



# Central Peninsula Church

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Luke 6:37–49

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## The Spirit of a Disciple

SERIES: *A Savior for All People*

All of us have people we admire; those we consider models for our lives, or some aspect of our lives. As I've coached Little League baseball I've watched many a boy step into the batter's box, hike up his belt, tap his cleats, spit through his teeth, and hitch his bat just the way Barry Bonds does. I've even seen young preachers do the same. When I was in school at PBC back in the late 1970's, it was common for many of us aspiring preachers to drape our Bible over our left hand, punctuate the air with our open right hand, pace the platform with casual confidence, and speak with a mellow cadence...just like Ray Stedman!

It's human to do that. But it doesn't really work for long. The perception of the copyist is blind. We misunderstand the real source of the power we so admire. We imitate visible characteristics and repeat them over and over again to somehow capture the greatness of our hero. In reality, we can never become a great hitter by copying the stance of Barry Bonds or a great preacher by copying the gestures of Ray Stedman. Phillips Brooks wrote, "If you really reverence a great person, if you look up to and rejoice in his great work, if you truly honor him, *you will get at his spirit*, and doing that you will cease to imitate his outside ways."

This morning as we continue in the Gospel of Luke, this is what Jesus is talking about. We're looking at the last half of Jesus' sermon on the mount in Luke 6. In vv. 37-49 Jesus pieces together a number of ideas to capture the spirit of someone who wants to follow him. He goes beyond externals to the very heart of discipleship.

### I. A true follower of Jesus has a magnanimous spirit (vv. 37-38).

**"Do not judge, and you will not be judged; and do not condemn, and you will not be condemned; pardon, and you will be pardoned. Give, and it will be given to you. They will pour into your lap a good measure--pressed down, shaken together, and running over. For by your standard of measure it will be measured to you in return."**

Have you ever heard the word "magnanimous?" It's kind of an old word, but it's a good one. It comes from the latin word *magnus* ("great") and *animus* ("spirit")—great spirited, great souled. It describes a generous and forgiving spirit.

**A. He is accepting:** He says several things about

a magnanimous spirit. Negatively, it doesn't judge; it doesn't condemn. If you put that in positive terms you might say it's accepting. "Judge not lest you be judged." I doubt there is a person in this room who is not familiar with those words. This might be the most oft quoted line in the entire Bible. What's really funny is that these words are probably quoted more by unbelievers than by believers. I doubt there is any line in the Bible more misunderstood than this one.

A local radio talk show host criticizes Christians because they make judgments about what other people believe. He says, "You can't truly be a Christian and judge whether or not the members of a cult are right or wrong. Jesus said, 'Judge not, lest you be judged,' so how can you call yourself a Christian and make judgments about what others believe?" Is that what Jesus means by judging? Are we to never say what a person believes or does is wrong?

This can't be what Jesus meant. Take the very context of this statement and you can see that. In v.43 Jesus talks about good trees producing good fruit and bad trees producing bad fruit. Right there he makes a moral judgment! Jesus is not talking about fruit trees, he's talking about people. Some people are good trees and others are bad trees. That's a moral judgment.

Scripture teaches us that there are several arenas in which judgment is to be exercised. Scripture endorses judgment in connection to the the law of the land. We have courts and judges and juries for that very purpose. Scripture also says judgment is to be exercised in the church. In Matthew 18:15-20 Jesus says, "**If your brother sins, go and reprove him in private...**" Jesus didn't say to be just hang loose and tolerant of everyone and everything. "To each his own. As long as he doesn't hurt anybody." Jesus wasn't that way, nor should we be.

Remember that this statement is part of a larger sermon in which Jesus teaches us to be poor in spirit, to be meek, to hunger and thirst for righteousness. He talks about a righteousness that went beyond an external observance of the law and penetrated to the heart. The Pharisees were the antithesis of this. They were impressed with their own ability to keep the law. They were self-righteous, and out of that they judged others. They were like a religious policeman who ran around writing moral traffic tickets. This is what Jesus is talking about when he says, "Judge not." He's talking about a spirit of condemnation that arises out of self-

righteousness. It's the opposite of being poor in spirit. It's being proud. It's secretly taking pleasure when we see another person fall. It's being eager to find fault. It's like the censors who rate the movies. Imagine what that's like. You sit there and watch a movie with the purpose of rating it. Your whole focus is to judge the level of junk—swearing, sex and violence. Judgmental people are like that. They look for the junk. They watch the lives of others like a movie and they rate them. The love finding fault.

John Wooden, former coach at UCLA, was the most successful coach in the history of college basketball. Unlike many of his colleagues, he seldom left his seat on the Bruins bench during a game. He says, "I tried to teach players that if they lose their temper or get out of control they will get beat. Modeling was better than words. I liked the rule we used to have that a coach couldn't leave the bench. I'm sorry they did away with that." In one interview he was pressed to be critical of Indiana University coach Bobby Knight, whose methods are the antithesis of Wooden's. This is all he said, "I think Bob Knight is an outstanding teacher of the game of basketball, but I don't approve of his methods. But I'm not a judge, and I'm not judging Bobby Knight. There is so much bad in the best of us and so much good in the worst of us, it hardly behooves me to talk about the rest of us." That's the spirit Jesus is talking about when he says, "Judge not."

**B. He is forgiving:** But Jesus takes it one step further and says not only should you stop judging but you should pardon, you should forgive. While the world loves the first command to judge not, it's not quite so eager to quote this one. We can go through life and never say anything judgmental at all, but when someone wrongs us, that's a different story; in our heart we put them in jail, lock the door and throw away the key. We can be passively nonjudgmental, but inwardly cold and seething. Jesus says, "I want you to go beyond being nonjudgmental and forgive. Whatever it is they've done to hurt you or cheat you, let it go. Just as God does with us, forget about it. You might have to work at that. It's a process, but do it as an act of your will, and your feelings will follow in time."

**C. He is giving:** And then he takes it one step further. In v.38 he says to "Give..." He's not talking about giving in general. He's talking about giving to those you would rather condemn; giving to those who have wronged you. A long time ago, someone said to me, "If someone wrongs you, don't just forgive them, bake them a pie." Now I've never taken that literally because if I baked a pie for someone it wouldn't endear them to me, but the principle is right on. Don't just forgive them, move

towards them with a giving spirit.

A magnanimous spirit is accepting, forgiving and giving. Notice that in each one of these commands there is a payoff. If you don't judge, you won't be judged. If you forgive, you'll be forgiven. If you give, you'll receive an overflowing measure. The image is from measuring out grain in the marketplace. You measure it out in such a way as to ensure that full volume is given—pressed down, shaken. Your "lap" refers to a fold in the outer garment as it hung over your belt. It was used like a pocket. He says, if you give, your pockets will be full and overflowing.

Jesus wants us to examine our standard of measurement. In the same way we treat others, we will be treated. What's our standard? Is it justice or mercy? If our goal is to condemn, God will condemn us. If our goal is to forgive, God will forgive us. It's not that you earn God's grace by accepting and forgiving others. But rather the person who manifests an unforgiving, condemning spirit shows he doesn't know God's grace to begin with. He hasn't experienced it. And so he still stands under God's judgment. A forgiven person is a forgiving person. Someone once said to the great hymnwriter, Charles Wesley, "I never forgive, and I never forget." To which Wesley replied, "Then sir, I hope you never sin."

That's what Jesus says. If our spirit is stingy, that's what we can expect from God. If our standard is generous; if we're magnanimous in spirit with others, we show that we've been touched by a magnanimous God, we will get the same from him.

## **II. A true follower of Jesus has a genuine spirit (vv. 39-45).**

One of the problems with a judgmental spirit is that we don't always see things as clearly as we think. This leads to the second thing Jesus says about the spirit of a disciple. Besides being magnanimous, the spirit of a disciple is genuine, it's real, it's lacking in hypocrisy, it has a kind of inner integrity. That comes out in several ways in vv.39-45.

**A. He is worth emulating:** First, he is worth emulating. Look at vv. 39-40.

**"And He also spoke a parable to them: 'A blind man cannot guide a blind man, can he? Will they not both fall into a pit? A pupil is not above his teacher; but everyone, after he has been fully trained, will be like his teacher.'"**

Jesus uses the familiar images of the blind leading the blind and a student becoming like his teacher. This is a warning about who you follow. Jesus called the Pharisees "blind guides." You don't want to follow a blind person. You want to follow someone who sees; someone who has keen spiritual eyesight; someone who sees life as it really is. If you emulate a blind person, the results will be disastrous.

Erik Weienmayer is blind, but on May 25, 2001, he reached the peak of Mt. Everest. On a mountain where

90% of the climbers never make it to the top, Erik succeeded. He did so by listening to a little bell tied to the back of the climber in front of him so he would know what direction to go. If somehow that climber didn't know what he was doing, Erik would have fallen to his death.

You need to be careful who you listen to and follow. This principle has been a great help to me in decision making. I learned early on that one of the things I should pay attention to when trying to decide whether to do this or that was WHO I would be exposing myself to; whose influence would I be under. When I chose a seminary, I asked myself that question. I chose to come to this church partly because I knew I would be molded by some great people who were worth emulating. Sometimes we would like to think that we can go somewhere and instead of being molded by those around us, we're the ones who'll mold them. But Jesus says, "A pupil is not above his teacher." When you come under someone's life and teaching, you will become like them.

**B. He is willing examine himself:** But that's not all. A person with genuine integrity who is worth emulating is able and willing to examine himself. Look at vv. 41-42.

**"Why do you look at the speck that is in your brother's eye, but do not notice the log that is in your own eye? Or how can you say to your brother, 'Brother, let me take out the speck that is in your eye,' when you yourself do not see the log that is in your own eye? You hypocrite, first take the log out of your own eye, and then you will see clearly to take out the speck that is in your brother's eye."**

No one can accuse Jesus of not having a sense of humor! Call this the "splinter and plank syndrome." Here is a proud, arrogant man, with a long two-by-four hanging out of his eyeball. He doesn't even know it's there. He strides up to another guy to do some "splinter inspection." The very least we could say about this guy is that he can't see as clearly as he thinks. Until he deals with his two-by-four he can't see anything. And it's hypocritical. He says, "You hypocrite, first take the log out of your own eye..." We pretend to have this great interest in helping others; that we are so distressed at finding the speck in our brother's eye; that we really just want to help them, but the fact is, we're glad to discover it! Maybe that, in and of itself, is the two-by-four in our own eye. That's what Jesus meant when he condemned the Pharisees: **"You strain out a gnat and swallow a camel. You focus on the tiniest things in others, but you have neglected the major things in yourself: justice, mercy and faithfulness"** (Mt. 23:23-24).

A study done by the University of Arizona found that a spotless kitchen may harbor as much bacteria as a dirty one. Why? Because the most germ-laden object in a kitchen is often a sponge. Researchers tested sponges collected from 500 kitchens around the country and discovered that one out of five contained salmonella. Almost two-thirds had some bacteria that could make

people sick. Some attempts to clean can cause more harm than good! Self-righteousness is the salmonella of the soul.

**C. His words reveal a good heart:** A person with genuine integrity understands that. That's why Jesus says a third thing about this.

**"For there is no good tree which produces bad fruit, nor, on the other hand, a bad tree which produces good fruit. For each tree is known by its own fruit. For men do not gather figs from thorns, nor do they pick grapes from a briar bush. The good man out of the good treasure of his heart brings forth what is good; and the evil man out of the evil treasure brings forth what is evil; for his mouth speaks from that which fills his heart"** (vv. 43-45).

Jesus gives the litmus test for a person's character; a sure fire test. What is it? It's what comes out of their mouth! That's the key. Why? Because the condition of the heart ultimately will be seen by the quality of our words. If a person is caustic, cynical, critical, full of gossip, then you know they haven't been touched by the love of God. It's not that a child of God never slips into that, but when they do slip into it they see it and they judge it; they take action to remove the plank in their own eye!

Sometimes a person tries to mask what is to their heart with their words. That leads to what Jesus says next.

**III. A true follower of Jesus has an obedient spirit (vv. 46-49).**

**"Why do you call Me, 'Lord, Lord,' and do not do what I say? Everyone who comes to Me and hears My words and acts on them, I will show you whom he is like: he is like a man building a house, who dug deep and laid a foundation on the rock; and when a flood occurred, the torrent burst against that house and could not shake it, because it had been well built. But the one who has heard and has not acted accordingly, is like a man who built a house on the ground without any foundation; and the torrent burst against it and immediately it collapsed, and the ruin of that house was great."**

Jesus says there are two men. They have a few things in common. Both of these men were building a home to live in. They were probably building very similar homes. To those strolling by, the two houses looked the same. Not only that, both of these men had their work tested by a storm. Neither was able to escape or ignore the pounding rain, the rising flood level, and the swift wind as it slammed against their house.

Jesus says each of us are like one of these men. Each of us are building our lives. We have families and

jobs and friendships and hobbies and bank accounts. We all want to create something secure and lasting. We don't want our lives to collapse. And like the men in the story each of us will be tested by storms. Regardless of how you build, storms will come your way. Christians and atheists are alike in this. God doesn't pamper his people.

Sometimes a storm breaks with a great fury of temptation. A woman in her forties is single and alone. She tries to stay close to the Lord but she longs for the affection of a man. One day she meets a guy. He pays attention to her; listens to her; treats her with respect. She finds herself awake at night thinking about him. The fact that he doesn't know Christ seems less and less important. That's the storm of temptation. Sometimes a storm breaks into our lives as a crushing personal loss. A few years back in the Silicon Valley we saw the economy take a plunge. People lost their jobs. Savings accounts dwindled. That's the storm of personal loss. Sometimes the storm comes in the form of an illness. It might be chronic pain or it might be something more that causes the flood waters of death to slowly rise above your head, like being diagnosed with cancer. That's a storm. For all of us, there is one storm that we cannot avoid. It's the storm of judgment. Ultimately, this storm pictures God's final judgment. All of us will stand before the judgment seat of Christ and give an account of our lives.

But notice something else in this story. The two men and their houses are also different. One man built the foundation of his home on the rock, while the other built his home on no foundation at all. That sounds absurd, unless you're building a doghouse! Why would someone build a home with no foundation? Perhaps he's in a hurry. He doesn't want to take the time and make the effort to dig deeply and find the rock beneath the surface. Or perhaps he doesn't really think through future possibilities. He doesn't expect the weather to change. He sees this nice stream meandering by and he never stops to think through the fact that in the winter the rains might cause that stream to flood. He thinks things will always be the way they are. But storms do come. And it's the storm that reveals the real difference between the two houses. One home endured the storm because it was founded on the rock, while the other fell, and "the ruin of that house was great."

Each of us are like one of these men. Those who build on no foundation at all are those who hear the words of Jesus, but do not act upon them. They even claim to have some connection with the Lord. They call him, "Lord, Lord" but they don't act upon it.

They don't really do anything about it. Maybe they're in a hurry. They don't want to take time to do the hard work of digging deep and dealing with things beneath the surface. They want forgiveness without repentance, growth without discipleship, resurrection without the cross. Or maybe they look into the future and they really don't see any storms coming. But those who build on the rock are those who hear the words of Jesus and act upon them. That's the spirit of a true disciple—obedience to the words of Jesus. It's really an amazing claim that Jesus makes here for himself—he says everything hangs on what you do with my words. Words like the ones we have seen right here in the Sermon on the Mount: love your enemies, do not judge, rejoice when you're hated because of me.

Each one of us has unlimited access to the words of Jesus. We come to church and listen to sermons. We have books and Bibles and software programs. We can turn the radio on and hear some of the best preachers in the world. We're saturated with his words. That's a good thing, but that can also be a dangerous thing. Because in the end it will not matter how much of it we heard, but rather how much of it we lived.

## CONCLUSION

Yesterday all of us were saddened by the death of Pope John Paul II. We may not agree with the concept of the papacy and many of the teachings of the Roman Catholic church, but we all must agree that this Pope made a profound impact on many people's lives. He was a compelling figure. He also courageously stood for many things that we believe are important. In the next few weeks all the Cardinals will gather in Vatican City to elect a new Pope. I would imagine that they will try to find one among themselves who is much like Pope John Paul II. They will try to select a man who is able to engage the modern world as he did. One who connected with the young as he did. One who is as committed to a life of prayer as he was. One who reached out in forgiveness to the very man who tried to kill him, as he did. But the real challenge will be finding a man who somehow captures not just his beliefs or his behavior, but his spirit. "If you really reverence a great person, if you look up to and rejoice in his great work...*you will get at his spirit*, and doing that you will cease to imitate his outside ways."

Jesus says if you want to capture the spirit of a true disciple, you need to be magnanimous and genuine and obedient. The good news is that Jesus himself has placed his Spirit within us to mold us and shape us. As we yield to him we will embody the spirit of a true disciple.

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