

The Absurdity of Hypocrisy

Luke 6:36-45

Sunday, May 11, 2025

This shouldn't surprise you, but later this afternoon I plan to call my mom. I imagine my wife will do the same and wish her mom a happy Mother's Day. This December, on my birthday, my mom will celebrate 50 years as a mother. I've known her my whole life. This August, Lindsay's mom, Gail will mark 26 years of being a mother-in-law. I've known her for two-thirds of my life, going back to when Lindsay and I started dating in high school.

There are many reasons we love the moms, stepmoms, foster moms, adopted moms, and mother-in-laws in our lives. But let's be honest. One thing we really love is our moms' cooking. No one made rice pudding like my Grandma Evelyn. My kids will tell you that no one makes a better frosted sugar cookie than their Grandma Wendy. And our family knows that no one makes cheesy potatoes better than my mother-in-law. No one.

Even with their recipes, when we try to replicate these dishes, it's a B+ effort at best. I bet you can think of a dish a parent, grandparent, or relative makes that you'll never come close to duplicating. We may not be like our moms in every respect, but many of us would give anything to be like them in the kitchen.

Turn back with me to Luke 6 where last Sunday we heard Jesus challenge us to love our enemies. Look with me again at verses 35-36.

“[L]ove your enemies, do good to them, and lend to them without expecting to get anything back. Then your reward will be great, and you will be children of the Most High, because he is kind to the ungrateful and wicked. Be merciful, just as your Father is merciful” (Luke 6:35-36, NIV).

Jesus roots this love-your-enemies ethic in our relationship with God our Father. In verse 35, Jesus says that those who love in this manner “will be children of the Most High.” He concludes this section in verse 36 with the command “Be merciful, just as your Father is merciful.” A more literal rendering of verse 35 would read “you will be *sons* of the Most High” (cf. ESV). By no means was Jesus glorifying sons and excluding daughters. Those listening would have understood that in those days, sons typically followed in their father's footsteps vocationally.

New Testament scholar D. A. Carson says it this way:

“Vocationally speaking, in our culture relatively few sons end up doing what their fathers did; relatively few daughters end up doing what their mothers did. ...In the ancient world, however, ...if your father was a farmer, you became a farmer; if your father was a baker, you became a baker; if your father was a carpenter, you became a carpenter—which of course is why Jesus could be known as the carpenter's son. ...To put the matter differently, your father determined your identity, your training, your vocation. He generated you not only biologically, but, shall we say, functionally.”¹

¹ D. A. Carson, *Jesus the Son of God*, (Crossway, 2012, 19-20.

Today, we use the expression “like father, like son,” or “like mother, like daughter.” Whether or not we reflect our parents’ physical characteristics, we often share their mannerisms and are shaped by their teaching and values.

So when Jesus said in verse 36 to his disciples and the crowd of followers, “Be merciful, just as your Father is merciful,” his point was that as children of God our hearts should resemble that of our Heavenly Father. Verse 36 then sets the tone for the rest of the passage.

The main principle I want you to take away from this text is this: **We become like who or what we follow.** If there is only one thing you remember from today’s sermon, I hope it’s that *we become like who or what we follow.* We’ll come back to this in a bit, but Jesus states this principle this way in verse 40:

“The student is not above the teacher, but everyone who is fully trained will be like their teacher” (v. 40).

This passage is about discipleship. The word “student” in verse 40 is the same word that appears in verse 13, referring to Jesus’s twelve *disciples* “whom he also designated apostles.” It shows up again in verse 17, referring to “the large crowd of his *disciples*” who had gathered to hear him. Here the word “student” doesn’t refer to a pupil in an academic sense, but to a disciple who learns from their master, and in time, when “fully trained will be like their teacher” (v. 40).

This applies not only to those who’ve chosen to follow him, but Jesus’s statement also applies to all people regardless of what they believe. We are all disciples or students of someone or something. We are all being disciplined whether we realize it or not. The truth is, *we become like who or what we follow.*

My aim this morning is twofold. First, let’s identify who or what it is that we are truly following. Who is our teacher? Is it Jesus or someone else? Who or what are we a disciple of? When we are fully trained, what will we be like? Second, I hope to show you that as those who claim to be deeply devoted followers of Jesus, there is no one who is worthy of our discipleship other than Jesus Christ. No one.

I would suggest that Christian discipleship can be summed up in three simple—but not necessarily easy—steps: **Behold the Father, follow the Son, and walk in the Spirit.** That’s where we’re going with the rest of this message. *Behold the Father, follow the Son, and walk in the Spirit.*

Let’s look at verses 36-38 as we consider together what it means and why we should *behold the Father.* We return to Jesus’s command in verse 36: “Be merciful, just as your Father is merciful.” As children of the Heavenly Father, we are to show mercy *in the same way* that our Father demonstrates his mercy to men and women everywhere.

I’ve heard it said that whereas John 3:16—“For God so loved the world...” *used* to be the most frequently quoted verse of the Bible, today Luke 6:37 and its parallel in Matthew 7:1 is: “Do not

judge.” This short phrase—rightly attributed to Jesus, but often wrongly misapplied—is frequently presented as a get-out-of-sin-free card in defense of one’s lifestyle choices. However, if we take the time to read the Sermon on the Mount in Matthew 5-7 or the passages we’ve been looking at in Luke 6, we see that the Lord calls us to draw clear distinctions between words, thoughts, and actions that honor God, and those that don’t.

But it’s not just the non-Christian world who sometimes misreads and misapplies Jesus’s teaching here. That’s why we need to read all of verse 37 along with verse 38. Let’s review what Jesus says there.

“Do not judge, and you will not be judged. Do not condemn, and you will not be condemned. Forgive, and you will be forgiven. Give, and it will be given to you. A good measure, pressed down, shaken together and running over, will be poured into your lap. For with the measure you use, it will be measured to you” (Luke 6:37-38, NIV).

Rather than being quick to condemn and stand over others in judgment, sons and daughters of God must be quick to forgive and generous with mercy. This is what it means to “be merciful, just as [our Heavenly] Father is merciful” (v. 36).

I need to confess something. I typically keep a close eye on what I eat. But a few weeks ago I was in downtown Indianapolis for a conference, it was lunch time, I was craving a burger and fries, and just a few blocks from where I was staying there was a Five Guys.

If you’ve never eaten at a Five Guys, you should know just how good their food is. The best part about Five Guys is you don’t need to debate if you should order a small, medium, or large order of fries. Regardless of size, Five Guys always gives you an overabundance of fries, so much so that the cup overflows and the bottom of the bag is layered with extras.

That’s the imagery in verse 38. Jesus pictures the way forgiveness and mercy should characterize the children of God. Such mercy should be abundant and overflowing. To be merciful as our Father is merciful means to super-size forgiveness and be generous with mercy.

But we all know that this is impossible. Even as redeemed sons and daughters, we lack the natural ability to be so generous in mercy. That’s why the Lord commanded us not to judge or condemn in the first place. By nature and by choice, we are *unmerciful* just as the devil himself is unmerciful. Now, if that sounds harsh, consider what God’s word says in Ephesians 2.

“As for you, you were dead in your transgressions and sins, in which you used to live when you followed the ways of this world and of the ruler of the kingdom of the air, the spirit who is now at work in those who are disobedient. All of us also lived among them at one time, gratifying the cravings of our flesh and following its desires and thoughts. Like the rest, we were by nature deserving of wrath” (Eph. 2:1-3, NIV).

If this is true, how do sons and daughters of God become more like him in showing mercy? Get ready to write this down. Discipleship begins when we **behold the Father**. If it's true that *we become like who or what we follow*, then if we want godly character, we must first *behold the Father*.

What do I mean by that? Continuing in Ephesians 2, we read,

“...we were by nature deserving of wrath. *But* because of his great love for us, God, who is rich in *mercy*, made us alive with Christ even when we were dead in transgressions—it is by grace you have been saved” (Eph. 2:3b-5, NIV).

Did you catch that? God our Father is rich in what? *Mercy*. In the same way that Scripture says, “God is love” (1 John 4:16), we might say God *is* mercy. He exudes mercy. He personifies mercy. If we want to be quick to forgive, slow to condemn, and slow to judge, and if we want to be merciful in the same way that God is merciful, then we must *behold the Father*.

It sounds so obvious, but we behold the Father by opening Scripture to see what he has revealed about himself. Yes, we can behold the Father in creation whether on the lake, in the garden, on the golf course, or on a hike through the woods. But beholding him in nature is by itself insufficient. To borrow a phrase from Jesus that we heard last Sunday, *even sinners do that*.

We behold the Father when we read passages like Ephesians 2 and contemplate his grace. Need some help? Read Ephesians 2:1-5 aloud substituting *we* and *us* for *I* and *me*. You were numbered among the spiritually dead devil-followers that passage speaks of. Apart from Christ, you were worldly and disobedient. But God loved you. Your rich, merciful Father pulled you out of the grave and made you alive with Christ, saving you by his grace alone. Behold God our Father!

Or take an example from the Old Testament. We behold the Father when we hear God say of himself in Exodus 34:6 (NIV), “The LORD, the LORD, the compassionate and gracious God, slow to anger, abounding in love and faithfulness.” Now consider these same words in light of the golden calf rebellion that took place just two chapters earlier. Is our God not rich in mercy?

If it's true that *we become like who or what we follow*, then as disciples, we must not only *behold the Father*, we must also **follow the Son**. We return to our main principle found in verse 40 in its larger context. I'll read verses 39-42.

“[Jesus] also told them this parable: “Can the blind lead the blind? Will they not both fall into a pit? The student is not above the teacher, but everyone who is fully trained will be like their teacher. “Why do you look at the speck of sawdust in your brother's eye and pay no attention to the plank in your own eye? How can you say to your brother, ‘Brother, let me take the speck out of your eye,’ when you yourself fail to see the plank in your own eye? You hypocrite, first take the plank out of your eye, and then you will see clearly to remove the speck from your brother's eye” (Luke 6:39-42, NIV).

The reason we must *follow the Son* should be obvious. It's so obvious that Jesus presents the alternative as completely absurd. To be sure, Jesus was in no way making light of blindness.

Frequently in the Gospels, Jesus healed those afflicted with physical blindness. In heaven, there will be no need for glasses and contact lenses when we receive our glorified resurrection bodies. But blindness serves as a metaphor for our spiritual condition apart from Christ.

If it's true that *we become like who or what we follow*, then beware the pit in front of us should we continue to follow those who do not see the things of God. Jesus's illustration about the plank in our eye and the speck in our brother's is not only meant to expose the absurdity of hypocrisy. When we listen to Jesus's warning, we should also ask ourselves, "Where did this plank in my eye come from in the first place?"

Everyday we are being bombarded by various teachers seeking to disciple us, many of whom are monetizing their efforts as they compete for our attention. At the same time, these empty teachers are also trying to convince us that there is no plank that obstructs our vision. At the same time, these teachers provoke feelings of outrage at the presence of the speck in our brother's eye. Jesus said, "The student is not above the teacher, but everyone who is fully trained will be like their teacher" (v. 40). *We become like who or what we follow.*

As disciples, we must not only *behold the Father*, we must also *follow the Son*. Here's the thing about discipleship—following the Son takes time. It takes time to become a deeply devoted follower of Jesus. May I ask, how are you investing your time? How much time do you give each week to following the Son? If we're not actively pursuing discipleship at the feet of Jesus, we will be passively permitting the world and its teachers to disciple us.

In the Sermon on the Mount, Jesus said,

"If your right eye causes you to stumble, gouge it out and throw it away. It is better for you to lose one part of your body than for your whole body to be thrown into hell. And if your right hand causes you to stumble, cut it off and throw it away. It is better for you to lose one part of your body than for your whole body to go into hell" (Matt. 5:29-30, NIV).

Church family, if the time you're giving to social media is fostering bitterness or a judgmental spirit, and isn't promoting the mercy of God, *cut it off*. If CNN, Fox News, MSNBC, or Newsmax is filling your eyes with a lumberyard's worth of planks, *gouge them out*. If the podcasts, books, videos, and other media are fertilizing the acts of the flesh rather than the fruit of the Spirit, *throw them away*. Folks, *we become like who or what we follow*.

What would we be like if we committed to *behold the Father*, *follow the Son*, and finally, *walk in the Spirit*?

Picking it up in verse 43, Jesus went on to say,

"No good tree bears bad fruit, nor does a bad tree bear good fruit. Each tree is recognized by its own fruit. People do not pick figs from thornbushes, or grapes from briars. A good man brings good things out of the good stored up in his heart, and an evil

man brings evil things out of the evil stored up in his heart. For the mouth speaks what the heart is full of" (Luke 6:43-45, NIV).

Again, Jesus points to something absurdly obvious. Why should a Christian expect to be characterized by a good heart and good fruit unless they make it their aim to *behold the Father, follow the Son, and walk in the Spirit*?

There's a feature on my Apple Watch that I've come to appreciate. My watch tracks my resting heart rate. I never gave this feature any thought until one day at a routine medical appointment a nurse said to me, "You must be a runner." I don't consider myself to be a runner, just someone who enjoys running to stay in shape. Apparently, runners tend to have a lower resting heart rate, at least when they're in good enough shape. It's a sign of a healthy heart.

Jesus said, "A good man brings good things out of the good stored up in his heart, and an evil man brings evil things out of the evil stored up in his heart. For the mouth speaks what the heart is full of" (v. 45).

Some self-assessment is in order. How would you describe your spiritual heart health? If we could look in and see, what would we see stored up in your heart? How does what leaves our lips—not only our words but the attitude behind those words—reveal the health of our discipleship? Consider this diagnostic from Galatians 5.

"So I say, walk by the Spirit, and you will not gratify the desires of the flesh. For the flesh desires what is contrary to the Spirit, and the Spirit what is contrary to the flesh. They are in conflict with each other, so that you are not to do whatever you want. But if you are led by the Spirit, you are not under the law.

The acts of the flesh are obvious: sexual immorality, impurity and debauchery; idolatry and witchcraft; hatred, discord, jealousy, fits of rage, selfish ambition, dissensions, factions and envy; drunkenness, orgies, and the like. I warn you, as I did before, that those who live like this will not inherit the kingdom of God.

But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, forbearance, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness and self-control. Against such things there is no law. Those who belong to Christ Jesus have crucified the flesh with its passions and desires. Since we live by the Spirit, let us keep in step with the Spirit" (Gal. 5:16-25, NIV).

We emphasize discipleship at our church a lot. *Becoming deeply devoted followers of Jesus together* is not a catch-phrase or advertising slogan. We know that *we become like who or what we follow*. Discipleship isn't easy, but it can be simple: *behold the Father, follow the Son, and walk in the Spirit*. In light of Jesus teaching that we've looked at today, would you make it your daily aim to *behold the Father, follow the Son, and walk in the Spirit*.

Let's pray.