

The Code of the Kingdom

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[0 : 00] Amen. Last week, Matt helped me preach for us from verses 1-16, and there we saw Jesus choose his 12 apostles, and instead of choosing the religious leaders of their day, the Pharisees, Jesus chose a morally depraved tax collector.

Instead of choosing the theologians and scholars of his day, the scribes, Jesus chose the fishermen, the uneducated fishermen. Instead of choosing the politicians and people in power, Jesus chose a zealot, a fringe political revolutionary.

Instead of choosing people with exemplary faith, Jesus chose a man who would become famous for his doubting. And instead of choosing those who would be loyal to him to the point of death, Jesus chose a man who would deny him three times publicly, and a man who would eventually betray him to arrest an eventual death.

So Jesus called these men apostles, the 12, that will form the foundation of the church. And these head-scratching choices that Jesus made bring us to the passage for today, because it leaves us wondering, what kind of people then are the citizens of God's kingdom?

And how does this kingdom really operate? And Luke 6, 17-38 gives us an answer to those two questions. So let's read together, verses 17-38.

[1 : 35] And he came down with them and stood on a level place, with a great crowd of his disciples, and a great multitude of people from all Judea and Jerusalem and the sea coast of Tyre and Sire, who came to hear him and to be healed of their diseases.

And those who were troubled with unclean spirits were cured, and all the crowds sat to touch him, for power came out from him and healed them all. And he lifted up his eyes on his disciples and said, Blessed are you who are poor, for yours is the kingdom of God.

Blessed are you who are hungry now, for you shall be satisfied. Blessed are you who weep now, for you shall laugh. Blessed are you when people hate you, and when they exclude you, and revile you, and spurn your name as evil on account of the Son of Man.

Rejoice in that day, and leap for joy, for behold, your reward is great in heaven, for so their fathers did to the prophets. But woe to you who are rich, for you have received your consolation.

Woe to you who are full now, for you shall be hungry. Woe to you who laugh now, for you shall mourn and weep. Woe to you when all people speak well of you, for so their fathers did to the false prophets.

[3 : 06] But I say to you who hear, love your enemies. Do good to those who hate you. Bless those who curse you. Pray for those who abuse you.

To one who strikes you on the cheek, offer the other also. And from one who takes away your cloak, do not withhold your tunic either. Give to everyone who begs from you.

And from one who takes away your goods, do not demand them back. And as you wish that others would do to you, do so to them. If you love those who love you, what benefit is that to you?

For even sinners love those who love them. And if you do good to those who do good to you, what benefit is that to you? For even sinners do the same.

And if you lend to those from whom you expect to receive, what credit is that to you? Even sinners lend to sinners to get back the same.

[4 : 06] 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.

For He is kind to the ungrateful and the evil. Be merciful, even as your Father is merciful. Judge not, and you will not be judged.

Condemn not, and you will not be condemned. Forgive, and you will be forgiven. Give, and it will be given to you. Good measure, pressed down, shaken together, running over, will be put into your life.

But with the measure you use, it will be measured back to you. I read to 38 because that's related, but I'll actually speak on 37 and 38 on the following week. So we'll stop at 36 for today.

And the main point of this passage is that as the citizens of the kingdom of God, we should love people selflessly and sacrificially. And that brings us to two main points. One, it's the citizens of what is, who are the citizens of the kingdom, verses 17 to 26.

[5 : 08] And then what the code of the kingdom is in 27 to 36. Verses 17 to 19 tell us this. Read with me. Jesus came down with them and stood on a level place with a great crowd of his disciples and a great multitude of people from all Judea and Jerusalem and the sea coast of Tyre and Sidon who came to hear him and to be healed of their diseases.

And those who were troubled with unclean spirits were cured, and all the crowd sat to touch him, for power came out for him and healed them all. So after choosing his 12 apostles on the mountain, he came down, it says, and stood on a level place.

That's why this teaching that follows in the rest of the chapter is often called the Sermon on the Plain, Sermon on a Level Place. In contrast to the Sermon on the Mount in Matthew 5 through 7.

There are a lot of parallels between the two sermons, and it's possible that they are the same sermon. But Matthew 5 says that Jesus sat down on the mountain to teach, while Luke tells us that he came down and stood on a level place.

This is not an irreconcilable difference, because a level place doesn't necessarily mean that Jesus came all the way down from the mountain. It could simply mean that he was looking for a flat enough space to stand on and to teach for people to gather.

[6 : 25] So it could be the same sermon. It's also possible that there are two different sermons. Repetition is a time-tested and proven method of effective teaching, especially itinerant preachers like Jesus would have often repeated the same messages for us to learn.

So it's not hard to imagine Jesus taught these messages in two different contexts. So that's impossible to establish with certainty, but what's important for our purposes is that whether it's one or two sermons, Matthew and Luke have reproduced Jesus' sermon in ways that have distinct emphases.

So they have their own context. So in order to appreciate what Luke has written for us, we need to appreciate the sermon on the plain on its own terms, instead of going back and looking at everything from the lens of the sermon in the mount.

And so in that way, we can appreciate the unique emphasis that Luke is trying to bring home to us. In that introduction passage I just read, we saw that there are three distinct audiences, three different kinds of audiences.

First, there are the twelve apostles that came down with Jesus. And then there's a great crowd of his disciples, it says. So there's a larger crowd of disciples that goes beyond the twelve apostles.

[7 : 41] And then finally it says that there's a great multitude of people from all Judea and Jerusalem, and it's equal to Tyre and Sidon. So that third category is distinguished from his disciples, the larger crowd of disciples, which suggests that there are likely people who are not followers of Jesus.

Skeptics, unbelievers in the crowd as well. And likely some hostile Pharisees and scribes that we saw earlier in the chapter as well. And Jesus' popularity is explained in verse 18.

He says that these people came to hear him and to be healed of their diseases. And those who were troubled with unclean spirits were cured. So these accounts of miracles are not just legends or quaint stories that were tacked onto Jesus' teaching.

It's easy for us as people living in the modern era to dismiss people from the ancient world as gullible and superstitious. But actually people in the ancient world didn't believe that miracles happened regularly either.

Which is why this is extraordinary. And that's why people are gathering. Because Jesus is doing amazing things. Verse 19 says, And all the crowds sought to touch him, for power came up from him and healed them all.

[8 : 55] It's hard to garner this kind of attention even with sleek branding and aggressive marketing. But Jesus didn't have any of that. In fact, he often intentionally withdrew from large crowds so that he would not be detained or distracted from his preaching.

So Jesus was drawing the crowds here for these two primary reasons. Because he preached with authority and he backed up his preaching with demonstrations of God's power by healing diseases

and exercising demons.

So preaching and power. That's what the people came to see. To hear him and to be healed. And it says Jesus healed them all. All who came to him. But when the time came for him to teach, it says in verse 20, it says Jesus lifted up his eyes on his disciples.

So this is important. Because he heals them all. He heals all the people who come with need. But when he's teaching here, he's specifically addressing his disciples. Those who follow him.

Yes, the multitude can listen in to learn from this. But Jesus is specifically addressing his disciples. Telling them this is what it means to be a follower.

[10:05] This is what it means to be a disciple of Christ. This is the profile of a disciple. That's what the next few verses are about. This is what the citizens of the kingdom of God are like.

In verses 17 to 26, now Jesus first describes positively what the disciples are like. And then with four matching statements, opposite statements, he describes what the disciples are not like.

Maybe. The blessed are you statements, the four of them here, are often referred to as the beatitudes. Which comes from the Latin word for blessed. It was common in the ancient world to refer to people as blessed.

It refers to a state of happiness, a contentedness, a blessedness. It's really not that dissimilar from that overused hashtag, blessed.

You guys have seen that, right? If you search for the hashtag blessed on Instagram or Twitter, you will literally find millions of posts that are tagged that way.

[11:07] And for example, there will be a picture of someone sipping margarita on the beach. Blessed. Someone hugging or kissing their downtime, you know, and it will say blessed.

A lot of times, people who use the term blessed don't even believe in God. So they don't even believe in being blessed, but they're just saying that they're happy. They're fortunate. And the word blessed was used in similar ways in the ancient world.

Now think about what you would typically associate with the idea of being blessed. Blessed are you who are poor. What you would use that hashtag for. And then be Jesus' shocking future.

Blessed are you who are poor. For yours is the kingdom of God. Blessed are you who are hungry now. For you shall be satisfied.

Blessed are you who weep now. For you shall last. Blessed are you when people hate you. When they exclude you and revile you and spurn your name as evil on account of the Son of Man.

[12:12] Blessed are you who are blessed. It's the exact opposite of what people then and now would call blessed. People post pictures of their handsome paycheck or a thick wad of cash.

Or pictures of themselves eating delicious meals, foods from fine restaurants. Or pictures of themselves laughing with their friends and family. And then they say blessed. Blessed. Not when you're poor.

Hungry. Weeping. Hated. Excluded. Reviled. And spurned. What in the world is Jesus talking about? The parallel structure of this passage suggests that blessed are you spavans.

There's four of them. They're not referring to four different kinds of people. But they're all different ways of referring to the same kind of people. One group of people. So who exactly are these people that are blessed by God?

First, verse 20 says, Blessed are you who are poor. For yours is the kingdom of God. Bible commentator Robert Welch helpfully explains the biblical concept of the poor this way.

[13:25] He says, The poor in Judaism are referred to those in desperate need, the socioeconomic element, whose helplessness drove them to a dependent relationship with God, the religious element, for the supplying of their needs and vindication.

So that the idea of the poor combines the socioeconomic and spiritual elements. The two elements are related because the socioeconomically rich, the well-off, are often self-sufficient.

While the socioeconomically poor often realize the insufficiency and depend on God. This is confirmed by the way Luke uses socioeconomic categories to refer to spiritual realities.

He uses them almost metaphorically. He says, for example, in Luke chapter 11, verse 4, Jesus teaches his disciples to pray, Forgive us our sins, for we ourselves forgive everyone who is indebted to us.

The language of debt. Financial debt. He uses metaphorically to refer to our debt of sin. Verses 22 to 23 tell us that these poor that God's referring to, that Jesus is referring to, are people who are persecuted on account of Jesus Christ.

[14 : 37] So these are people who are cut off from the pleasures and privileges of this world because of their allegiance to Christ and their citizenship in the kingdom of God.

So the poor are those who are dependent on God. Which is why Jesus said later in chapter 18, verse 17, Whoever does not receive the kingdom of God like a child shall not enter it.

A child is by definition dependent. Right, we file them in our taxes as dependents. Those who humble themselves before God spiritually are often materially poor.

And that's why, that's why, well, I'll come at you later, but there are exceptions to that, which is why in chapter 19 in Luke, the rich tax collector, Zacchaeus, is saved.

Because even though he was rich, he humbles himself. He becomes poor in spirit. So the poor is a generalization of the type of people that turn to God for salvation.

[15 : 46] So Jesus says, blessed are you who are poor, for yours is the kingdom of God. Notice that the statement is in the present tense. The poor possess the kingdom of God now.

This is a call to faith. Because being poor in this world feels miserable. You can't get what you want when you want it. Sometimes you can't even get what you need.

It's humiliating. You are looked down upon and it feels miserable. It does not feel good to be poor.

In a similar way, the poor in spirit, likewise, feel miserable.

They feel that they're miserable sinners. They feel helpless and unworthy. But Jesus says to the poor, the kingdom of God is yours. Your poverty might feel like a curse.

You might feel no comfort in this life now. But yours is the kingdom of God. The corresponding woe to you statement, look at it in verse 24, says this.

[16 : 46] But woe to you who are rich, for you have received your consolation. Woe is the opposite of blessed.

It's an explanation of pity for someone's misfortune. Instead of the kingdom of God, the rich in this life have their riches and what they can buy with their riches as their consolation prize.

The phrase, you have received, in Greek, is a technical commercial term for accepting the receipt of payment. In other words, the check has already been cut.

Those who put their hope in riches, for those who live for riches, those who are self-sufficient in their riches, those who they will not inherit the kingdom of God. The riches that they enjoy in this life is their full payment.

That's why when I pray for you guys, when I pray for other believers, I never pray that God will make them rich. Amen. Jesus says later in Luke 8, 14, Jesus says again in Luke 18, Basically impossible, apart from God's work.

[18 : 27] Verse Timothy 6, 10 says, For the love of money is a root of all kinds of evils. It is through this craving that some have wandered away from the faith and pierced themselves with many pains.

Being rich, generally speaking, from a biblical standpoint, is not spiritually desirable. It's in fact dangerous. Yes, it's helpful and useful in this life.

Riches can buy you mansions. Riches can buy you beauty. It can buy you power. It can buy you sex. It can buy you comfort. It can buy you toys and gadgets. It can buy you cars.

But guess what? If that's what you live for, that's all you're going to get. That's your prize. Or you will not have the kingdom of God.

Many of us are wealthy by global standards. How then are we supposed to live? 1 Timothy 6, 16-17 teach us this.

[19 : 31] As for the rich in this present age, charge them not to be haughty, nor to set their hopes on the uncertainty of riches, but on God who richly provides us with everything to enjoy.

They are to do good, to be rich in good works, to be generous and ready to share, thus storing up treasure for themselves as a good foundation for the future, so that they may take hold of that which is truly life.

Only the rich who are poor in spirit, only the rich who do not depend on the uncertainty of riches, but instead depend on the God who richly provides, only the rich who are rich in good works, not just to themselves, but toward others and toward God, and are generous with their wealth.

Only the rich who are concerned with storing up treasures in heaven, rather than on earth, only those rich possess the kingdom of God. Jesus continues with the attitudes in verse 21.

Blessed are you who are hungry now, for you shall be satisfied. One of the most difficult and amazing things that poor people in our world experience is hunger.

[20 : 51] And they who have no money to buy food for themselves, they cry out to God to fill their hunger. They mourn the injustice of this world and the callousness of people who let their fellow men go hungry.

So they look to God for his provision. That's what the hungry being referred to here are. But once again, like the term poor, it refers to more than just the physically hungry.

Psalm 107 speaks of our hunger of soul for the Lord. And a parallel verse in Matthew 5, 6 draws out this meaning when he says, Blessed are those who hunger and thirst for righteousness, for they shall be satisfied.

Do you long for righteousness in this world? Do you see how woefully inadequate your own righteousness is before God?

Do you hunger for more of it? Blessed are you who are hungry now. If you mourn your sins, if you long for that righteousness, if you pray and you cry out for that, you hunger for it, you thirst for it, then you will be satisfied.

[22 : 07] A just kingdom, a righteous kingdom will be your possession forever. And notice that the tense shifts here to the future. He said, Be poor, for yours is the kingdom of God.

But here, he says, Those who are hungry now will be satisfied later. You shall be satisfied. The kingdom of God is in the possession of the poor now, but the satisfaction of their hunger lies in the future.

This points to the already but not yet reality of the kingdom of God. The kingdom of God has already been inaugurated, but it's not yet consummated.

You could think of it this way. Our towns, our homes, were under occupation of the enemy army.

But Christ has won a decisive battle in the front lines that guarantees our victory in the Lord.

The effects of that decisive battle, however, are still being worked out in all the towns. So for now, there is still hunger.

[23 : 15] There's still poverty. There's still weeping. There's still persecution. But because victory is won, its effects will soon spread and be experienced in fullness everywhere.

That's why we're hungry now. That's why we still wrestle with our sins now. That's why we still have to mourn the lack of righteousness in this world now.

But that day is coming when that will be fulfilled and that hunger for righteousness will be satisfied. Similarly, Jesus says in the second half of verse 21, Blessed are you who weep now, for you shall laugh.

The poor and the hungry is like wheat because of the sins and sufferings of this world. Are you too busy amusing yourself with diversions from life that you fail to mourn the great injustices of life?

Are you too busy laughing and pursuing the pleasures of this world that you never weep about your own sinfulness? You have an awareness of your own depravity, your own selfishness and pride that makes you weep.

[24 : 31] If so, then take heart. Blessed are you. Those who weep now will get their final laugh. The converse is also true.

It says in the second half of verse 25, Woe to you who laugh now, for you shall mourn and weep. Woe to you who are full now, for you shall be hungry. Woe to you who laugh now, for you shall mourn and weep. People who are satisfied with their righteousness now.

Those who are self-righteous, those who are self-satisfied, those who are not looking for justice and righteousness on the earth, those who laugh derisively at the followers of Jesus, those who pay no attention to the sins and sufferings of this world, their laughter now will be replaced by weeping. Jesus continues that radical teaching in verses 22-23. We read with you. Blessed are you when people hate you and when they exclude you and revile you and spurn your name as evil on account of the son.

[25 : 46] These verses reveal clearly that Jesus has more than physical poverty, hunger, and weeping in view. He's referring to those who experience these things on account of their commitment to Jesus.

And the four verbs get increasingly worse, increasingly more hostile and intense. First, they hate you. Instead of just hating you in their hearts, they actually exclude you from their social circles. And instead of merely excluding you, they revile you, slandering you in front of others. And then finally, they spurn your name as evil. To spurn someone's name is to reject the whole person as an evil person.

And note that this harsh treatment is not in and of itself a sign of blessedness. Sometimes, Christians are hated and excluded, reviled, and spurred not because they're being committed to Christ and representing Him but because they're just being jerks.

That's why we have to read the whole statement. It doesn't say blessed are you when people hate you. That's not a virtue by itself. Blessed are you when people hate you and when they exclude you and be violent, spurning the name as evil on account of the Son of Man.

[27 : 07] If you are persecuted because of your commitment to Christ, and then that should not cause you to doubt or make you more depressed but instead it says in verse 23 it should make you rejoice in that thing.

Leap for joy for behold your reward is great in heaven for so their fathers did to the prophets. This is the only command in this entire section of the Beatitudes.

On the day you are persecuted for Christ's sake he says rejoice. Leap for joy. That exact wording leap for joy was used earlier in Luke chapter 1 to refer to John the Baptist leaping for joy in his mother's womb when the mother of Jesus pregnant with Jesus approached him.

Being near Jesus coming to Jesus causes joy brings joy and that's how we are to be joyous and that's what we see in the book of Acts throughout the book of Acts which is the sequel to the book of the Gospel of Luke people the followers of Christ are persecuted they're beaten they're stoned and left for dead and they rejoice that they have the honor of being persecuted for Christ's sake. Why should this be the case? Verse 23 gives us two reasons why we should rejoice first for behold your reward is great in heaven and second for so their fathers did to the prophets so even though we suffer now in heaven we will be vindicated and receive a reward for our faithfulness to Christ that's the first reason and the second reason is that the fact that we're being persecuted reveals our nearness to God because the prophets of God in the past were persecuted in the same way that we are persecution is evidence that we are citizens of the kingdom of God and not of this world that's cause to rejoice and the corresponding statement is in verse 26 woe to you when all people speak well of you for so their fathers did to the false prophets if all people speak well of you that's actually a problem because in John 15-20 Jesus said remember the word that I said to you a servant is not greater than his master if they persecuted me they will persecute you also those who faithfully follow Christ will be persecuted and being spoken well by all people indicates that you have compromised in some measure with the world even a dead fish can drift with the current but if you want to be swimming upstream like salmon you have to be alive and strong those who belong to this world drift with the sinful ways of this world but those who belong to the kingdom of God will again stick hard in spite of the persecution so to which of these sides do you belong there's a clear separation here between Jesus' disciples and the rest of the crowd

[30 : 20] Jesus lifted up his eyes on to his disciples and taught them directly saying blessed are you but he spoke of their fathers who persecuted the true prophets and welcomed and loved the false prophets you they poor hungry weeping persecuted do you belong to that category or are you rich full laughing and universally white some of you know this morning that you belong to this latter category you know that you don't know what it's like to weep for sin or the sufferings of this world to hunger for righteousness to be poor and persecuted and if that's you you must acknowledge your sins and repent turn from your sins and humbly receive Jesus' love for you the grace of God given to you and Jesus dying for your sins to save you 2 Corinthians 8 9 puts it this way for you know the grace of our Lord

Jesus Christ that though he was rich yet for your sake he became poor so that you by his poverty might become rich the righteous son of God Jesus died on the cross for sinful people like you and me and he was raised from the dead so that the poor in this world that Jesus is describing here might inherit his riches so that the sinners of this world might inherit his righteousness so that the spiritually dead in this world might inherit eternal life it's through Jesus that you become citizens of the kingdom of God so that's the profile of the citizen of the kingdom now let's turn to the code of the kingdom these are the people of the land what is the law of the land that we are to live on and that law is love radically selfless and sacrificial love but before we dive into that commandment let's first note the relationship between the beatitude and the commandment to love that we see here because Jesus is not saying to us if you love this way then you will be blessed if you love this way then you will enter the kingdom of God that's not what

Jesus is saying the commandment to love is given to those who already are blessed those who already are in the kingdom of God no one earns their way to heaven through their obedience rather

obedience characterizes those who are already heavenly citizens with that in mind let's dive into verses 27 to 28 but I say to you who hear love your enemies do good to those who hate you bless those who curse you pray for those who abuse you the Old Testament had commanded Jews to love their neighbor as themselves but the Jews had restricted their definition of neighbor to people who weren't like them people who share their religious views people who share their ethnic heritage and Jesus here challenges that notion and radically expands the category of neighbor here to include even our enemies those who hate and oppose us and let's be over spiritualize this command to love our enemies and we say to ourselves well okay well I really don't want anything to do with that enemy of mine but fine

I will love him in my heart that's not what Jesus is talking about Jesus adds specific ways in which we ought to love our enemies and he says do good to those who hate you bless those who curse you pray for those who abuse you Jesus is not merely speaking about vaguely loving attitude that you should just have for his people Jesus is commanding us to do something concrete and active do good to your enemies seek their welfare when they curse you seek when they seek your harm bless them and seek their welfare when they slander and mistreat you instead of retaliating and kind pray for them that's actually a great advice when you are having trouble loving someone or when you're having trouble forgiving someone that has hurt you or offended you one of the best things that you can do for them is to pray for them one of the best things you can do for yourself is to pray for them because as you pray for them and you're appealing to God on their behalf on the behalf of your enemies

God actually enlarges your heart to love them as you're praying for them to forgive them and having given us four general commands Jesus gives us vivid illustrations in verses 29 and 31 first he says to one who strikes you on the cheek offer the other also so Jesus is not teaching us to line up to volunteer to get pummeled by our enemies until we're unconscious so striking on the cheek is most likely a reference to a slap on the face with the back of the hand it's intended as an insult it's a picture of rejection this is an illustration of someone who rejects you when someone insults you don't retaliate or withdraw from them but continue to love them and do good to them of course that might mean that you're risking getting slapped on the other side as well if that's the kind of people they are that's exactly

[36 : 04] Jesus' point love your enemies even if it means making yourself vulnerable again to their hatred to their abuse when someone insults you and speaks harshly to you don't respond tit for tat and fight back don't cut off contact with that person vying never to speak to that person again befriend them again love him again even though that means you might find yourself on the deceiving end of verbal abuse again instead of being consumed with getting even getting your rights focus on loving your enemies retaliation in kind will not overcome hatred it's love and the demonstration of the grace of God that overcomes evil please note that what I'm talking about here what Jesus is teaching here is this non-retaliation ethic is a personal ethic it's not an institutional or societal ethic

Romans 13 4 says that governing authorities bear the sword in order to carry out God's wrath on the wrongdoer it's the government's job to protect the innocent and the vulnerable and to punish abusers but Jesus is teaching us not to retaliate personally ourselves Paul summarizes Jesus' teaching hopefully in Romans 12 19 21 beloved never avenge yourselves but leave it to the wrath of God for it is written vengeance is mine I will repay says the woman to the contrary if your enemy is hungry feed him if he is thirsty give him something to drink for by so doing he will keep burning holes on his head do not be overcome by evil but overcome evil with good I saw a short documentary last year entitled Befriending Her Shooter I don't know if you guys have seen that we've told the story of a 13 year old boy

Ian Manuel who's in a gang and he shot a young mother in the face in downtown Tampa Florida and was sentenced to life in prison and this woman Debbie Debbie Baby publicly forgave him and campaigned for him so that his sentence could be reduced after establishing communication lines with him and befriend him and that story kind of shows that interface between personal forgiveness and institutional justice she personally forgave the shooter but that did not reduce the young man's sentence because justice still has to be served but she still obeyed the call to forgive personally Jesus continues in verses 29-30 and from one who takes away your cloak do not withhold your tunic either give to everyone who begs from you and from one who takes away your goods do not demand a lie if someone steals your outer garment

Jesus is saying don't withhold your undershirt sounds crazy doesn't it but this is exactly what Jesus taught be generous to a fault forgive people to a fault don't be vengeful give to those who ask the ESV if you're looking at the same version I'm looking at the Bible use the word beg but the actual word that's used here is a more general term that means ask and likely it's referring not only to people who are begging on the streets but also to those who are seeking to borrow money from you so this is confirmed by the summary in verses 34 to 35 which focuses on lending money to people without expecting the same favor in return we should give to everyone who has need and ask us for help that's the idea even at the risk of being taken advantage of and Jesus sums it up in verse 31 in a memorable way that we have come to know and as you wish that others would do to you do so to them this is what popular in the golden rule and we find variations of this command all throughout different cultures for example in the first century

Jewish Greek philosopher Philo he writes whatever things anyone hates to suffer let it not do similarly Chinese philosopher Confucius writes in his analytics what you do not want done to yourself do not do to others but Jesus' formulation is the most emphatic and positive of them all instead of simply telling us not to treat others as you don't want to be treated Jesus calls us to be proactive in being sensitive toward others needs as you want others to look out for your own we should treat others as we wish them to treat us most of the variations of the golden rule you find in other cultures are based on the idea of equality and reciprocity and they're often selfish actually at their root do this for others so that they would do this for you don't do this to others so that they don't do this to you but

[41 : 34] Jesus here calls us to a selfless and sacrificial love that goes beyond that giving even when it hurts forgoing our desires to meet the needs of others not just so that we can get something back but for the sake of loving the other person if you're not squirming in your seats right now with discomfort you're probably not understanding rightly this is a radical teaching Jesus puts it in an absolute and shocking way intentionally to confront us and force reflection on this it's a teaching that makes no sense from a worldly standpoint why in the world would I do that it only makes sense for the citizens of the kingdom of God who are poor hungry weeping and hated now because if we're hoping for riches in this life if we're hoping for fullness in this life if we're hoping to laugh in this life if we're hoping to be well liked and highly regarded in this life this ethic of selfless sacrificial love makes absolutely no sense but for the citizens of the kingdom of God it makes all the sense in the world because with every act of personal forgiveness even in the absence of institutional justice for ourselves we are declaring that the

God of justice will make all things right in the end we're hoping for the kingdom that is coming because with every act of sacrificial giving when we give even though it hurts it means we don't get to do what we want to do so that we can help someone else when we give sacrifice in that way we're declaring our faith that this world is not all there is for us that there's a better world coming and we will be rewarded that we are storing up treasures in heaven not just in this world that we are ready to part with consolations in this life because we know the prize of the kingdom wins us it's only if you are a citizen of the kingdom of God that this selfless sacrificial love make any sense and then verses 32 34 Jesus contrasts the love that he's commanding from the love of this world around us read with him it says if you love those who love you what benefit is that to you for even sinners love those who love them and if you do good to those who do good to you what benefit is that to you for even sinners do the same and if you lend to those from whom you expect to receive what credit is that to you even sinners lend to sinners to get back the same amount the phrase to get back the same amount is literally just to receive the same and I think it's not speaking actually restrictively about wanting to get paid back in full for the loans you give out it's actually speaking about lending to people who are able to give you some other kind of favor in return giving something to others lending something expecting something in return expecting the same to receive the same so then it's consistent it's parallel with everything all the other ideas that are expressed here the idea the worldly mentality is you scratch my back and I will scratch yours but Jesus is directly contradicting that idea he's not say don't say I did you a favor this time so do me a favor next time we shouldn't only lend to people whom we expect something from in return isn't it true that people tend to decide each other all the time no matter where you go no matter what kind of society you're in is this fellow student of mine able to offer me help in other subjects if I spend time helping them in this subject I should be nice to that person because that person has a car he can drive me to places I should be nice to this manager get gifts

for this professor because he or she has power and influence that can help me take me places stop sizing people and stop showing favoritism to people who can do something for you

Jesus is saying love people who can do nothing for you loving expecting a return favor lending to those whom you expect to get a return from doing good to those who can do good to you loving people who love you that's human that's not Christian love there's no benefit there's no heavenly reward for that the Christian love is to love those who hate you to do good to those who do evil to you and to lend to those from whom we can expect nothing in return to love serve and give with no strings attached it's an extremely high and difficult command and that's why Jesus gives us very powerful motivations in verses 35 to 36 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 for he is kind to be now why does it sound like

Jesus saying hey if you do this if you love this way then I will give you the kingdom then I will make you sons of the most high the answer lies in the next clause for he is kind to the ungrateful and the evil this is the reason why you will be sons of the most high when you love your enemies for because God is kind to the ungrateful and the evil so the expression this is referring to resemblance not status the expression son of dot dot dot fill in the blank is a typical Hebrew idiom to refer to someone that is characterized by something so Psalm 89 22 calls the wicked literally a son of wickedness Deuteronomy 3 18 describes courageous men as sons of valor so when it says here you will be given the right to be sons of God that's not what he's saying if you do this if you love your enemies and do good to those who hate you you will resemble the father the fathers of

[49 : 09] Christ already are adopted children of God but when we love our enemies and do good to those who hate us we act like God for that's the reason God is kind to the 36 clinches this argument be merciful even as your father is merciful once again the idea is resemblance since you are a child of God already you should resemble your father show that you're cut from the same cloth prove your paternity that God the father is your father be merciful because your father is merciful and this highlights the ordinary mercy of God because we take for granted the way this world works sometimes we don't stop to recognize God's mercy but any given moment we are all sinners we deserve God's fury and wrath his holy justice any given moment we could fall right to hell and burn and be dismissed into oblivion and forgotten forever that's what we deserve and every breath we take and every air every moment of air that we stand by the mercy of

God we don't recognize this and that's why we don't appreciate the mercy of God we deserve God's wrath right now we stand right now we sit in our seats right now we listen to this right now we work and live and eat and move and have our be because of God's mercy that's how merciful God the father is to us right now the same way we have to show mercy to others because even though we are ungrateful and evil the father shows mercy to us and God's mercy sees an even more amazing and special specific application in the way Jesus saves his people Romans 5 10 tells us this it says 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 can love our enemies because

God loved us while we were his enemies we were not sincere people good people pretty good people that are finding our way to God we were his sworn enemies we were rebelling against him refusing to do his will refusing to acknowledge him in any aspect of our lives living for our glory ourselves stealing and robbing from his glory that's who we are and if you think it's hard for us to love those enemies that come to mind if we think it's hard to love those who have abused us those who have hurt us those who have made us feel small those who have offended us if it's hard for us to love imagine the holy God the perfect God the righteous God from eternity past the great God loving us while we were his enemies while we were his enemies

Jesus died for our sins to save us and it's when we are transformed by that love that we can love those who hate us