

Matthew

Sermon on the Mount

August 25, 2024

I. Introduction

A. **Matthew 7:7-12**, “[Keep on asking], and it will be given to you; [Keep on seeking], and you will find; [Keep on knocking], and it will be opened to you. [8] For everyone who [keeps on asking] receives, and he who [keeps on seeking] finds, and to him who [continues knocking] it will be opened. [9] Or what man is there among you who, when his son asks for a loaf, will give him a stone? [10] Or if he asks for a fish, he will not give him a snake, will he? [11] If you then, being [sinful], know how to give good gifts to your children, **how much more** will your Father who is in heaven give what is good to those who ask Him! [12] In everything, therefore, treat people the same way you want them to treat you, for this is the Law and the Prophets.”

B. **Vs 12** is known as the Golden Rule. Some say that John Wesley is responsible for giving it this label because history suggests it has been called the Golden Rule since a sermon he preached in 1750. However, history also suggests that over 1000 years earlier, a Christian Roman emperor engraved this saying on his wall – in gold. Interestingly, history also records a number of variations of **vs 12**. For example:

1. **Confucianism:** *Do not do to others what you would not like yourself.* (Analects 12:2)
2. **Buddhism:** *Hurt not others in ways that you yourself would find hurtful.* (Udana-Varga 5,1)
3. **Hinduism:** *This is the sum of duty; do nothing to others that you would not have them do unto you.* (Mahabharata 5,1517)
4. **Islam:** *No one of you is a believer until he desires for his brother that which he desires for himself.* (Sunnah)
5. **Plato:** *May I do to others as I would that they should do unto me.*
6. **Socrates:** *Do not do to others that which would anger you if others did it to you.*
7. **Aristotle:** *We should bear ourselves toward others as we would desire they should bear themselves toward us.*
8. **Judaism:** *What is hateful to you, do not do to your fellowman. This is the entire Law; all the rest is commentary.* (Talmud, Shabbat 31d)

C. You may have noticed that many of the sayings are in the **negative** – telling us NOT to treat others as we DO NOT want to be treated. In

contrast, Jesus' statement is in the **positive** – telling us to treat others IN THE SAME WAY we want to be treated. The significant difference is the difference between what the Law requires and what love requires.

1. For example, the Law says do not murder. Love says that human life **and** human relationships are exceedingly valuable. Therefore, the nature of love is to do what it can to protect life, and promote and preserve relationships.
2. In **Matthew 5:21-48**, Jesus confirms this difference between the Law and love by comparing what the Jews thought the Law required with His explanation of the fuller intent of the Law. In each case, the fuller intent is love, that is, intentionally **seeking** the good of those around you instead of **not** hurting or **not** harming them in some way.
3. With these things in mind, we will look at **vs 12**.

D. Pray

II. Pursing what is truly valuable and lasts forever

- A. **[12]** In everything, therefore, treat people the same way you want them to treat you, for this is the Law and the Prophets.”
 1. This statement confirms that God's way for us here on the earth and in His eternal kingdom is the way of love – love that seeks the good of everyone who in any way are affected by your choices and behavior.
 2. To seek the good of everyone affected by your choices and behavior, you must intentionally and thoughtfully love others, regardless of who they are, or the circumstances involved – which means your love may need to be given at a cost to self-interest or your well-being.
 3. This truth is affirmed in a number of other scriptures. As I read them, notice that each one is stated in the positive, just like Jesus' words in **vs 12**.
 - a. **Leviticus 19:18**, ‘You shall not take vengeance, nor bear any grudge against the sons of your people (*negative*), but **you shall love** your neighbor as yourself (*positive*); I am the LORD.
 - b. **Matthew 22:37-40**, “And [Jesus] said to [the lawyer], ‘**You shall love** the Lord your God with all your heart, and with all your soul, and with all your mind.’ [38] This is the great and foremost commandment. [39] The second is like it, ‘**You shall love** your neighbor as yourself.’ [40] On these two commandments **depend** (*to be conditioned by or dependent on*) **the whole Law and the Prophets.**”
 - c. **Romans 13:9-10**, For this, “You shall not commit adultery, you shall not murder, you shall not steal, you shall not covet,” and if

there is any other commandment, it is summed up in this saying, “**You shall love** your neighbor as yourself.” [10] Love does no wrong to a neighbor; therefore **love is the fulfillment of the law.**

- d. **Galatians 5:13-14**, For you were called to freedom, brethren; only do not turn your freedom into an opportunity for the flesh, but **through love serve** one another. [14] For **the whole Law is fulfilled** in one word, in the statement, “**You shall love** your neighbor as yourself.”
 - e. **1 John 4:7-8**, Beloved, **let us love** one another, for love is from God; and everyone who loves is born of God and knows God. [8] The one who does not love does not know God, for **God is love** (*God is the complete embodiment and the supreme example of love, for in all He does, He seeks our good.*)
 - f. **1 John 4:10-11**, In this is love, not that we loved God, but that He loved us and sent His Son to be the propitiation for our sins (*the One sent to appease God’s wrath and gain God’s favor toward us in regard to our sin*). [11] Beloved, **if God so loved us** (*sent His son to secure our good*), **we also ought to love one another.**
 - g. By nature, love is a positive force that comes from within and flows outward to everyone affected by our choices and behavior.
4. The next part of **vs 12** that needs to be considered are the first three words.

B. [12] **In everything, therefore**, treat people the same way you want them to treat you, for this is the Law and the Prophets.

1. The first two words, “**In everything**” are all-inclusive. They leave nothing and no one out: no person – regardless of gender, ethnicity, position, or religion; no relationship; and no situation.
 - a. We may fall short of treating everyone in every situation the same way we want to be treated, but it ought never be for the lack of making a sincere effort to be all-inclusive.
 - b. However, it is the all-inclusiveness of love, the never-ending need for love of those around us, and our own longing to be loved that makes self-interest, self-centeredness, and just plain selfishness so appealing when the cost of loving others goes beyond the cost our self-interest is willing to pay.
 - c. And yet, as it was for Jesus, so it is for us – in a sinful world, there is no avoiding the various costs that come with loving others in the same way we want to be loved. The reality is, love is costly.

- d. And yet, it is only love that gives us eternal life instead of eternal death. It is only love that reconciles us to God – making it possible for us know Him personally and intimately. It is only love that transforms us, forgives us when we sin – again, and protects us from being tempted beyond what we can endure. It is only love that makes our homes, our neighborhood, and even our nation a safe, secure, and an enjoyable place to live. As **Colossians 3:14** says, “And beyond all these things, put on love, for it is the perfect bond of unity.”
 2. The third word in **vs 12** is “**therefore**,” and it tells us that the reason we are to treat others as we want to be treated is because this is how our heavenly Father treats us. In other words, because He treats us the way He wants us to treat Him, we are to follow His example and treat those around us the same way.
- C. This raises the question, “If this is the Golden Rule,” and if it is this easy to understand, why don’t we live according to it all the time? I suspect you know why – at least in part. Yet let me remind you of some of the reasons why.
1. The biggest enemy to treating others the way we want to be treated is distrust of God. When we do not trust God to keep us safe, to provide our needs, and to give us a sense of well-being, we turn to self and resort to self-centeredness, self-protection, self-pleasure, and self-exaltation in order to gain the love, happiness, security, importance, and sense of well-being we long for – which, as I am sure you can see, gets in the way of treating others as we want to be treated.
 2. Beyond distrust of God, loves enemies include fear of being taken advantage of, fear of being a victim, fear of losing out on some perceived good, selfishness, self-centeredness, self-rule, self-deception, self-serving expectations, a belief in entitlement, irrational fears, unrestrained passions, wanting to be rich, wanting to control, double-standards, double-mindedness, bigotry, discrimination, retaliation, vengeance, sinful anger, pride, and the devil’s temptations.
 3. These are the enemies of love that took Christ prisoner, tortured Him, and nailed Him to a cross. And these are the enemies of love that bring all manner of evil, hardship, and suffering into our lives, our homes, our workplace, our neighborhoods, our nation, and our world.
- D. The reality is, to love as we ought requires trusting God to be our first and foremost source of security, well-being, provision, protection, approval,

acceptance, and love. It is also important to know what the Bible says about loving God and those around us.

1. Beyond trusting God and studying God's word, love requires denying self, accepting less, being content with what you have, honest self-assessment, careful thinking, compassion, a genuine concern for the greater good of God and the community, and a commitment to decrease the evil and increase the good in your home, your neighborhood, your workplace, and the world.
2. However, keep in mind that in a sinful world, there is no avoiding the various costs that come with loving everyone according to the ways of love.
 - a. And sadly, the place we are most prone to side-step love and choose some form of selfishness is in the home, or with our extended family.
 - b. And yet, the home is the place that love is needed the most, for it is in our home that our relationships are the most intimate and life-affecting, and it is the home-life that has the first and possibly the most lasting influence on how our children live their lives after leaving home.

E. Dennis Jernigan wrote the song, **To be Loved**. The first verse and chorus go like this: "Father, if we were all to be honest, what would our greatest need consist of? Wouldn't we say, if we were all honest, simply our greatest need is to be loved? From the strong and stable man to the single-minded woman, To the man not even sure he is a man, to the lonely hurting children, To the old abandoned soul, we need love to make us whole! (*chorus*) To be loved is like a harbor in a storm; To be anchored so securely at the heart you can't be torn. To be loved is just what ev'ry heart would give their life to be; Held just once by One Who would not leave. To be loved is what we need."

1. Do you know a child – whether an adolescent, a teen, or an older adult – who doesn't want to be loved by his parents? I know children who have been so mistreated and hurt by a parent or parents that they want nothing to do with them. Yet even in those situations, if the child could gain the love of the parent, he would take it – because that is what he wants.
2. Do you know a wife who doesn't want to be loved by her husband, or a husband who doesn't wish his wife would love him in ways she doesn't?

3. Is there any relationship or situation where love is lacking or absent that would not be made better by love?
 4. I believe we were created to be loved, and in fact, to need love. And I believe we were created to give love – so that we could meet the need of those around us to feel loved.
 5. Therefore, you are fulfilling the Golden Rule when you love those around you – and especially those nearest and dearest – in ways that make them feel loved – whether or not they are treating you in the same way they want to be treated.
- F. Sadly, treating others this way may come naturally to God, but it does not come naturally to the rest of us. True, some are more nurturing or caring by nature, but even they have times of selfishness, resentment, anger, and the pursuit of self-protection. And in those times, they forsake love and elevate self-interest over the good of others – just like the rest of us.
1. Fortunately, Jesus presents a helpful way of dealing with and changing our mixed motives, hypocritical love, and inclination for making the good of self more important than the good of all.
 2. We find His solution in **vs 7-8**: Keep on asking God to teach you and empower you to love as you ought to love, and He will so you can. Keep on seeking ways to make or help those around you feel loved by you, and you will and they will. Do not give up pursuing God, godliness, and learning how to treat others in the same way you want to be treated – regardless of the cost to you or failures by you, and you will gain the transformation you seek.
 3. If you want this – and I hope you do, and if you have further to go – and it is possible you do, then I am urging you to continue pressing forward toward the goal of treating others in the same way you want them to treat you.

III. Conclusion

- A. **Romans 8:32**, “He who did not spare His own Son, but delivered Him over for us all, how will He not also with Him freely give us all things?”
- B. **1 John 4:10-11**, “Beloved, if God so loved us (*loving us in the same way He wants to be loved*), then we also ought to love one another.”