SO, YOU SAY YOU WANT TO FOLLOW JESUS…

Luke 6:17-49

This morning we’ll be looking at Luke’s account of Jesus’ longest sermon. Both Matthew and Luke record it. Matthew’s account is longer, 3 chapters (Matt 5 thru 7), 111 verses. We know it as the “Sermon on the Mount.” Luke’s account here is much shorter, only 33 verses. Luke tells us when Jesus gave this sermon that “He came down” from the mountain (6:12) and “stood on a level place” (6:17). Matthew says that He was “on the mountain” (Matt 5:1). Apparently Jesus goes up to a mountain (in Galilee they are more like large hills). It is located on the north side of the Sea of Galilee. On His way down the side of the mountain He finds a level place where He delivers this long sermon. Let’s look at the setting…

READ Luke 6:17-19

This scene typifies Jesus’ early Galilean ministry. He’s attracting great crowds. They’re eager to hear what He has to say. Matthew says, “the crowds were astonished at His teaching for he was teaching them as one who had authority, and not as their scribes” (Matt 7:28-29). Others came to be healed. Luke says that “power came out from Him and healed them all.” And then many came, frankly, just to watch the Jesus show. Luke refers to three groups that are here: (1) the twelve disciples; (2) “a great crowd of His disciples” (these are those who are attracted to Jesus’ message and eager to learn from Him); and (3) “a great multitude of people” from both near and far away. These are the curious.

READ Luke 6:20a. Jesus directs His attention toward His disciples. The words that He speaks are for those who want to follow Jesus. These are words directed at Jesus’ disciples – the 12 plus this great crowd of His disciples. This message is for them and it is for us. And the overarching message for all of us from our Lord is this: if you are going to follow Me then this is what you can expect, from Me and from the world. So, you say you want to follow Me? This is what it will look like.

Jesus begins by laying out the character of a true disciple of His. The Jews of Jesus day (His audience here) were familiar with the O.T. teaching regarding blessings and curses (Deut 27-28). What Jesus does here is to apply that concept of God’s blessing for those who are in God’s kingdom and God’s curses (woes) to those who are outside God’s kingdom – He takes it and applies it to those who will follow Him. First, the blessings…

READ Luke 6:20b-23

V 20, blessing of poverty (not speaking of material things). In Matt 5:3 Jesus says, “Blessed are the poor in spirit, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven.” Isa 66:2 talks about being “contrite in spirit.” Being poor in spirit is when we understand the bankrupt condition of our soul. We realize we have nothing to earn God’s favor – the opposite of self-righteousness. It’s a starting point for those of us who want to enter God’s kingdom.

V 21a, blessing of hunger (not speaking of food). In Matt 5:6 Jesus says, “Blessed are those who hunger and thirst for righteousness, for they shall be satisfied.” This hunger is our intense desire for righteousness, holiness, forgiveness and fellowship with God. David put it like this in Ps 63:1: “O God, you are my God; earnestly I seek You; my soul thirsts for You; my flesh faints for You, in a dry and weary land where there is no water.” Jesus says those who hunger for righteousness will be satisfied.

V 21b, blessing of weeping. In Matt 5:4 Jesus says, “Blessed are those who mourn, for they shall be comforted.” This speaks of being saddened, heartbroken over our sinful condition. We grieve over our own sin. A great picture of this is Peter after he realizes what he’s done after denying Jesus 3 times. He broke down and wept bitterly (Mark 14:72, Matt 26:75). Our brokenness now leads to pure joy later, the laughter of being forgiven. Remember the old bumper sticker: Christians aren’t perfect, just forgiven.

V 22-23, blessing of rejection. In Matthew’s account Jesus speaks of people reviling you and persecuting you because you follow Jesus. Because we’re noticeably different, the world hates us. We Christians can expect hostility from a sinful world. In Matt Ch 10 Jesus referred to His disciples as “sheep in the midst of wolves.” But Jesus tells us that our reward is great in heaven. Paul says it like this in Rom 8:18: “I consider that the sufferings of this present time are not worth comparing with the glory that is to be revealed to us.” Jesus says “rejoice in that day.” Persecution in one form or another is going to come. It will come for a while and then go away and then be back again. Our reward for undergoing all this, however, is not in this life, but in the future. We are in good company. Just read about how God’s prophets were treated by God’s own people in the O.T.

Well God’s blessings are followed by God’s curses. READ Luke 6:24-26

V 24, curse of the rich. This speaks about religious self-righteousness; a failure to realize one’s need for salvation. The only comfort they will get is in this life. For those outside of Jesus there will be no kingdom rewards.

V 25a, curse of the satisfied. This describes those who think they have no need of anything. They’ve arrived spiritually. These are those who will be shocked to hear Jesus tell them, “Depart from Me. I never knew you!”

V 25b, curse of the happy (those who laugh now). This speaks about those who are happy with their own morality and religious activity. These are those who will be crying later in that place where there’s weeping and gnashing of teeth!

V 26, curse of those who are popular. Everybody loves them. Nobody is offended by their message. Why? Because they say what people want to hear. These are false teachers. But they’re doomed along with those who follow them. Good examples of this in the O.T. books of 1 Kings, Jeremiah and Ezekiel. Jesus will expound on false teachers later in his sermon.

So, you want to be Jesus’ disciples? This is what it will look like. At this point we must take a good long look at ourselves to see if we really are true disciples of Jesus. It’s where we need to start.

In the next section Jesus teaches what our view of others should be.

READ Luke 6:27-31

So here Jesus lays out what kingdom love looks like. It is radically different from the way the world is.

V 27-28, Jesus says, “love your enemies”; “do good to those who hate you”; “bless those who curse you”; and “pray for those who abuse you.” Paul puts it like this in Rom 12:17: “Repay no one evil for evil (don’t retaliate), but give thought to do what is honorable in the sight of all.” Remember the way Jesus responded to His enemies when He was on the cross. He said, “Father, forgive them, for they know not what they do” (Luke 23:34).

So just think a moment about who your enemies are personally and who the enemies of the church are. I like the perspective that John MacArthur gives. He said: “Remember that they are not the enemy. They are the mission field.” We need to remind ourselves of that.

V 29-30, Jesus gives real life examples of what this kind of love looks like. It’s in this context of loving our enemies that Jesus gives us, His followers, what has become known as the golden rule… READ Luke 6:31.

Again this is completely different from the way the world is. The conventional wisdom of our day says something like this: “Do unto others as they have done unto you.” We Christians are to take the initiative, the first step in treating others, including our enemies, with love and respect.

READ Luke 6:32-36

The “sinners” here are lost people. Jesus offers a stark contrast between us Christians and the lost world. We love our friends and our enemies. In v 32 they love only those who love them. We do good, we show love even to those who mistreat us. In v 33 they only do good to those who do good to them. Motivated by our love and knowing that God will reward us for godly actions, we lend liberally to others without expecting a thing from them in return. In v 34, unbelievers are motivated by a desire to get something good in return. Quite a contrast!

At the end of v 35 and then in v 36 Jesus is basic telling His disciples to act like God. As God’s children (“sons of the Most High”) we are to exhibit the same moral character that God does. And Jesus gave us an example to follow.

READ Luke 6:37-38

V 37, don’t judge, don’t condemn – that is not our place. We leave all that up to God. Instead we are to pardon, to forgive those who offend us. Jesus adds a warning in the Matthew account: “if you do not forgive others their trespasses (their wrongs against you), neither will your Father forgive your trespasses” (Matt 6:15).

V 38, this is basic Christian economics. Our great generosity to others (of our money, time and resources) is a good investment. It will return to us in full measure, plus some. One commentary summarized these verses this way: “Mercy will lead to mercy, judgment will lead to judgment, condemnation will lead to condemnation, and giving will lead to giving.

READ Luke 6:39-42

Here Jesus presents a rather humorous picture of false teachers. The whole point of Jesus’ sermon is to determine whether or not you are a true disciple of His. We are disciples, followers of whatever voices we listen to. So the bigger question here is are we following the voice of Jesus, doing what He says or are we following someone else? The world is filled with teachers who would love you to follow them. They’ll give you all kinds of good advice. They’ll give you their version of truth. Who are you going to believe? Jesus gives us a picture of following the world.

V 39, the blind leading the blind. False teachers are blind in the sense that they don’t know the way to God’s kingdom. They are blind to the truth.

V 40, false teachers are worldly and not of God. You become like those you follow. So are you going to follow Jesus or them?

V 41-42, false teachers are hypocritical. They can’t fix you and your problems until they first fix themselves.

READ Luke 6:43-45

You can tell a lot about a tree by looking at its fruit. A healthy tree produces good looking healthy fruit. And then the kind of fruit being produces indicates what kind of tree it is. Before blindly following someone look to see what their followers look like and act like. To bring this close to home, if we are truly followers of Jesus then we’re going to look like Him. His character will be reflected in us.

Well, just like in the Matthew’s account this sermon ends with the parable of the man who built his house on the rock.

READ Luke 6:46-49

If we follow Jesus and are obedient to do what He teaches then we will be building the house of our life on a solid foundation. In 1 Cor 3:11, Paul talks about us building on the foundation which is Jesus Christ. If we do that and the storms come and the flood waters rise (live long enough and they will come), then our house will stand. We will not be shaken. On the other hand, if we have built on anything else then our house will not be able to stand. The storms of life will get the best of us. Jesus says that “the ruin of that house was great.” A sobering warning for all of us.

Application. Jesus teaches us His disciple a lot in this sermon. If we are true disciple of His we will see our own sin, realize our poor spiritual condition, and repent. If we are truly His then we will love others, even our worst enemies, the way God loves us. If we are truly Christians then we will submit to the lordship of Jesus and follow Him. If we truly believe in Jesus Christ we will build our life on Him. “On Christ the solid rock I stand. All other ground is sinking sand.” Ask yourself: who am I following?