

Luke 6:36-49 // Planks and Specks and Figs and Floods

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Preacher: Martin Ayers

- [0 : 00] The reading this morning is from St. Luke's Gospel, chapter 6, and beginning at verse 36. And you will find this on page 1034 in your church Bibles. Luke 6, 36.
- Jesus said, He also told them this parable.
- Can the blind lead the blind? Will they not both fall into a pit? The student is not above the teacher, but everyone who is fully trained will be like their teacher.
- Why do you look at the speck of sawdust in your brother's eye and pay no attention to the plank in your own eye?
- How can you say to your brother, Brother, let me take the speck out of your eye, when you yourself fail to see the plank in your own eye?
- [1 : 35] You hypocrite! First take the plank out of your eye, and then you will see clearly to remove the speck from your brother's eye.
- No good tree bears bad fruit, nor does a bad tree bear good fruit. Each tree is recognized by its own fruit.
- People do not pick figs from thorn bushes, or grapes from briars. A good man brings good things out of the good stored up in his heart, and an evil man brings evil things out of the evil stored up in his heart.
- For the mouth speaks what the heart is full of. Why do you call me Lord, Lord, and do not do what I say?
- As for everyone who comes to me and hears my words and puts them into practice, I will show you what they are like.
- [2 : 50] They are like a man building a house who dug down deep and laid the foundation on rock. When the flood came, the torrent struck that house, but could not shake it because it was well built.
- But the one who hears my words and does not put them into practice is like a man who built a house on the ground without a foundation.
- The moment the torrent struck that house, it collapsed and its destruction was complete. This is the word of the Lord.
- Thanks be to God. Let me add my welcome.
- My name is Martin Ayers if you've not met before. It's great to have you here. As Robbie helpfully said earlier, it's our central prayer meeting on Wednesday evening this week. One thing we'll be giving thanks to God for at that meeting, just to share here, was that a few weeks ago, if you were here, we had a notice about our international cafe ministry.
- [4 : 02] And that's been a ministry that's run for some years at St. Silas and been really fruitful in welcoming international students. But because of people on that team going on the church plant soon and others who've moved on, we knew we couldn't have that ministry anymore unless there was a new team.

And in light of that notice, 12 people have come forward to be part of the international cafe team. So it launched this week. They had a great evening on Tuesday night.

Over 40 international students came. So be encouraged. It's great that in our church family, people were stirred to be involved in that ministry. And sometimes we hear about the needs, but maybe wonder, I wonder what the outcome was of that.

But great to hear that people in our church family have responded to that and got involved. At the end of the time we've got in God's word here, we're going to share in the Lord's Supper, as Robbie said.

So at the end of the sermon, we'll sing. During the songs that we sing, children will be brought back through from the group. So look out for your child if they're coming through, if you think they might not remember where you were sitting as a parent.

[5 : 13] And if your child's in Crest, you could go and get them at that point. Now we're continuing our sermon series in Luke's Gospel. It's our habit as a church, our regular diet to preach through books of the Bible, chapter by chapter, so that God sets the agenda for us.

And we're in Luke chapter 6 on page 1034, as was said. So if that's fallen closed, it would help me if you could have that open. You can find an outline inside the notice sheet to follow along.

And let's pray together. Let's ask for God's help as we turn to his word. Heavenly Father, we ask that your words to us now will not just be information, like the torrent of information all around us, day by day, but rather that you will feed our souls, that Jesus will be for us the bread of life.

And so we ask, will you give us ears to hear you now, minds to know you, and hearts willing to follow you. For we ask in Jesus' name.

Amen. Well, one of the things that designer brands spend a lot of time investing in is trying to protect themselves from counterfeits. Some of them are very easy to spot.

[6 : 29] I've got a photo here of one that was a bit more obvious. This was one of my favorites, the next slide. Dolce and Banana there.

Or this one, Microsoft Bimbos there. Not going to fool anyone. And then this figure, this toy, Special Man.

So some counterfeits are pretty easy to spot, but some are much harder. It's harder to find, to distinguish between the real and the fake. One of the most counterfeited products in the world today are Levi's jeans.

And I've been told a secret if you own a pair of Levi's to see if they're the real thing. Please don't all try this at once now, depending on what you're wearing. But next time you're in your favorite charity shop and you see some Levi jeans your size, apparently, if you look at the back of the waist button on a pair of Levi's jeans, if they're authentic, it will have a three or four digit number stamped on the back of the button.

And that number will match the number printed on the care label. And that's how you tell if they're genuine. There you go. Well, how do you spot, how do you spot a real follower of Jesus?

[7 : 54] Someone who is truly enjoying the kingdom life that Jesus has come to bring. Well, it might not be as obvious as we would think. From verse 46 of our passage today, we know that it's not about who goes to church because there are people who hear Jesus' words.

It's not even about who calls Jesus Lord, verse 46. There are people who will say that he is their Lord. But then he tells us throughout this sermon, this teaching, what we should look like if we have genuinely experienced Jesus' kingdom life.

So it's a morning that I hope will move each of us to ponder, to self-reflect, and ask ourselves, how am I going with Jesus? And how am I growing in these marks of authentic kingdom life?

So our first mark is that true disciples see everyone with clearer vision. In verses 36 and 37, Jesus follows on from his teaching that we saw last week about treating others differently.

It's like the horizontal playing out to others of what's happened in our life vertically between us and God. Verse 36, be merciful just as your Father is merciful.

[9 : 14] Do not judge and you will not be judged. Do not condemn and you will not be condemned. Forgive and you will be forgiven. Now when Jesus says don't judge, clearly he doesn't mean that we should never exercise discernment.

In this very sermon, he tells us to make judgment calls about who we will follow and choose to be our teachers. So making judgments is right and it's inevitable.

But as we grow in the Christian life, what we should grow out of is judgmentalism. We're judgmental when we look down on others.

When we think of other people as in a different category to us. So we withhold mercy from them. We treat them differently. I suppose we see that kind of attitude when someone sees someone do something wrong and they describe it as unforgivable that they would do that.

They're treating them in a manner that distinguishes them from themselves. Now why is this a mark of being an authentic disciple of Jesus?

[10 : 23] Well in verse 39, if you just look down, Jesus warns the crowd against following the religious leaders of his day because he says they're like blind guides.

And their blindness, we've seen already in Luke's gospel is a blindness to their own faults. In chapter 6 verse 11, they're filled with fury about Jesus.

In chapter 5, what's caused that fury to erupt in the religious leaders is that Jesus welcomes anyone to come to him. In fact, what he promises is that for anyone who goes to him knowing the biggest need they have from God is mercy, he will grant them full forgiveness and a fresh start with God.

But the Pharisees reject that because they distinguish themselves self-righteously from people who would need that kind of mercy.

Jesus then says in verse 36 that when you receive that mercy from your heavenly Father, you in turn are changed and you can show mercy to others.

[11 : 35] This comes hot on the heels of Jesus calling us to astound the world. We saw this last week by the way we treat people who make themselves our enemies because we follow Jesus.

There was a striking example of this last Sunday in the World News at the memorial service for Charlie Kirk who was murdered in America. Now, the situation with Charlie Kirk is complex and we saw all of that complexity on display at the memorial service.

People in our church family have got different opinions about him. It seems to me very clear that Charlie Kirk was a Christian. I didn't actually know very much about him before he was horrifically shot but he is someone who evidently spoke very bravely and publicly and graciously about his faith in Jesus seeking to persuade others.

But he was also at the forefront of a movement that aligns evangelical faith with political figures and political views that many of us disagree with.

And we saw both sides of that of Charlie Kirk at the memorial service. His widow, Erica, got up in front of the stadium full of people and she spoke very movingly about her husband's murder and she said through her sobs, the answer to hate is not hate.

[12 : 59] The answer we know from the gospel is love and always love. Love for our enemies and love for those who persecute us. I forgive him about her husband's killer.

Then the president got up to speak, the epitome of worldly power and he said, that's where Charlie was different from me. I hate my opponents.

I do not want the best for them. Well, Jesus says that his authentic followers will be marked by verse 37, by being forgiving.

And of course, that is hard. We will find that hard. But we do it conscious of our promised future. Jesus says, verse 37, forgive and you will be forgiven.

He calls us to bring our minds forward knowing Jesus' promises to the reality that one day every Christian will stand before the judgment seat of Jesus and he will know on that day everything about us, all the ways we've messed up, all the ways our hearts are messed up and he will forgive us for everything.

[14 : 13] Not because it doesn't matter but because he's paid for it already out of love at the cross. on top of that, verse 38, our heavenly father will be so generous to us in the future, we can give generously to others today even when we know we won't get it back from them.

He says, verse 38, give and it will be given to you. And he uses this picture that's the language of the marketplace. I think the modern equivalent of verse 38 is if you go to Loop and Scoop or any ice cream place and you're one of these places where you choose your flavor and you might find yourself thinking, I wonder what kind of mood the ice cream server is in.

Are they going to like just get this little scoop of ice cream on my corn or are they going to go back to the tub again and again and like pile it high on my ice cream?

What kind of an ice cream server have I got? Well, when we picture what God is like, do we believe that he's going to be underwhelming towards us or do we believe that our heavenly father will be astoundingly generous to us?

Well, the picture Jesus gives us in verse 38 is of going to the market in first century Galilee to the wheat cellar and you would have gone with a cone to have filled a measure with wheat and he talks about going with a really big measure and we go to the wheat cellar and the wheat cellar fills it but then we've got him on a good day so he presses down the wheat to get rid of all to make more space and he adds more wheat in and then he shakes it to make sure all the wheat just gets down and then he adds more and more and more so much that it starts spilling over and we put out our robe the kind of spare material from our robe like a pouch and there's grain everywhere and we go back home going I caught the wheat cellar on a really good day in other words Jesus says that's the picture to reassure you God is waiting to be overwhelmingly abundantly generous to you

[16 : 29] Christian my people off the charts generous so knowing that you can be open handed to others in this life not needing payback from them next the gospel reshapes how we view ourselves so have a look with me at verse 32 how can you say to your brother brother let me take the speck out of your eye when you yourself fail to see the plank in your own eye you hypocrite first take the plank out of your own eye then you'll see clearly to remove the speck from your brother's eye this is a great picture isn't it a man with a whole great plank of wood incomprehensibly protruding from his eye socket trying to help you with something a bit of dust caught in your eye a bit like if you were talking after church today with some some people and you heard a voice say to you oh sorry to interrupt but it's just really bothering me you've just got a little bit of tomato sauce just like just stuck on the corner of your mouth there it's a bit annoying and you look at them and they've got a pizza stuck on the side of their face and they haven't even noticed well as absurd as that would be

Jesus says so is how quick we can be to see faults in other people and be so blind to our own more than that the continuity between the sawdust and the plank of wood emphasizes the way that it's often the kind of faults we're most guilty of ourselves that we're so good at spotting in other people when we're being proud we get really offended by someone else's pride a greedy person is often especially aggrieved by someone else's greed now God has put us in relationship with other Christians to be instruments in his hands to help them grow and become more like Jesus we're grace gifts to one another in that kind of way so it's not that we would never be concerned for the godliness and growth of a good friend or our spouse but how do we ever challenge sin that we see in them well we start with self-examination we pause we think about our own planks in our own eyes so that we're slow to challenge then it's great to try and challenge by example thinking to ourselves if there is a sin in our brother or sister in Christ's life that we'd love to see them grow out of can we by our example model something better and when we think it is right to move towards another Christian and in love help them take the speck out of their eye we do that with humility we do it privately we do it constructively and with gentleness because the gospel has given us new lenses with which to see ourselves clearly and see them clearly that's our first point how do we grow in this our second point true disciples store up good treasure in their hearts the principle comes in verse 33 if you look down about good trees and bad trees good fruit and bad fruit now I planted a tree three years ago and for two years none of you would have known that it's a pear tree but this summer it grew one pear one solitary pear and one of our kids was so pleased that she pulled it off the tree so we couldn't even eat it the point is though so now you can't tell again that it's a pear tree and so it will be till next summer but you can recognize what a tree really is once there is fruit once it's bearing fruit

Jesus says so it is with discerning whether someone is an authentic Christian look at verse 45 a good man brings good things out of the good stored up in his heart and an evil man brings evil things out of the evil stored up in his heart for the mouth speaks what the heart is full of the writer Paul Tripp has written about this I've got the quote on the screen if Matthew could just bring it up I'll just read it for us he says everything you do and say in your life every choice that you make and everything you decide to invest in is a reflection of a system of internalized values in your heart your words your time commitments your finances your emotional highs and lows your relationships and your spiritual habits together form a portrait of what is really valuable to you so think with me for a moment if

I were to watch with you the video of your last two months what would I conclude is of true value to you we see what's going on in our hearts when we're under pressure when there's heat in our lives sometimes it brings out the best in us and we can think goodness I'm not the person I was there's real change there other times we see bad fruit and what we tend to do is blame the pressure pressure at work pressure at home it's brought out the bad fruit we say it's uncharacteristic we tell a lie to protect our reputation but we don't think of ourselves as a liar or we explode in a rage because our kids are shouting at each I think I'm not a hot headed person who wouldn't have been pushed beyond breaking point by that but Jesus says those ungodly responses they come out of what's stored in our hearts a bit like if you've got a bottle of a fizzy drink of

Lucozade and the tops open and you start shaking it what spills out Lucozade why does Lucozade come out well you could look at it and say because the bottle got shaken but it also was Lucozade that came out because it was Lucozade in there and so it is says Jesus with our words and our behavior when we're under pressure it's what's stored up in our hearts that comes out in the Bible when it talks about our heart it's the control center of who we are it's who we are things like family relationships achievement community the beauty of creation would be something to treasure the problem comes when we over treasure things and they start to displace Jesus Christ in our hearts now this it seemed to me this week preparing a sermon on

[24 : 06] Luke 6 feels very convicting to consider that if someone's finding it hard in life not to gossip about other people in those moments when they are gossiping it's because they are treasuring something else in their heart instead of Jesus and that is what is being revealed and if someone is watching pornography online it's because there are things they are treasuring in their heart more than Jesus I was helped with a book there's a book by Tim Chester Captured by a Better Vision about living porn free where what he does actually is just chapter by chapter he talks about the different each chapter is a different thing that someone might be treasuring in their heart that might make turn to watch pornography what are we treasuring in our hearts Jesus doesn't say this here to condemn us he's gathered his people who have come to him depending on him for grace and there is hope with

Jesus for change because his grace is not just a grace for the past for a Christian that gave us forgiveness to come into the Christian life and it's not just a grace for the future when we stand on judgment day he gives us grace in the present to change one of the promises Jesus came to fulfill was the promise through the prophet Ezekiel in Ezekiel 36 that God seeing that his people had rejected him would send the spirit to create in us new hearts hearts that want to please God hearts that are inclined to keep his word so we won't be able to change our behavior in life just by focusing on the bad fruit and saying stop that I need to stop that that's a bit like taking apples out of the fridge and attaching them to a tree in the garden it doesn't change what's on the inside instead as authentic disciples we need to go and let's remember that as we do that

God has sent his spirit to live in us to change us from the inside out and the way the spirit transforms us is by working through what we treasure in verse 45 a good man brings good things out of the good stored up in his heart it could be translated out of the good treasure!

change what we can do with the spirit's help is be treasure hunters storing up thoughts about Jesus and who he is with all the glorious beauty of God on display in him his poise his majestic character the grandeur of God displayed in him and as we store up in our hearts truth about Jesus we also store up in our hearts truth about his posture towards us that he delights in us incredibly his compassion towards us his friendship that he stands before his father today and he's praying for us he's pleading for us pleading his own sacrifice for our justification pleading that God would patiently be at work by his spirit in us making us the people that he saved us to be so true religion true kingdom life is about that kind of work in our hearts storing up treasure looking for treasure filling our mind with good things about

Jesus so that the fruit people see in us demonstrates that we belong to him and a key way we can store up that kind of treasure! is by taking Jesus at his word so that's our third point true disciples build solid foundations this is the parable verses 46 to 49 and there are two kinds of people in the parable and it's striking how much they both have in common both of them hear Jesus words so this is not to compare the person who's in church on Sunday with the person who's at Tesco on Sunday or playing sport on a Sunday more than that both kinds of people profess faith in Jesus in verse 46 why do you call me Lord Lord and the repetition there Lord Lord it suggests reverence and passion and enthusiasm but only one of them is actually preparing their life to withstand the storm of

[29 : 08] God's judgment verse 47 as for everyone who comes to me and hears my words and puts them into practice I will show you what they are like they are like a man building a house who dug down deep and laid the foundation on rock when the flood came the torrent struck that house but could not shake it because it was well built but the one who hears my words and does not put them into practice is like a man who built a house on the ground without a foundation the moment the torrent struck that house it collapsed and its destruction was complete now even today building foundations is hard work isn't it and earlier this year I remember numerous days cycling in to the office here you could hear because they're doing a lot of building work at the university you could hear the bangs of the pile drivers as they put foundations in and when you look at building sites in

Glasgow so often they're kind of fenced off for months and you don't see any progress and the building shoots up within weeks because all of that work is going on underground to make sure the building will last well in the first century there was no mechanized help digging a foundation into rock was hard work it took a lot of effort and it would be tempting not to bother because when you look at a house whether or not it's got a foundation is not immediately obvious but the man in verse 48 digs down deep the other man in verse 49 of Jesus story decides it's not worth bothering!

happily professed to be a Christian we're hearing the word at church we've got a Bible reading plan at home but we're not building our lives on the words we're not changing in light of the words of Jesus and Jesus says the storm is coming and both houses would have looked fine if it wasn't that there's a flood coming and it is coming as we saw last week earlier in Luke chapter 6 the sums in the Christian life really add up when you think about the future Jesus is alive God raised him to life we're all going to stand before his judgment seat and we'll all experience on judgment day the torrent of God's righteous judgment his holy wrath against sin it will be good news for our world and we will have nothing to fear in that judgment if our we are people who genuinely put our trust in

Jesus so we're not saved by the works we do nobody should leave today thinking that that we're saved by what we do that would go against what Jesus is teaching in the rest of Luke's gospel but we prove what we really think of Jesus words by whether they've made a difference to how we live and it strikes me in Luke chapter 6 that Jesus does not intend to leave open to us the option of separating out trusting him from trusting his words they come together and that's how Jesus ends this magnificent sermon in Luke 6 and I think Jesus is saying to you and me today what are you going to do with my words that I've given to you are you going to save church yet church was good I was moved by the songs or will you prove that you believe

Jesus is Lord by being a doer and not just a hearer we're going to share the Lord's supper and that gives us an opportunity for self reflection you can ask yourself what does the fruit in my life reveal about what's raining in my heart and wherever we feel conviction of there's been bad fruit in my life or that we've been drifting coming forward for bread and wine gives us a chance to turn to God again afresh knowing his promise he says return to me and I will return to you and having bread and wine with Jesus it's a chance again to store up treasure the treasure of the gospel in our hearts so as the band come up let's bow our heads and let me read some of the words we've heard from Jesus these past few weeks in Luke's gospel!

[34 : 32] holy holy so that we bear good fruit.

And may he move us so to revere and trust you that we build our lives on the rock of your words for a firm foundation.

We ask these things for our good and for your name's sake. Amen.