Foundational and assumed. Like the pre-flight instructions! Now Jesus tells us that his Kingdom’s way goes further.

Love your enemies. Do good to the haters. Bless those that curse you. Pray for those who mistreat you.

Love is no longer reserved for the realm of self and neighbor. It extends further. Not even just acquaintances... It extends to your enemies. Those out to get you. To keep you down. Those that attack you. Who take and take.

Makes me think of the clip from the last couple of weeks where Ukrainian women are giving tea and food to a Russian soldier.

Love here is more than a cordial kindness, or even an outward-facing expression in public. It is a self-sacrificial life for others.

While studying this week I would hover between a chuckle and an angry scowl at the number of commentators that attempt to make Jesus’ words more appealing to those who don’t want to love... hints at exaggeration. “Did he really say?!”

But he did. And his life and ministry bear it out. This is what he will go on preaching. And it is more than a metaphorical love - he makes it a practical posture of life.

Offer the other cheek when insulted. When someone takes your coat, give them the shirt off your back. Lend without the expectation of return.

Loaning a tool, forgetting about it, and asking around to borrow one, and your buddy gives you yours!

Of course, we take this way of life alongside other principles in Scripture but these are never negated.

This way of love is so far beyond us, our churches don't even preach it! Give yourself away for others. Take on insult and mistreatment. Kiss the wave that sends you crashing into the rock of ages!

It ruins your schedule. It messes with your five-year plan. It dethrones you and may bring into service of others who could never deserve it.

“To feed a hungry soul with the bread of heaven is a far higher deed than to eat the fat and drink the sweet ourselves. There is more plunging our arm up to the elbow in the mire to find a jewel for Christ than in washing one's idle hands with the scented soap of respectable propriety.” Spurgeon

Seems too much - it is absurd - we are so inclined to “get ours” at the expense of others, or we just live behind our preference to avoid the enemy and our neighbor.

His Kingdom is different. We don't live for the ways of lending, loving, doing good for the return, “even sinners do that!” But we live out of principle, our of identity as those that are part of the Kingdom.

Absurd, all-in love. “Just as you want others to do for you, do the same for them.”
-- **Luke 6:31** (CSB)

The rule is golden for a reason. It is good.

Who doesn't want to be loved like this? Sacrificial. Not to get, but to give.

It is a deliberate love, rooted in the will—a love by choice. “Love [agape] is a deep, continuous, growing and ever-renewing activity of the will superintended by the

Holy Spirit". Agape love says, "I will love this person because, by God's grace, I choose to love this person."

Those who follow Jesus... "they act as God acts. They will therefore follow not merely the call of duty, but the call of love. They will seek to do not simply what is right, but what is good. And they will act in this way not only towards those who deserve it but also towards those who do not. Such open-heartedness does not in fact go unrewarded - but the very essence of it is that that must never be their motive for practicing it!" Wilcock

But it doesn't end with love.

Absurd Mercy

"Be merciful, just as your Father also is merciful." -- **Luke 6:36** (CSB)

This is our disposition. Recognizing how our actions are tied to what we receive.

Do not judge... do not condemn. Forgive... be generous.

We can have discernment in these things - we don't neglect the reality of life and death, light and darkness. But even if we get halfway there the difference would be astounding.

'What is the church known for?' We know the answer biblically what it should be known for, but we also know far too often the negatives here would be the answer - judgment, condemning. Imagine if it was forgiveness and generosity!

This is how you recognize the difference of Kingdom citizens...

The measure you use will be measured back to you. Extending mercy when it is uncomfortable.

This is being caught with tax collectors and sinners. Not combative and condemning but gracious. Quick to be merciful, to be forgiving.

Take this seriously and you will be faced with plenty of opportunities to see how far you have to go! Even as I was preparing this week I found myself quicker to condemnation and judgment... Don't want to be blind attempting to lead others!

Part of this unearthly mercy is self-awareness. Looking at the splinter in your brother's eye without recognizing the beam in your own eye! It is not a call to never help the brother or sister with a splinter, but to be aggressive with your beams so that you can extend mercy.

Citizens of the Kingdom produce fruit according to this call by Jesus. Each tree is known by its own fruit.

He says our fruit is an absurd love, an absurd mercy... and an absurd resilience.

Absurd Resilience

Kingdom living seems hard - it will take all you've got - but we want the reward.

"I will show you what someone is like who comes to me, hears my words, and acts on them: 48 He is like a man building a house, who dug deep and laid the foundation on the rock. When the flood came, the river crashed against that house and couldn't shake it, because it was well built." -- **Luke 6:47-48** (CSB)

How you live matters. It is what braces you for the storms of life. The well-built house is a well-built life.

We know people that reveal this. They are anchored, secure, resilient.

The likes of Horatio Spafford - who can face tragedy and still give us words to sing... "When peace like a river attendeth my way, When sorrows like sea-billows roll, Whatever my lot, Thou has taught me to know; It is well, it is well with my soul."

Those that listen, that live an absurd love and mercy, they get this resilience.

"The person who hears them and does not obey is utterly foolish. The person who hears and obeys will be as secure on the day of judgment as the person who takes

care to build a house with strong foundations on rock.” Howard Marshall / And that forms all of life...

The illustration of building on a solid foundation versus building without a foundation points out the necessity for a disciple’s behavior to be consistent with his stated commitment. The difference between a life that can withstand storms and one that cannot depends not just on whether one comes to Christ and hears his words but also whether one acts on his teachings.

“Why do you call me ‘Lord, Lord,’ and don’t do the things I say? -- **Luke 6:46** (CSB)

Go and do likewise... that’s it, that’s the exhortation. Go and live like you are supposed to. Some ask for more to do in these sermons, well here you go. Get to it.

How do we do this?!! Be apprenticed by Jesus.

This is an impossible call apart from Christ. But it comes with full force to us if we are his followers.

“But love your enemies, do what is good, and lend, expecting nothing in return. Then your reward will be great, and you will be children of the Most High. For he is gracious to the ungrateful and evil.” -- **Luke 6:35** (CSB)

All I ever ask is that you live in response to what you have been given. And that is all that Jesus puts before the crowd on the plain.

He goes on loving his enemies. Healing those that are unsure. Feeding those who want no more than a free lunch. Doing good to the haters, sharing a cup with Judas. Praying for those who mistreat him, “Father forgive them for they don’t know what they are doing...”

The key to Christ’s moral teaching is Christ in us!

“For while we were still helpless, at the right time, Christ died for the ungodly. 7 For rarely will someone die for a just person — though for a good person perhaps

someone might even dare to die. 8 But God proves his own love for us in that while we were still sinners, Christ died for us. 9 How much more then, since we have now been justified by his blood, will we be saved through him from wrath. 10 For if, while we were enemies, we were reconciled to God through the death of his Son, then how much more, having been reconciled, will we be saved by his life.” -- **Romans 5:6-10** (CSB)

Our only hope to love our enemies as we are called is to see more clearly how it is God’s own character, manifested fully in Jesus. For when we were God’s enemies, he loved us back into fellowship with himself.

“We love because he first loved us.” -- **1 John 4:19** (CSB)

“Tho' Satan should buffet, tho' trials should come,
Let this blest assurance control,
That Christ hath regarded my helpless estate,
And hath shed his own blood for my soul.

My sin - oh, the bliss of this glorious thought!
My sin - not in part but the whole,
Is nailed to His cross and I bear it no more;
Praise the Lord, praise the Lord, oh my soul.”

By his life, by his death, by his resurrection, He makes you a good tree. The way of the Kingdom, absurd as it may be, is lived out of what we have been given. Lived out of what we have received. And it is not a checklist that motivates us away from self toward others, it is what flows out of our hearts.

You have a duty to this way of living. But duty will only get you so far. What you need as motivation and fuel for this life is love - you can only give out what you have received.

As I get older, the more convinced I am that we don’t imbibe enough on the love of God for us in Christ. I may lament that we don’t see enough of this absurd living from Christians, and hopefully, the lament starts with my own life. But it is

not judgment or condemnation that pushes us into this way of living. It is taking in more of his love for us.

‘A good person produces good out of the good stored up in his heart. An evil person produces evil out of the evil stored up in his heart, for his mouth speaks from the overflow of the heart.’ -- **Luke 6:45** (CSB)

Here is how...

“Therefore, since we have been justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ. ² We have also obtained access through him by faith into this grace in which we stand, and we boast in the hope of the glory of God. ³ And not only that, but we also boast in our afflictions, because we know that affliction produces endurance, ⁴ endurance produces proven character, and proven character produces hope. ⁵ This hope will not disappoint us, because God’s love has been poured out in our hearts through the Holy Spirit who was given to us.” -- **Romans 5:1-5** (CSB)

This is what makes us hearers and doers. This is what stirs us to action. To sacrifice. To love and mercy. This is what gives us resilience. This is what is so good.

Kingdom living is absurd, but it is good.

Start and Stay in the Love of the Father for you:

“For God loved the world in this way: He gave his one and only Son, so that everyone who believes in him will not perish but have eternal life.”-- **John 3:16** (CSB)

A great truth for evangelism, but it is also for you, the beloved. The citizens of the Kingdom.

God loves you with a depth you may never understand. That takes all of your experience, your sin, your distrust, your disbelief, and still washes over you like endless waves of approval, acceptance, and value.

Let this love fill your heart. Ask the Spirit to pour more of it into you today.
Receive it. Rejoice in it.

Live it out: Boldly embrace the absurd love, mercy, and resiliency found in Jesus. Be so filled in him that it spills out and your enemies are surprised by it. Take this love into all of life and see it bear fruit.

Eberhard Arnold -“If we fully grasp the Sermon and believe it, then nothing can frighten us – neither our own self-recognition, nor financial threats, nor our personal weakness. The dedication demanded in the Sermon is not a new law or moral teaching. Instead it is forgiveness. Its vital element is the light and warmth of the Holy Spirit. Here is Christ: the essence of salt, and the strength of the tree that bears good fruit. The Sermon shows us the character of a community, which shines like a light for the whole world.”

May we hear what Jesus says. May we do it for his glory and our good.

May we know how to fasten the seat belt... to take our oxygen before giving it to others... may we locate our flotation device and sail into the future with him.

“Take our “little” prayers and mobilize legions of angels. Take our 5 pieces of bread and 2 fish and feed multitudes. Replace our fear with faith, our anger with love, and the odor of our self-interest with the aroma of your Kingdom. May Gospel-generosity go viral. So Very Amen.” Scotty Smith