

A Sermon for DaySpring Baptist Church

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“One for You, One for Me”

Luke 6: 28-36

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When I was growing up, my brother and I, who are only two years apart, had a way of making things even. That was really important because we were fairly competitive and were often competing.

So, say if we had a can of marbles, we'd sit out in the backyard with them all stacked up between us and then, because he was older, he would do the dividing. (Being the divider was a birthright of the eldest son.)

He would say, **“One for you,”** sliding a marble my way... **“And one for me,”** taking one for himself. **“One for you,”** another into my pile... **“And one for me.”** **“One for you and one for me.”**

This was the way we assured fairness and justice in our preK world. We always did it that way... If we had a bag of chips it was, **“One for you and one for me.”** If my grandfather had given us all the change in his pocket... **“One for you and one for me.”**

It was always that way... right down the middle. Unless our cousin who lived next door wanted in on things and then my brother would always use some “fuzzy math” because he was too young to tell. Other than then... it was “even Stephen,” **“One for you and one for me.”**

If we were watching TV... **“Your show for an hour and then mine for an hour.”** If we were riding somewhere in the car... **“You sit on the hump on the way there, I'll take the hump on the way back.”** If we were choosing sides for a neighborhood game of football, it was the same way. **“I'll take Brad.”** **“I'll take David.”**

I suspect it was that way in your backyard too. Every sibling in every family, every kid in every neighborhood, plays by this rule. **“One for you, one for me.”**

It's written into our psyche... our preschool, collective unconscious. This is the moral common denominator of every neighborhood... of the universe for that matter.

This for that.

Tit for tat.

Quid pro quo.

“What's in it for me... for us?” Is the question that is always on the table.

Anywhere there are human beings trying to get along, you'll have someone saying, **"One for you, one for me."** It's called "Social Exchange Theory."

Go back to the caves of our ancestors and you'd see it there. **"I'll trade you four lion skins for your oldest daughter." "Throw in a pair of alligator skin sandals and you've got yourself a deal."**

Go to any kitchen table today. **"I'll take out the trash... you take the kids to soccer."**

Wallstreet... **"We'll give you \$300 million for 51% of the stock and that's our final offer."**

Professional Sports... **"You can have Troy Aikman and we'll take three of your future draft picks."**

Washington... **"I'll vote for your handgun restrictions if you'll let me drill for oil in Alaska."**

It makes the world go round, **"I'll scratch your back...if you'll scratch mine."** And I suppose it's a system that works to some extent. As long as everyone is looking out for her or his interests things will maybe... eventually get divided up evenly and everyone will be at least semi-happy. It's the theory in play, anyway, from your backyard all the way to the Middle East. It makes the world go round, it seems.

And Jesus came to say in so many words... **"That may make this world go around but it doesn't have anything to do with the Kingdom of God."** Jesus is talking to folks in this sermon about this very thing... and it's not really that he is critical of "one for you, one for me" living, he just wants to make sure we don't mistake it for love. And he wants to invite us to grow up.

As he so often does, Jesus holds up a mirror here. He's on to us. **"It's not really all that big of a deal if you're nice to someone who's nice to you... if you scratch the back of someone scratching yours... bitter enemies in the Middle East talks, know to do that."**

"So what if you trade your affection like marbles. Any preschooler in any backyard can do that."

"If you only love people who repay it in full... you have a long way to go."

Jesus knows that even at our best, our motives are mixed. Even when we're loving, Jesus is suggesting that somewhere down deep, maybe even in an unconscious place, there is a little voice saying, "What's in it for me?" If

we're honest at all, we have to confess it's true because we've all witnessed our basic instincts when our love isn't returned.

"After all I've done down there at that church... Well let's just see how they do without my tithes."

"I can't believe... after all the sacrifices I've made... that a child of mine would treat me this way."

Jesus is on to us. He knows we're keeping score... he knows we're still operating with an infantile ethic that may be necessary at some negotiating table but doesn't come close to redeeming the world... or you.

Jesus knows... what he knows is that we're attached to all the wrong things. ... That we have deep desires for...

affection

and esteem

and power

and control

and security...

He knows that when these desires are frustrated we're going to react with jealousy and anger and grief... it's going to ruin our day, at least.

Jesus knows that if someone steals our favorite coat that we're going to stew over it and stew over it because that coat tells us something about ourselves we need to hear. So, he invites us to unhook. **"Give them your hat too."**

Jesus knows us... he knows that if someone curses us and gives us a "sign" in some moment of traffic confusion, our instincts are to return everything in kind... rather than to return blessing or to pray for that person.

Something in us feels things must be made even... made right. That some selfish moron took our turn at a four way stop can stay with us for blocks and Jesus knows this.

... And wants to change this.

Jesus came to show us God and to show us how to live as God's children. There is a path that he is calling us to... it's a path of selfless love and mercy... and Jesus says when we get there... we'll know we're children of God... because that's who God is and what God does.

This is the transformation that Jesus wants to bring in our lives. Where we are free to live life not so attached to things and opinions and control. Where we don't have to critique and judge and feel like we're the world's traffic cop. It is a reorientation, a recentering of our lives in God... and it is a life long project.

It seems to me that this invitation to love is both a description of the goal and of the process. Because you know what happens when someone tells you that you have to love. “Love... Now.”

The more you try to love someone who is an enemy or who is obnoxious or who has done you wrong and hurt you... the more you realize your own need for transformation on the inside. It is our inability to forgive that pushes up deeper into this work with God on our own hearts. We are collaborators with God in this process of salvation. It is a journey we’re making into Christlikeness.

I think that’s why Jesus followed up these teachings with the parable about the beam in the eye. **“Why are you so focused on the speck in your sister’s eye when there’s a log poking out of your eye. Take that 2x4 out of your eye first and then you’ll be able to see clearly to remove the speck from your sister’s eye.”**

It’s a comic, bull-in-the-china-closet kind of image. You know how it is when someone is needing help with something in the eye. The eye is hurting and just a little something can cause so much pain. And they ask for help... someone who can so gently look and just barely touch the eye to remove what is troubling them.

And here Jesus pictures someone with a log sticking out of his head... it’s swinging this way and that... no one’s really going to get near him... not if they’re hurting and needing someone to see clearly and tenderly help them.

Jesus says, first you’ve got to look within... you’ve got to take care of what is stuck in you... but it is finally, so that we can help our sister. Notice, he does want us to help with the removal of what hurts. And it’s a great image of love and of the church.

Someone looking to a brother...

vulnerable and in need...

they can’t even really see what is bugging them so...

they certainly can’t get to it themselves.

But there is a brother who is healed... just enough to help... and lift with grace what is causing the pain.

In Luke, this group of teachings is called, “The Sermon on the Plain.” That’s because Luke locates it on a flat place, unlike Matthew who puts it on a Mountain.

There is theology in the geography. Matthew wants us to see a new Moses coming down the mountain with a new law. Luke wants us to see

what is common... what is universal to all our experience. What it means to be a human being on a journey home.

We, all of us, begin in our own backyard... asking, "What's in it for me?" "One for me, one for you." "You scratch my back, I'll scratch yours." Not a bad way to start... but not where Jesus wants to leave us.

We are to be conformed to the image of Christ who emptied himself and lowered himself. Who, even in death and humiliation on the cross, has empathy for his enemies. **"They don't know... forgive them."**

This is where our Lord wants to take us... to this kind of freedom. And we cooperate... we work... we look deep... Ultimately, though we trust because transformation is God's work... we are saved by grace.

Do you know the story of Corrie Ten Boom? In her book, The Hiding Place, she tells the story of what it was like to be imprisoned at Ravensbruck in Nazi Germany. Her sister Betsy died there... somehow she survived it and after the war, became somewhat of an evangelist.

One day in Munich, after she had given her testimony in a rally, she looked up to find standing right in front of her, one of the former S.S. officers who had stood guard at the showers in the camp.

"How grateful I am for your message, frualein," he said. **"To think that, as you say, He has washed my sins away!"**

The man put his hand out to Corrie Ten Boom. He wanted to shake her hand, but she couldn't take it. She said she felt, shame and guilt coursing through her body and so she prayed, **"Lord Jesus, forgive me and help me to forgive him."**

But nothing happened... no warmth... no forgiveness... no handshake.

She prayed again, **"I cannot do this, Jesus... I can't forgive him. Give me your forgiveness."**

Still at war within, when took the man's hand. And as she did, she says, *"The most incredible thing happened. From my shoulder along my arm and through my hand a current seemed to pass from me to him, while into my heart sprang a love for this stranger that overwhelmed me."* (p.233)

It's time to begin to love. Don't worry about your heart so much... Jesus will take care of that... you just stick out your hand. Amen?