
The Manner of the Mission

Luke 6:27-36

Dan Turner

Introduction Tonight, God will talk. He will say something about strategy for evangelism. His talk will take the form of command. Now if obedience to tonight's message seems unbearable it will be precisely because it possesses a promise which seems unbelievable. The forecast I give for tonight is this: *We will advance in evangelism if we will obey. And we will obey if we will believe.*

The Bible alone is the inerrant, infallible authority for what we are to believe about God and how he wants us to live. By nature we don't like the thought of absolute authority existing in anyone outside of ourselves. What if tonight God commands me to do something I don't want to do? What if he portrays himself in a way that differs from the way I think he should be? The temptation to repel an uncomfortable text from our minds may be great tonight. And so, I desire us to read in unison a perspective and then a prayer that is on the screen. Please stand with me as we read together.

The Perspective – Behold, I am sending you out as lambs in the midst of wolves (Luke 10:3).

The Prayer — And Jesus said, “Father, forgive them, for they know not what they do” (Luke 23:34)

PRAY – May the perspective be clear in us and the prayer be consistent from us as we...

The Mission

As one reads the two volume work of Luke (that is, the gospel of Luke and the book of Acts), one gets a clear impression that Jesus was divinely appointed to carry out a specific mission. To understand how our passage is functioning in Luke's overall narrative, it will be helpful for us to see Jesus' mission as it was prophesied, prepared and presented at the beginning of Luke's gospel.

Prophesied

Right from the start of Luke's narrative, we come to a prophecy over Jesus. This prophecy of Simeon is troubling; for it tells the reader that “ [Jesus] is appointed for the fall and rising of many in Israel and for a sign that is opposed (and a sword will pierce through [Mary's] own soul” (cf. 2:34f). Luke is indicating that Jesus' appointed mission will be productive and it will be persecuted. He will cause some to rise and some to fall. And those who follow him will suffer too.

Prepared

Luke sets out to demonstrate that Jesus has a mission given and sustained by his Father in heaven; God Almighty (L. 1:46-55; 3:21-4:30). To make this mission clear, it was not only prophesied but it needed a forerunner to prepare the people. John the Baptist set out

to be obedient to God by calling for repentance in Israel. John was productive (i.e. people were saying, “What shall we do?” [3:10-14] and John was persecuted (3:20).

Luke makes plain that the mission will be met with resistance and even hostility. The mission will advance only through suffering.

Presented

To cast Jesus’ appointed assignment in its proper light, Luke shows that the mission was prophesied, prepared and now presented.

Notice how the people responded to Jesus as he presented his mission (cf. 4:14-30). In 4:22, after he announced his mission by locating himself in the book of Isaiah, the people “marveled at the gracious words that were coming from his mouth”. But then he exposed their hardened hearts and intimated God’s judgment. And they became enraged. Now, instead of speaking well of him, they desired to kill him (as seen in v.28ff).

Notice also what happens to those who follow him after he presents the mission. In Chapter 5 we see Jesus calling Levi, a tax collector, to follow him. Levi then has a party to which he invited all his sinful friends and Jesus. The religious leaders of the day (i.e. Pharisees) were repulsed by Jesus’ compassion and freedom. Note how Luke talks about their disgust in vv.30, 33. There is a growing animosity over Jesus and his followers. The Savior is on a mission. And this mission will be opposed vehemently.

The idea Luke makes clear is that those who follow the Christ will succeed and will suffer from the Christ’s enemies. Association with Jesus is involvement with persecution. (cf. Lk.9:23-26; 10:3; Acts 14:22)

The Manner

According to 6:12, it’s in these days; days of growing hostility toward Jesus and His followers, that Jesus calls his 12 Apostles to begin the advancement of the mission. What follows is what we will be focusing on this evening. He desires to instruct his disciples on how they are to respond to this growing resistance to the mission. That is, he will clarify for his followers what to do with a group that hates truth and loves lies (see vv.23c, 26b). The manner of the mission is now the subject of concern.

Follow with me as I read our text for tonight – Luke 6:27-36.

Love your enemies

There is a specific reason why Jesus’ disciples need these instructions. V.22 tells us that disciples of Christ will be hated. Therefore, they need to know with certainty how they are to act in response to enemies. Concisely put, Jesus says simply “Love your enemies”. That is the overarching message for this evening. The manner in which we are to

carry the message to our enemies is “love”. But how is love characterized? When our message is opposed and our lives are harassed or even threatened what does love look like?

In actions

v.27

First we can see that love is in actions; v.27. “Do good to those who hate you”. Notice that the Bible does not merely tell us to withhold bad from those who hate us. It tells us to take the initiative and “do good” to those who do bad to us.

For a fuller look at this aspect of love see Romans 12:19-21. As Jay Adams said in his book “How to overcome evil”, “The Christian is the most violent man on earth. He has orders to subdue the enemy, win the victory for his Lord, and he will stop at nothing to do so; his Lord’s name is at stake”. Then he qualified these words by saying, “But in [subduing the enemy] he may not use just any sort of weapons or any strategy that he wishes...God’s strategy calls for the use of weapons of righteousness...we are to overcome evil with good”.

When we are faced with opposition, we are to overcome evil with good.

In words

v.28

The second way Jesus expresses the command “love your enemies” is in words. We see this in v.28. These are words both to and for our enemies. We are to bless and we are to pray. We are to say words of grace and wisdom and concern to an enemy (not unlike Num.6:22-26). We also are to pray for our enemies (not unlike the Lord’s Prayer; Mt.6:9-13)

In attitude

v.29-31

We next come across another way Jesus exhibits love for enemies; vv.29-30. We are not to take Jesus’ words in a crassly literal way. We see Jesus getting slapped in John 18:22ff. He did differently in that case than what he is saying here (if we were to take him in a rigidly literal way). No, Jesus is getting at the attitude of his followers. When we suffer injury, we must not desire retaliation. We must seek the well-being of our abuser. And we must be ready to undergo another injury for the sake of love if need be (cf. 1Pet.2:21ff).

Oh, beloved, we will not be obedient to the manner of the mission if we are so ready to express our grievances through exercising our government-given rights. Why not instead take Paul’s words to heart in 1Corinthinas when he encouraged those who were taken advantage of, “Why not rather suffer wrong? Why not rather be defrauded?” (cf. 1Cor.6:7). This is the strategy that is mighty. This is the manner of the mission of Jesus Christ. And this is the attitude to which we are all called!

Jesus summarizes this section by a general command with a comparison. How are we to measure obedience to the command “love your enemies”? What standard are we to gauge our actions, words and attitude when loving people who are intolerant to the gos-

pel? Jesus said in v.31, “And as you wish that others would do to you, do so to them”. When we are mistreated when loving someone for the gospel’s sake, we are to examine our own desire over how we would like to be treated. The standard of our own desire must be brought to bear upon our outreach to an enemy. If we will stick our necks out and love hostile people we will be persecuted. As Dr. Piper frequently says, “make your self-seeking the measure of your self-giving.

The next section in this paragraph, vv.32-36, describe loving enemies by comparing it not with our own desires but with God’s character and actions. You can see this in v.36. What Jesus is getting at is a strategy for evangelism that cannot be matched.

We’ve noted that Jesus is exhibiting enemy love in actions, in words and in attitude. Now he says that enemy love is like what God does.

By unselective kindness

v.32-35

The nature of loving our enemies is brought out with three illustrations of the way Christians must surpass people of the world. We are to love our enemies not merely our friends. The point with these illustrations is to underscore the importance of unselective kindness. We are not to pre-qualify potential recipients of kindness. We are not merely to be kind to those who are kind to us. This selectivity mirrors what the world does. We must be different; radically different. We are to be like God who “is kind to the ungrateful and the evil”. To win the heart of an enemy be kind even when ingratitude and sin are present.

By unbelievable mercy

v.36

Finally Jesus draws this thought to a close by illustrating enemy love by paralleling it to God’s unbelievable mercy. Observe this in v.36. He is using God’s character and actions as a standard by which we are to live with our enemies. This angle on his actions is said to be mercy. Recall what Paul said concerning reconciliation in Romans 5:10. “For if while we were enemies we were reconciled to God by the death of his Son, much more now that we are reconciled shall we be saved by his life”.

We must take our cue from God at this point. When we get daring and move into enemy territory in order to release POW’s by the gospel, we will need to have a standard that far exceeds natural ways. We are to be merciful as our Father is merciful. Like Father; like son...think about it.

Recap

What we’ve noticed so far is that the gospel of Luke starts by making the point that Jesus will be opposed and suffer. And that association with Jesus is involvement with persecution (cf. Lk.9:23-26; 10:3; Acts 14:22). Jesus goes with the gospel to his enemies. His followers must also.

Because his followers will be hated by His enemies, Jesus clarifies the manner of the mission. Simply put, we are to love our enemies. He does not leave it to the imagina-

tion of the reader to define this type of love. He talked about how we are to love our enemies

- In actions
- In words
- In attitude
- By unselective kindness
- By unbelievable mercy

Conclusion In closing let me come back to the opening sentence of this message.

If obedience to tonight's message seems unbearable it will be precisely because it possesses a promise which seems unbelievable.

By believing a promise

v.35

There is one thing I've left off in expounding this paragraph. This component to obedience must not merely be spoken of. We must have it as our magnetic north, a carrot before the nose, an impulse driving us into difficult ministry. The last piece that must be put in place in order to obey the command "love your enemies" is found in v.35. "By believing a promise" we will move out in risk-taking, life-changing, God-honoring, enemy-converting good deeds.

The love-prompting promise is found in v.35. As I read it listen carefully. "But love your enemies, and do good and lend expecting nothing in return *and your reward will be great and you will be sons of the Most High...*"

Let us set our sights on more of Christ. Let us attempt to imagine what great reward in heaven is like. Let us picture in the mind's eye a vast vision of the splendor of Christ richly given to the one who walks by faith into enemy territory.

The sense of knowing that when all tears stop, when death dies and all evil expires, when toil rests and all unbelief takes flight, we who obey by faith this very command (i.e. love your enemies) will thrill with joy never ending and ever increasing. Oh happy days! Oh happy days!

Jesus says, "Rejoice in that day [i.e. of suffering] and leap for joy for behold your reward is great in heaven".

Here are some closing questions to ponder and some marching orders to pursue.

Questions to ponder

- *What current thoughts make it difficult for you to believe clear promises of the Bible? Do you examine your thought life? Are you aware of these thoughts? Can you see how you doubt clear promises and commands? Repent from thought patterns contrary to biblical promises and principles. Believe afresh the precious and magnificent promises of the Bible.*
- *Is there anyone in your life who you classify as an “enemy”? Are you harboring any bitterness, anger or hatred against this enemy? If so, confess your sin to the Lord. Repent of the heart sins. This week pray the blessings talked about in this passage for this person. Ask God to soften your heart and to create in you true affection and love for him/her.*
- *What new ways of living is God calling you to carry out? What is one “good deed” you can give to your enemy this week?*
- *At the Chapel, what new initiatives and evangelistic ministries can be started and sustained? How can we locate and love these unlovable people talked in our passage for tonight? Who will partner up with these ministries? What changes in church culture must we undergo in order for the fresh initiatives to thrive? Let us pray for these things beloved. Let us dream big about outreach. Let us talk among ourselves over these things. Let us believe promises and pursue practices that lead us together into enemy territory.*

Marching orders to pursue

- *Believe the unbelievable.*
- *Love the unlovable.*
- *And let us get ready to suffer with great joy!*