



Good News **for all people.**

The Gospel of Luke

Week 5 **LEADER** Discussion Questions

Week of 9/25/22

Text: Luke 5:33-6:11 (Thornton); passages from Luke 6:27-49 (Erie and Boulder)

Icebreaker: What's the most loving thing someone has ever done for you (besides Jesus)? 😊

Love is the tie that binds these two separate sections this week!

Luke 5:33-6:11 (Thornton)

1. In verses 33-34 of chapter 5, Jesus compares himself to a groom (or “bridegroom”) and compares his followers to wedding guests when confronted by the religious leaders. Why would it be unfitting for such guests to fast?

Yes, this is intended to be a softball, not a trick question! Fasting has an element of somberness and, at times, even mourning. No one should be somber and mourning at a wedding, though! It's supposed to be a party—a celebration!

Application: Jesus doesn't shun fasting altogether (see v. 34) but sees it as appropriate for when he “is taken away from them.” In what way is the life of a Christian one of both times of “feasting”—as in a wedding celebration—and times of fasting (literally or figuratively)?

Jesus isn't eradicating fasting, but showing that it will have a role again after his earthly ministry. It could also point more immediately to the time of his arrest, crucifixion, and burial. Our experience of walking with Christ today can be marked by both somberness and celebrating. We live in a world where death still occurs yet has been defeated. It's a world where sin has been overcome yet still ravages lives. These aren't contradictions but symptoms of an age in history where God's Kingdom has come...and yet is still coming in fullness when Jesus returns.

2. Jesus uses a parable in verses 36-39 to describe his work and ministry. In what ways do you think Jesus's work is “new” or “fresh” in comparison to what is “old”?

These can be confusing images, but Jesus is using illustrations that would have been easy for the original audience to grasp. A new material will not pair well with one that is old. Neither will an old wineskin be able to handle the pressure of new wine. Everyone would have known that. Jesus's work is new in that the Hebrew Scriptures (i.e., the Old Testament) were pointing to him as the coming Messiah who would fulfill all that was written about him. Jesus is perfectly living out all that God's people before him were only able to occasionally follow. Along the way, Jesus is explaining and redefining the heart of God's law that had been misinterpreted and/or misapplied. Ultimately, Jesus's fulfillment of the law will culminate at the cross—something “new” that could hardly be expected from the vantage point of the “old,” even though the Old Testament does repeatedly allude to it. It is NOT new in the sense that Jesus has decided to move on to “Plan B” because the law (“Plan A”) failed miserably to do what God hoped it would do! No, God's plan and purposes are consistent across the pages of Scripture. The “newness” of

Jesus's ministry can be seen in how he explains the intent and meaning of God's law in the rest of chapter 6.

Application: We're 2,000 years removed from when Jesus spoke these words! Do you think this "new" versus "old" distinction still matters to us today?

Are we susceptible to taking God's commands and distorting them into rigid rules devoid of love? If so, we still face a danger that the religious leaders of Jesus's day are famous for. Also, these "old" and "new" distinctions matter to the extent that they more fully reveal to us all that God has accomplished on our behalf through Christ (see, for example, Romans 7:7-8:2).

3. Chapter 6 begins with two episodes that take place on the Sabbath. What is the Sabbath and why do you think the religious leaders were so angry (see v. 11)?

Background on the Sabbath goes all the way back to Genesis 2:1-3. God rested and God's people are called to do the same (Exodus 20:8-11). The Sabbath was the major battleground for Jesus and the religious leaders. Many rules had been created within Judaism to attempt to better instruct and define what was permitted and what was not permitted on the Sabbath—to the point that those rules obscured the purpose of it. Jesus (the inventor of the Sabbath!) used it to provoke and expose the hypocrisy of those who had distorted it, which incited their anger.

Application: What can we learn from these accounts about Jesus's heart for other people?

Jesus cares about the hunger of his disciples and the healing of the man. Loving God (by keeping the Sabbath) and loving people (by providing for their needs) are not in opposition to each other! These are complementary as the Great Commandment reveals.

4. How do you think these two Sabbath-related accounts would be different if the Pharisees and scribes truly loved their neighbor as themselves (see Leviticus 19:18, Luke 10:25-28 and Galatians 5:14)?

We can only imagine, but we would expect that the conflict would simply not exist or would at least be of a much lesser magnitude. Is it possible to be both loving and legalistic?

Application: Have you ever seen something like this, where people lost sight of love as they sought to follow God's commands? If so, what happened?

If you have, it's not pretty.

Luke 6:27-49 (Erie and Boulder)

1. Verses 17-19 tell us that Jesus's teaching to the crowd was accompanied by miraculous healings of both physical and spiritual troubles. What role do you think Jesus's supernatural actions have in relation to his teaching in the rest of this chapter?

Yes, this is also a softball! Note how awesome it is that Jesus's teaching is backed up by his miracles. It's easy to see but easy to overlook too when we find something in his teaching that we don't like.

Application: What difference would it make to you if all we had was a record of Jesus's teaching but no eyewitness testimony (Luke 1:1-4) of his actions?

We have teachings from (or at least purported to be from) all manner of teachers, sages, gurus, etc. None of them, though, has the kind of eyewitness testimony to support them as Jesus has. This should greatly boost our confidence in what Jesus says and the authority behind his words. Without those actions, it's just words.

2. How would you summarize verses 27-36? If you're familiar with Jesus's life, how does he model the things he's teaching here? Be as specific as possible.

The best summary might simply be "love your enemies." Jesus modeled this repeatedly in his earthly ministry as he said things like, "Father forgive them" about his executioners.

Application: Think of a challenging relationship in your life. What could it look like for you to demonstrate the kind of love to that person that Jesus is prescribing in these verses?

3. Jesus's words in verses 35-36 reveal the basis for his instruction. What is this basis or foundation?

Another softball! The foundation for Jesus's instruction is the fact that we are all recipients of God's kindness and mercy.

Application: What difference should a firm grasp of the Most High's kindness and mercy toward us make in our ability to extend kindness and mercy toward others?

A firm grasp of this should make us humble as we think about our own difficult relationships. We are undeserving of the love and forgiveness God has given us so how can we turn around and think we should withhold love and forgiveness from others? See Matt 18:21-35 for a powerful depiction of this.

4. Verses 37-42 are sometimes distilled into a simple maxim, "Don't judge!" Period. Do you see any circumstance in these verses where Jesus might permit one person to offer correction to another? If so, what is it?

Taken altogether, we see Jesus's warning against hypocrisy but also an instruction to "first take the log out of your own eye, and then you will see clearly..." In other words, this is not a blanket prohibition but a clear call to self-examination and humility as we think about judging others.

Application: What could happen within a community of believers when those "with a log in their eye" decide to point out the "specks" in others' eyes? How can we guard against this?

It's not pretty! We're all familiar with the charges against Christians of being hypocrites. Unfortunately, those who are "trigger-happy" in judging others deserve the charge! The best guard against this is brutal self-examination, humility, and gentleness toward others. In short, the best guard is the very kind of love that Jesus describes in the surrounding verses. See 1 Cor 13:4-7.

5. These verses are sometimes referred to as the "Kingdom ethic"—the principles that instruct us on how God's followers are to live in God's Kingdom. Where do you see sharp contrasts with the "popular ethic" of our society today and where do you see similarities?

Jesus's ethic is radical! Who loves their enemy? On the other hand, most would agree, Christian or not, that if we've been recipients of great kindness then we should turn around and show it to others.

Week 4 Final Thought:

Love. It's what all the law and prophets depend on (Matt. 22:40). It covers a multitude of sins (1 Pet. 4:8). It's the royal law (Jas. 2:8). It's the fulfillment of the whole law (Gal. 5:14). It's the greatest (1 Cor 13:13). It's what instructs us to love our neighbor as we love God, even if it means we "work" on the Sabbath for their good. And our undeserved experience of it from Jesus is what fuels us (by God's Spirit at work in us) actions of love toward those we might otherwise consider unlovable.

