

Luke 6:27-38  
February 20, 2022

Grace and peace to you from God our Father, and from our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ! Amen.

Growing up our family didn't have cable TV or a dish and there was no such thing as internet or YouTube TV, Netflix, or Hulu. Thus, my viewing options were limited to just a handful of choices: NBC, ABC, CBS, and Iowa Public Television. I recollect watching shows I may not today given the over abundance of channels even base packages start out with. I mean really, who needs 64 or 86 or however many channels are offered? Yet, that's how it is today. Regardless, one of those shows I often watched was painting with Bob Ross. Some may not know who Bob Ross is. Each week the viewer would find Bob, with his soft voice and ability to tell a story as he painted, sitting on a stool with a blank canvass before him and in his hands a brush and a pallet dotted with primary colors he would soon begin to apply to that canvas. Bob would brush, stroke after stroke, and I would attempt to make out the vision that was in his mind taking shape on that once blank slate. Usually, 15-20 minutes in I would be able to catch a glimpse into what that final portrait would be. Sometimes, my short attention span would get the best of me and I would wander away, but other times I would stay to the very end to see the finished masterpiece.

Jesus doesn't waste much time giving his disciples and the large crowd gathered at a level place down the mountain a portrait of the kingdom God is ushering in through him. He began last week with brush strokes that revealed the least of those would be called blessed in the kingdom of God. Building upon those initial colors on canvass, the portrait further unfolds in the next twelve verses we just heard. In Jesus, God's masterpiece continues to be laid out for all willing to listen and it's a masterpiece Jesus calls them into. Invites them to live into and live out.

It's a masterpiece that displays the heart of who God is. This isn't a new portrait Jesus is painting. It's one that began centuries ago. A favorite verse of many is Exodus 34:6-7, "The Lord is merciful, slow to anger and abounding in steadfast love." Mercy is central to who God is. Steadfast love is a given. We love to quote such passages, hang them on walls, etc. They remind us God's promises that sustain us, give us hope when we stumble or encounter a brush stroke gone awry that creates chaos upon our canvass. Those beloved passages paint into our hearts the joy it is to live under the wings of a God who shows time after time mercy upon sinful humanity. Jesus makes it abundantly clear, "Be merciful, just as your Father is merciful."

There are two questions I am posed more than any other. "What's heaven like or life after death?" And, "What's God's will for my life?" Jesus might just give us an image into both. Yet, why do we struggle, even resist, living out this blueprint for what God's wills for our lives? Why do we look for a way out and suggest this is only applicable to Jesus' first disciples? Or Luke's community? Or this is the completed portrait for a kingdom that will be revealed at the end of times when Jesus comes again. This isn't reality now. We look for a way out because it's easier. Just as it's easier to hate another who has hurt us than to forgive another. Just as it's easier to ignore another who has wronged us than it is to pray for them.

But, let's not forget there was a large crowd gathered alongside the twelve. We too are part of the crowd. Jesus tells those willing to listen, who reap the rewards of God's mercy and steadfast love comes with it a lifestyle lived out doing the same. The saying on the wall is not simply meant to hang there and be for our advantage. The portrait God is painting isn't simply an eschatological one. The promise found in those words and that picture of God's masterpiece prompt us to live out and extend that great reward to one another.

Jesus calls his followers to jump onto what he is up to and put it into practice. Jesus shows us how to put God's mercy into practice, not only in this sermon, but through the life he lives. Ronald Allen does equate this merciful portrait as an image of the final coming of the kingdom, which he names as the realm. He makes note Jesus' sermon" offers guidance in how the congregation can live and witness faithfully in its situation considering the partial presence and final coming of the Realm of God" and that, "Three things happen when the community acts on these directives. First, the witnessing community extends the mercy of God — and the hope of being part of the Realm — to those who otherwise face destructive lives. Second, those who extend mercy (and the Realm) find that their experience of mercy deepens as part of their present, if partial, experience of the Realm. Third, the church models the promise of the Realm for other communities."<sup>i</sup>

We want the best life now. It's what we are told our entire lives. The marketplace grows exponentially year after year with the latest product promising a better, easier life for us. Embedded in that is an individualistic mindset. How is this going to make my life simpler, better? How is it going to help me live the good life? Yet, his teaching and his life model a good life lived out in God's realm looks entirely different.

The goodness God has shown us is extended to one another and we are to look for opportunities to extend mercy. Extend goodness. The good life comes through a life outward focused on the other. This is the community Jesus envisions his followers to live into and to be and, as Allen continues, "Per Luke 6: 38, when the community gives, that is, when it lives on the basis of the Sermon on a Level Place, it will be in a position similar to the person who goes to the market for grain. The merchant fills the measuring container to the brim and shakes it down so that every cranny is filled, and then pours the overflowing grain into the apron of the buyer to carry home. In a similar way, God pours out the power of the Realm on the communities that live into it."<sup>ii</sup>

Jesus paints us into the picture through our baptisms. He paints the promises of God's steadfast love and mercy into our hearts and minds every time we gather to repent and hear words of forgiveness. Jesus calls us to pick up our brushes, join them to his, and continue to paint God's masterpiece. You are God's masterpiece and so is your neighbor. Even the one you deem your enemy. Be merciful, just as God is merciful.

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<sup>i</sup> Ronald J. Allen *Commentary on Luke 6:27-38* (2019); [www.workingpreacher.org](http://www.workingpreacher.org) .

<sup>ii</sup> Ibid.