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SERMON TITLE: **Let Your Lifestyle Be Giving**
SCRIPTURE: **Luke 6:37-38**
DATE: **May 29, 2022**
Online service at www.fpcd.org/live-stream

Read also Proverbs 11:24-31. Series: *Distinctly Christian Ethics*

Today we talk about the authentic Christian. Authentic; a good word: true, reliable, dependable, trustworthy, faithful. This is a Christian who is “like Jesus.” That is the goal.

We often feel that we fall short—but we certainly don’t want to be called that “h” word—hypocrite!

Today we remember those who have served our country with their very lives. The motto of the Marines is *Semper Fidelis*—Latin for “Always Faithful.” The Marines hold an “eternal and collective commitment to the success of our battles, the progress of our Nation, and the steadfast loyalty to the fellow Marines we fight alongside.”¹

The Marines do not hold back from setting faithfulness, commitment, and loyalty as their goals. We honor this sort of authentic action.

Often, though, the church at large does not share that reputation. I asked someone about that, and sought to understand what someone means when they call someone a hypocrite. She said, “Hypocrite means you aren’t sturdy enough in your own identity. You focus on what others do wrong and call them out, while you aren’t self-aware enough to do the right things yourself.”

If we summed that up, we would say, “authenticity is missing.” So, let’s turn to our passage for today and see just what Jesus’ expectations are. Read Luke 6:37a:

“Do not judge others, and you will not be judged. Do not condemn others, or it will all come back against you.”

1. Don’t judge
2. Don’t condemn

And you won’t be called a hypocrite!

Those admonitions take a “what not to do” approach but if you follow them, you will get a positive result: grace will abound toward you and you won’t be judged. If you don’t condemn, that negative

action will not come down on your head. Not doing these things is an act of gracious giving.

However, if you do slip up and judge, it will come back to you.

What conclusion can we draw then? We do not judge each other because . . .

Each person is responsible for their own actions and will bear the consequences.

That is, my decisions weigh on my head and your decisions weigh on yours. Thus, it is not helpful or productive for me to tell you what you are doing wrong and you to tell me what I am doing wrong! We haven’t walked in each other’s shoes.

Let’s move on. Jesus next tells us what positive steps to take instead of judging. He says, “Instead of doing that, do this.” Let’s read it. READ Luke 37b-38:

“Forgive others, and you will be forgiven. Give, and you will receive. Your gift will return to you in full -- pressed down, shaken together to make room for more, running over, and poured into your lap. The amount you give will determine the amount you get back.”

Wow! This is very positive news. Forgive and give.

Did you know that guilt causes people to have a block between them and the church? A research study by The Barna Group reveals that 41% of non-Christians “say they would be open to participating in a spiritual conversation about Christianity [online] *if the experience felt friendly*.”²

3. Forgive – and you will be forgiven
4. Give – and you will be given to. Give grace and people will listen.

What you decide to do and carry through will be poured out on you.

These are generous attributes. Paul and Barnabas had been going about evangelizing. Most of the people who accepted their message about Jesus were Gentiles. They were the “lost sheep” Jesus talked about. You know how valuable they are to Jesus? He

¹ <https://www.marines.com/about-the-marine-corps/who-are-the-marines/semper-fidelis.html>, accessed May 25, 2022.

² The Barna Group 2020. Barna Group research reveals the cultural and religious trends affecting your life everyday. See <https://www.barna.com/research-type/state-of-the-church-2020/>. Accessed May 26, 2022.

said, *even one is so valuable you would leave the 99 to rescue the one, and then rejoice as you bring it back* (Lk 15:4-7).³

So Paul and Barnabas encountered Gentiles who wanted to believe but their lifestyle was not congruent with the custom of Moses. Could they be saved? So the apostles held a conference. They heard all about the mass of pagan Gentiles who were turning to Christ through the ministry of Paul and Barnabas. They debated and here's the decision handed down by James. He said:

"This conversion of Gentiles is exactly what the prophets predicted. As it is written: 'Afterward I will return and restore the fallen kingdom of David, rebuilding and restoring its ruins so that all other peoples might seek the LORD, including the Gentiles -- all those I have called to be mine.' And so my judgment is that *we should not make it difficult for the Gentiles who are turning to God*" (Acts 15:15-19).

They gave forgiveness; a generous, grace-filled attitude.

Let's think of Jesus' attitude on the night he was betrayed. He knew he had been given authority from the Father. Jesus had authority over everything. Now the world fights this authority. But God sent Jesus not to judge the world, but to save it" (John 3:17). It says "God **gave** his son."

And there Jesus finds himself with eleven believers and one faithless one who plans to usurp Jesus' authority. Nevertheless, Jesus takes up a towel and begins to serve—to wash their feet, even Judas's.

He comes to Peter who resists Jesus' display of love. "He says, 'No. Never, ever.'"

Jesus says, "Unless I wash you, you have no share with me." Then Peter says, "Not only my feet, but my hands, head, everything."

Jesus displays the patience and grace of Job. "You don't need that, Peter."

Every person who makes the determination by faith to come to Jesus on his or her own, that person is clean. Each person is basically responsible for themselves. I cannot judge you—you cannot judge others. **You are to forgive!** Because Jesus loves and forgives you, just as he forgave Peter. This is a **giving** act.

We all know that in the moment Jesus washed Peter's feet, Peter was still far from perfect. He would, in fact, in just a few hours, deny Jesus. But bear with me now. This is the moment when we want to judge and condemn. But we all make mistakes like Peter. Life gets our feet dirty—and when we stumble and our feet are dirty, we are to "love one another." Jesus set this example for us.

Not judging but washing each other's feet means helping each other get back up on our feet when we stumble into sin. This is bringing forgiveness.

The disciples were clean by faith, but they submitted to Jesus' teaching because he is Lord. Discipleship is not an instant transformation. We don't judge because each person is responsible for their own decisions, but we do help each other up. **If you give in this way, it will come back to you in abundance.**

Good actions produce rewards.

Each person is responsible for their decision and will bear the consequences.

1. Don't judge,
2. Don't condemn,
3. Forgive, and
4. Give.

What you decide to do and carry through will be poured out on you.

These are distinctively Christian ethics. Embrace them and you are interpreting Jesus for all those people out there who will be drawn by what you give them.

You show Jesus at work.

AMEN

³ Luke 15:4-7 - If a man has a hundred sheep and one of them gets lost, what will he do? Won't he leave the ninety-nine others in the wilderness and go to search for the one that is lost until he finds it? And when he has found it, he will joyfully carry it home on his shoulders. When he arrives, he will call together his

friends and neighbors, saying, 'Rejoice with me because I have found my lost sheep.' In the same way, there is more joy in heaven over one lost sinner who repents and returns to God than over ninety-nine others who are righteous and haven't strayed away!