

God Requires Honesty and Compassion

by Zac Poonen

God requires honesty and compassion from us, and we must be willing to acknowledge our mistakes and treat others with kindness and mercy.

Duration: 58:35

Scripture: Isaiah 1:12-13, Micah 6:6, Matthew 7:12, Matthew 22:39, Romans 13:9, Galatians 5:14, James 2:8

Topics: "Compassion"

Description

In this sermon, the speaker emphasizes the importance of acknowledging our failures and treating others fairly. He highlights the need to take responsibility for our mistakes and not blame others. The speaker also challenges the audience to examine how they treat people who can offer them nothing, such as beggars or servants. He references biblical passages, such as Micah 6:8, to support the idea that God requires us to do justice and love mercy in our interactions with others.

Transcript

I was, I was thinking this evening about this verse, Micah chapter 6. The Old Testament prophets, they frequently spoke to God's people and told them what was wrong with them. And if you read through all the Old Testament prophets, though some of it is heavy, there is a basic message that comes through. And that's what I want to share with you.

That even though God had commanded them to offer sacrifices and regular visits to Jerusalem and meetings, etc., very many times through the prophets he says, I'm sick and tired of all your meetings. So he says here in Micah chapter 6, verse 6, How shall I come before the Lord? For God, shall I come with a lot of burnt offerings, a lot of calves to be sacrificed? You think God is delighted in thousands of rams and ten thousand rivers of oil? You think he wants my firstborn son? He has told you, O man, what is good. Verse 8, What does the Lord require of you? And I believe this is true even in the New Covenant.

To do justice means to treat other people fairly. That's the meaning of doing justice. One of the complaints that God had against his people was that the judges would take bribes and not treat people fairly.

So here he says one of the first things he requires from us is that we all treat other people fairly. And Jesus made that clear by saying, expanded it and clarified it and said, that means treat other people the way you want them to treat you. That's the meaning of do justice.

Love kindness also, or mercy, also relates to the way we treat other people. And that is, if they do something wrong, be quick to forgive them, because we need forgiveness ourselves. And so there are three things mentioned here, but the first two have got to deal with the way we treat other people.

Be fair to them. You want other people to be fair to you? None of us want anybody to cheat us. We shouldn't cheat anybody else.

How delighted we are if one day you go to the office and you hear that they've just given you an increment, or you got a raise in salary. I mean, doesn't that delight you? A lot of us are getting such huge salaries now, which is quite unexpected. Have you ever thought of blessing people who work for you like that? I mean, if you have somebody working in your home, have you ever thought of blessing them the way you got blessed in your office with a high salary? Treat other people the way you want to be treated.

I find very few Christians do that. We can go to a lot of meetings and pray and all that, but if we don't, if we're not fair to other people, if we're not kind and merciful to others, we find that God's very far away from us. We can be religious.

And the other thing he mentioned here is to walk humbly with your God. To walk humbly with your God means to be honest in acknowledging where you have failed. It's a very difficult thing for many believers because we've all got the poison of Adam, who when the Lord asked him a question, did you eat? He sort of beat around the bush and blamed somebody else.

And in my observation of Christians in many places, even in our churches, I have found these are the two areas where there's a lot of failure. There's an unwillingness to acknowledge, I was wrong. It's the old Adam, Adamic nature.

Adam finds it very difficult to say, I was wrong. Lord forgive me, that was my mistake, 100%. Can you think, all of you sitting here, when was the last time that you ever went to somebody and said, that was 100% my mistake, I'm sorry.

You may have said it to your wife because you want peace at home, that doesn't count. Because your motive is not right, your motive is, it doesn't mean you're honest, you want peace at home so for the sake of peace you say something. I'm not talking about that.

I'm talking about where there was no such issue. And if you're really honest before God, you may have to think and think, when was it, was it 1995? It's amazing. It's only God who doesn't make mistakes.

I'm saying this for your own good. There are two things I want to share this evening. One is, and I'm saying this from the study of Old Testament scriptures and the New Testament.

If you want it to go well with you in the Christian life, dear brother or sister, be honest in acknowledging your mistakes. Don't blame anybody else. And number two, be kind to others.

It doesn't matter if somebody, you know, did something that hurt us, okay, fine, forget it. The only place where Jesus was very strict was when it concerned the house of God. Otherwise, you know, it concerned himself.

It didn't matter. He was always kind to people who called him the devil or treated him badly. In Isaiah chapter 1, the Lord says, Isaiah chapter 1, I want to read this from the Message Bible.

Verse 12 onwards, when you come to appear before me, you know, in the middle of the last part of verse 13, I can't endure iniquity in the solemn assembly. And the Message Bible says, quit your worship charades, that means pretense of worship. Quit your pretending to worship me.

I can't stand your trivial religious games, monthly conferences, weekly sabbats, Sunday meetings, special meetings, meetings, meetings, meetings. I can't stand one more, God says. Meetings for this, meetings for that.

I hate them. You warn me out. I'm sick of your religion, religion, religion.

When you go right on sinning, when you put on your next prayer performance, I'll be looking the other way. I'm not going to listen to you. No matter how long or loud or how often you pray, I won't be listening.

And do you know why? Now listen. Because you've been tearing other people to pieces. Have you done that? Have you torn people to pieces with your tongue at home, anywhere? Well, the Lord says, if you do that, you come here and you pray and pray and pray and pray, I'm not even going to listen.

See, God is very particular about how we treat other people. Very, very particular. How do you treat other people? It's very, very important to God.

Are you fair? Are you merciful? Now, obviously, we are very humble before people who are above us in the office. I'm not asking how you treat your boss. I'm asking how you treat a peon in the office.

How do you treat your boss? Oh, we are all respectful before our bosses. Through the years, God has spoken to me. How do you treat people who have no obligation to you? If you want something from somebody, of course, it would be very nice to you, very kind.

But what if there is somebody who can offer you nothing, a beggar or a servant or your wife or husband, whose opinion you don't care for? How do you speak? How do you treat? Do you tear people to pieces with your words? Do you treat them like you want to be treated yourself? He says, your hands are bloody. I say, your tongue is bloody. Go home and wash up and clean up your act.

And then, verse 18, come and sit down. Let's reason this out. Though your sins be as scarlet, they shall be as white as snow.

Now, you know, Christians have the habit of taking verses out of context, without any reference to the previous verse or the succeeding verse. And that's why many promises don't work in our life. This is another of those verses.

It's a very favourite verse of many Christians, Isaiah 118. Come, let us reason together. Though your sins be as scarlet, and the Christians take a lot of notice.

Oh, I'm so thankful, Lord, though my sins are as scarlet, you make them white as snow. Who does he say that to? He says that to people who treat other people like they want to be treated themselves. Not to every Tom, Dick and Harry.

You can go and claim it, it won't work. A lot of promises in Scripture don't work because we take it completely out of its context and say, ha ha, this is it. To whom does he say it? He says it to those who stop tearing other people to pieces, who have repented of the way they are behaving with others who are socially inferior to them or, you know, from whom you need nothing.

This is so important. The burden of the Old Testament prophets was this. First of all, acknowledge your iniquity.

And second, treat other people fairly, the way you want to be treated yourself. So, it could sum it up in two statements. Acknowledge your failure.

Acknowledge where you slip up. Acknowledge your mistake and don't blame anybody else. And secondly, don't be hard on other people.

See, Jeremiah chapter 3, in verse 13, the Lord says, first of all, verse 12, the Middle East says, return faithless Israel, I will not look upon you in anger, middle of verse 12, for I am gracious. I will not be angry forever but only acknowledge your iniquity, that you have sinned, that you have not obeyed my voice. You know, this may sound very, very simple.

Of course, we know we have to confess our sins. But just like God says, you can't say you love God if you can't love your brother. If you can't love a brother whom you can see, how can you say you love God whom you can't see? So, if you can't acknowledge your mistake to a human being, how do you know that you're acknowledging your mistake to God? Let me ask you this.

Who is holier? God or your wife? You don't have to think, do you, to answer that one. God is much holier. Now, it should be, strictly speaking, more difficult to go and confess sin to a holy God than to an unholy wife or an unholy husband.

It should be easy. I mean, after all, a sinner confessing to a sinner should be very easy. To come before a holy God to confess, it's more difficult.

Now, let me ask you a second question. Which do you find easier, to confess your sin to God or to confess it to your wife or to your husband? You know the answer. The answer is the same for every single person here.

Whether you look holy or not, the answer is the same. You say it's much easier to confess it to God. You know why? Listen, you're not really confessing to God at all.

You're imagining that you're confessing to God. If you were confessing, it should be much easier to confess to an unholy person than to a holy God. Sure.

I mean, if you have done badly in an exam, would you like a very lenient type of teacher to mark your paper or a very strict teacher? So, if you have failed, isn't it better to go to a sinner and confess than to go to a holy God? How is it we find ourselves feeling that we can confess to a holy God much easily? I really believe that many of us, when we say we are confessing to God, we're not confessing to God at all. We're confessing to ourselves. You know, like the Pharisee prayed.

Do you think the Pharisee realised he was praying to himself? It says in Luke chapter 18. Look at that parable that Jesus spoke. I don't know whether you've noticed this.

The Pharisee and the publican went into the temple to pray. And the Pharisee, see, this is what Jesus said. The Pharisee didn't think that.

The Pharisee thought he was praying to God. Because he says, Pharisee prays God. Psalm 18 verse 11.

I'm sorry, Luke 18 verse 11. The Pharisee prayed God. He's praying to God.

But Jesus said, no, he's not praying to God. What do you read in that verse? He was praying to whom? To himself. Did you notice that? Is it possible for a person to pray to himself? Have you ever prayed to yourself? You say never.

Nobody can pray to himself. But the Pharisee said God. And when you say God, or when you say Heavenly Father, I'm sorry I committed that sin.

You could be praying to yourself. If you find it easy. Psalm 130, I think, verse 3, it says there is forgiveness with God that he may be feared.

So when I come before God, I am coming before the strictest person in the whole universe. The standards are the highest anyway. How can I come so glibly and say, oh yeah, I slept up? I'll tell you how.

I think many of us are praying to ourselves. I want you to seriously consider this possibility that when you kneel down to pray, you're praying to yourself. That's why nothing happens.

And if I pray to myself and I claim in the name of Jesus something, nothing happens, naturally. I'm praying to myself. I mean this, brothers and sisters.

Consider seriously that a lot of our prayers, we're just praying to ourselves. We may be prefacing it with God or Heavenly Father. That doesn't make a difference.

Jesus said this guy was praying to himself. And one of the tests is this. You know, like I said earlier, if you say you love God, test whether you love your neighbor, whether you love your brother.

Otherwise, don't fool yourself. And you say, well, I wouldn't confess it to God. But what about confessing to the person whom you hurt? What about acknowledging your mistake before men, if they are involved in it? If not, I want to say in Jesus' name to you, you are praying to yourself.

And imagine if I spend all my life praying to myself and I wake up in eternity and I wake up and stand before the Lord and the Lord says, you never prayed to me even once. Lord, what? I never prayed to you even once? What do you mean? I prayed thousands of times. You say, yeah, thousands of times to yourself.

When you pray, do you make contact with God? Do you tremble at the fact that you have violated his law? You have been dishonest? You have pretended to be righteous? You know, when Ananias didn't even open his mouth, Peter said, why did you sin against, why did Satan fill your heart to tell a lie to the Holy Spirit? He could have said, I didn't even open my mouth. What do you mean I told a lie to the Holy Spirit? I can tell a lie to the Holy Spirit without opening my mouth. Satan can fill my heart to tell a lie to the Holy Spirit.

You read Acts 5. That's what he told Ananias. I'm sure Ananias prayed a lot of prayers to himself. Lord, how much money should I give? What is your leading? Yes, I think God has spoken to me.

God has told me this. Have you heard these people who say, God has told me this and God has told me that? Who told them? Their own mind told them what was good for them, selfishly, what would be maximum benefit for themselves, and they put God's name there and say, the Lord led me. It sounds so holy and so pious.

We have to be more honest, ruthlessly honest. I believe God speaks. The first chapter of Genesis is every day God said, God said, God said, God said.

But I'll tell you something. The vast majority of people who I hear saying God said to me this and God said to me that, I don't believe it one bit. And that is true.

I mean, we are in a pretty serious situation. How do I know that I have humbled myself and really confessed my sin to God? The test for me is, can I confess to a human being? I was wrong, brother. That should be very frequent in our life.

Yeah, that was my mistake. And if that is not frequent in your life, I want to say to you, if you think you're spiritual, you're just fooling yourself. You're so far from God that you can't even see anything wrong in yourself.

You could be a million miles away from God. You know what happened to Isaiah when he came near God? He said, oh, I'm such a filthy man. My lips are unclean.

I mean, he got that when he came near God and saw him. It's always what happens. Before that he was aware of the faults of others, but suddenly he became aware of his own.

See, that's the mark of a man who walks humbly. The Bible says, what does God require of you? Walk humbly before God. Only acknowledge your iniquity.

He prayed to himself and said, God, I thank you. I'm not like other people. When people pray to themselves, that is their spirit.

Oh, I don't sort of think there's anything seriously wrong with me. I seem to be okay. And in contrast, Jesus said, there was this publican or this tax collector who was known with a reputation, tax collectors had a reputation for being crooks and cheaters.

Verse 13, the tax collector was, he wouldn't even come close to the temple. He was standing far or distance away, unwilling to lift up his eyes to heaven. He was beating his breast and saying, God.

He also said God. He made contact. Both of them said God.

Here's one fellow saying God. Here's another fellow saying God. This fellow's prayer doesn't even reach the roof.

This fellow's prayer goes straight up to heaven. Is it possible that two people could be praying here in this church and one person's prayer doesn't go anywhere? The other person's prayer goes straight up to heaven because he acknowledges his iniquity. God be merciful to me.

The sinner. I like the NASB translation. I find the NASB is very accurate in many places.

More accurate than any other version that I have seen, including King James Version and all the other versions. The sinner. That means he felt, Lord, it looks as if I'm the only sinner in the whole world.

Have you ever felt like that? Or have you felt that a lot of sinners are around you? Have you, I'm not talking about every day, but have you ever once in your life felt, boy, Lord, there couldn't be anybody worse than me? If you've never had that feeling even once, shall I tell you something? I would seriously question

whether you're born again. At all. I don't think we can bear it to face that every day, but at least once you should have felt like that.

That there's no one in the world worse than you. And the closer you get to God, you'll feel that every now and then. I don't feel like that every day.

I don't think I can bear it. But I'd be a very depressed person if God allowed me to feel like that every day. But every now and then I do feel like that.

I'll tell you quite honestly. Paul said, O wretched man that I am. See, for such people it's very easy to acknowledge, yeah, I made a mistake.

Look at the way Paul writes even scripture in 1 Corinthians. This is a mark of humility. 1 Corinthians in Chapter 7. In 1 Corinthians Chapter 7, there are a number of places where he says, yeah, I really don't know what the Lord's commandment is.

You know, he says in verse 10, to the married I give instructions, not I, but the Lord. Previously, he was saying his own instruction in a sense in verse 7, I wish all men were as I myself. That's not God saying.

It's just my opinion. I wish you could all be bachelors like me to serve the Lord. But he made it here.

That's my opinion. But then he says, this is the Lord. And then later on, he says, down at the end of the chapter, in verse 14, after writing all this, he says, I think I have the spirit of God.

And God put it in scripture. God says, oh yeah, you have the spirit. You know, I'll tell you something.

I would rather listen to a man who says, well, I think this is what God is saying. God wants me to ban all these fellows who go around saying, thus said the Lord. Oh, I'm sure the Lord said this to me, the Lord said that to me.

I have seen that whole tribe of people, self-deluded Christians. I would listen to a man who says like, well, I think I have the spirit of God. And he says, I don't have a clear commandment from the Lord.

You read that chapter, you get that tone coming through. I don't have a clear commandment from the Lord, but I give my opinion as one who has found mercy from the Lord. So I'm just giving my opinion.

And he says in verse 14, in my opinion. And that comes through a number of times. The honesty to acknowledge that I haven't heard very clearly from the Lord.

That's humility. No, I believe that a lot of people, just like we pray and pray to ourselves, think we are praying to God, we can have a thought in our mind and imagine, you know, that's God speaking to me, that's God. That's how lots and lots of people have gone astray.

And when a man makes himself a self-appointed prophet, and whatever thought comes into his mind, he begins to tell other people, this is what the Lord is saying to you. Boy, then he's really serious. There are a lot of people floating around like that.

One mark of all of them is, they will want your money. That's the way you can easily pick them out. Or they'll want to control you.

So if you steer clear of people who want to control your life and steer clear of people who want your money, you'll never be deceived by such people. Because all these false prophets, they'll want to control your life or they'll want your money. Very quick way to test them out.

So I'm just giving you a couple of tests to find out false prophets. There are a lot of them floating around today. So that's the first thing.

The fact that we have really made contact with God means, I see my sin and I am so ashamed of it, and I don't mind acknowledging it. I mean Isaiah wrote it down in a book for everybody to read. I am a man of unclean lips.

Can you imagine the greatest prophet in the country saying that? We read Isaiah chapter 6, but that was the greatest prophet in Israel speaking and saying, I am a man of unclean lips. I would listen to such a man. I would listen to a man who is quick to acknowledge, I was wrong.

Peter, when he denied the Lord, it says, he went out and wept bitterly. I think he was saying, Lord, you're right. You said I would deny you.

It's me. I'm the worst of the apostles. I handed my resignation.

It says in John 21, he said, I'm going back to my fishing. He really meant it. He said, I'm not an apostle.

I'm not fit to be one. I denied the Lord. He went out and wept bitterly.

Judas Iscariot could do something worse than that. He just felt a bit sad that Jesus got caught and got beaten. You know, you feel sad if anybody gets beaten.

Even a thief, if you see him being beaten and hammered and killed, you'll feel sorry for the man. That's how Judas felt sorry that Jesus was being beaten so much. It didn't mean a thing.

It's honest acknowledgement before God that proves that we're really walking humbly with him. And as I said, the test of it is that we'll be willing to acknowledge our mistake before others. Yeah, I was wrong.

But it's so difficult in saying that. It just means that I'm saying, I am not God. Brothers and sisters, I want to announce to you that I'm not God.

Is that a big, is it very difficult to say that? Whenever you say to your husband or wife or to a brother or sister, and I'll tell you something, I told you earlier, it's sometimes easier to say to a husband and wife because you want peace at home. It's not because you're really convinced it's true. If you want to do okay for the sake of peace, we'll do it and say, I'm sorry.

I've noticed this with many, many brothers. I mean, you check yourself. I don't know your private life.

When you have a difficulty with your wife, do you do everything possible to try and restore that relationship as soon as possible? But when you have said something rude to a brother or done something wrong or not acknowledge your mistake, can you let days go by, weeks go by and ignore it? I'll tell you something, it proves you know nothing about the body of Christ. Your knowledge of the body of Christ is zero, even though you may have been in CSC for many years. You're not a disciple because you love your wife more than you love Jesus' body.

Every heathen, unconverted, godless atheist in the world wants to have peace at home and will acknowledge, will say something to pacify his wife. You're no better than them. The test is whether you'll go and acknowledge to somebody with whom restoring fellowship doesn't, you know, doesn't really accomplish anything.

Restoring fellowship at home is important. Then I'll get you breakfast tomorrow. That's important.

But this other guy, my fellowship with him is not so important. I want to encourage you to take all these things seriously. Walk humbly with your God.

Only acknowledge your iniquity. I also believe this is the reason why many people are not healed physically. Let me read you a verse in James chapter 5. James 5 verse 15 and 16 says, The prayer offered in faith, he's talking about people who are sick, will restore the one who is sick, and the Lord will raise him up.

And if he has committed sins, they'll be forgiven. Therefore, confess your sins to one another and then pray so that you'll be healed. So one reason why we're not healed is because we didn't make a confession to somebody.

I'm not talking about confessing some sin you did 20 years ago as a young man. That didn't affect this other person here. I'm talking about confessing to that person the way you hurt that person.

Not some sin you did somewhere else that hurt somebody else. No. That you have to confess to God and to that other person.

I'm talking about, see sin must be confessed in the circle in which it is committed. God is in every circle. Because every sin I commit is against God, I have to confess it to God.

But there may be another person in that circle. This person whom I hurt, this person whom I wronged. I have to go and confess to that person.

I'm sorry. Confess your sins to one another so that you may be healed. I want to be healed.

I want to be healthy all the time. I have only one life. And if I live up to 90, I want to be healthy to serve the Lord.

I don't want to be sick, I'll tell you honestly. I don't want to be sick a single day of my life. I don't want to have any sickness in my body.

I mean, you may accept some sickness in your body, I don't. And I'll do everything possible to get rid of it. I'll use medicine, I'll take treatment and I will confess my sins.

And I will treat other people fairly and I'll be kind to them because I want to be healthy. Do you want to be healthy? Confess your sins. Don't pretend that you never did anything wrong.

Don't put the blame on others like Adam did. Get rid of that Adamic habit, which is the great reluctance to say, I was wrong. I was totally wrong.

I'm sorry. That was my mistake. And I bundled up there.

And instead of that, we think of so many justifications and this and that and the other thing and this and that and the other. God says, okay, go your way. Do you know how much we have missed in the past? I learned this some years ago and I said, well, I'm just going to acknowledge whatever I see.

I'm not saying that we have to be artificial about it. But if you haven't done it, if you haven't ever acknowledged your mistake in the last few weeks, I would say you're pretty seriously sick. Because you were not God for the past few weeks.

So that's the first thing. The second thing that I said was, Jesus said, the Old Testament prophets and Jesus also spoke about treating other people right. One is acknowledging our iniquity and humility before God and before one another.

And the other is treating other people fairly, having a good attitude towards them. You know, Jesus spoke a lot of parables about that. And it's not so much in what you say.

It's a heart attitude towards somebody. I'll tell you honestly, I believe with all my heart that many of you sitting here, your heart attitude to some people in this church is not right. And I have seen that in all of our churches.

I've seen that in elder brothers. Sometimes their attitude to one another is not right. There's jealousy, hoping that something, I mean, unhappiness in something good happens to someone.

Can you imagine? To me that is one of the clearest marks of a wrong attitude. When you hear something wonderful happen to someone else, if you cannot rejoice wholeheartedly, that is a warning sign, like a sickness, first symptom of cancer. Take it seriously.

Don't let it spread. Because cancer gets worse and worse and worse and worse and worse. You ask yourself, when you hear that something really good happened to someone else, let's forget the world, in this church, do you rejoice wholeheartedly? I'm not going to ask you to raise your hands.

Go before God and see and answer to him. And if you have a symptom of cancer, go back to point number one. Acknowledge your iniquity.

Lord, it's true, I could not rejoice wholeheartedly when I heard this very good news about something. It shows something seriously wrong with my heart. After all these years of hearing about victory over sin, after all these years of talking, testifying and studying through the Old Testament, studying through the New Testament, look at the condition of my heart.

What's the use going through the Old Testament and New Testament, if my heart condition is still like this? Lord, please help me. My attitude to others is not right. No wonder the heavens are like brass over me.

No wonder the rivers are not flooding my heart. No wonder my life is not fresh with the anointing of the Holy Spirit. No wonder the joy of the Lord is not flooding my heart.

No wonder, because there's this wretched cancer that I can get rid of in a moment, but I don't. I don't even acknowledge it. You can't get rid of it before you acknowledge it.

So I want you to do some homework when you go home today. Really search your heart and ask God to show you if there's an atom of jealousy in your heart against any other person in the church. Because that person has something which you don't have.

Or something good happened to that person which didn't happen to you. See the two great dangers. One is this jealousy and the other is the person to whom something good has happened.

He's also in danger. He's in danger of being proud. Hey, it's wonderful what happened to me.

I'm sort of better off than these other fellows. There's danger on both sides. This guy is jealous of that person and that person is proud that something good has happened to him which is better than others.

I tell you, sin is a terrible thing. If you live close to the Lord, you'll get light on it immediately. First symptom of cancer, you get rid of it.

But if you don't live close to the Lord, these things, you know, the Bible speaks about the root of bitterness growing up. Why don't people pull it out? I mean, if you found a poisonous weed growing in your garden, would you pull it out or say, well, let's see how it grows? You'll kill somebody. I can't understand how anybody keeps the root of bitterness in their heart, which is destroying them, sapping their spiritual energy.

See, many of us, I really believe that God would have anointed us and used us much more mightily than you are being used right now and being blessed right now and you walk with the Lord. Therefore, if you would only take heed to these one or two simple things that I'm speaking today. I made it very simple today because it's only two points.

One, be quick to acknowledge your mistakes. To God and to man, humble yourself. And number two, treat other people kindly and fairly.

Do to others, know that verse, Matthew chapter 7, the Sermon on the Mount, you know, it's very interesting where Jesus said it. He didn't say that at the beginning of the Sermon on the Mount. In the beginning of the Sermon on the Mount, he said, blessed are the poor in spirit.

Those who have a sense of their own need, I want to tell you in Jesus' name, every blessing in heaven, I'm paraphrasing Matthew 5.3, every blessing in heaven belongs to the person who's aware of his own need. That's the meaning of blessed are the poor, the kingdom of heaven belongs to them. Every blessing in heaven belongs to the man who's aware of his own need all the time.

I've seen that clearly and I try to live there. Lord, I want to see my need. It's not a day that doesn't go by in my life when I don't have that cry in my heart, even if I don't say it in so many words.

But I want to possess as much of the kingdom of heaven as possible before I leave this earth. I'm not interested in possessing as much of this earth as possible. I mean, I leave that to all the businessmen and politicians.

They can try to possess as much of this earth as they want. I'm not interested. God gives me a little corner, I'm happy with it.

But I want to possess as much of the kingdom of heaven as possible. Sure. I have only one life to possess it.

And that's very easy. It's very easy because it's very easy to have a sense of our own need. Only a proud person won't have a sense of his own need.

But then at the end of the sermon on the moon, out of preaching all these wonderful things in Matthew 5, 6 and 7, he sums it up. He says, okay, forget about everything I said. Here it is in a nutshell.

Matthew 7 verse 12. Treat other people the way you want them to treat you because this is the message of the whole Bible. You know the word the law and the prophets is another expression for the Bible.

The only Bible they had in those days was the law and the prophets. Old Testament. The law and the prophets.

So Jesus, today we would call it the Bible. Treat other people the way you want them to treat you because this is the message of the Bible. This is Jesus' words.

Message Bible puts it like this. Ask yourself what you want people to do for you. And grab the initiative and do it for them.

Treat your wife the way you want her to treat you. Treat your husband the way you want him to treat you. Do any of us like to be yelled at? No.

Don't yell at anybody. The only time we are permitted to yell is where it concerns the glory and the purity of God's house. That's got nothing to do with you.

Zero to do with you. But the standards of God's house, purity of God's house, there I would yell. I wouldn't take a physical whip, but I would use my tongue as a whip.

When people are making money in the name of religion, when people are careless with money, in religion, Christian world is full of people, full of Christendom. I've seen, I've been in Christendom 40 years. I've seen Christian missions.

Everywhere people are careless with God's money. Very careful with their own money, very careless with God's money. It's like the money changers in the temple.

Not much different from that. We got to be fair and treat other people the way we want them to treat us. We do justice and love mercy.

You remember the story with Jesus? I'll tell you a few stories with Jesus. He told a parable about a man who had two sons. The story of the prodigal son.

I always call that the parable of the elder son. The prodigal son was okay. He came back and got into the house.

The problem was with the elder son. And why did he stay outside? Do you know how the story ends? The story ends with the prodigal son inside the house and the elder son outside the house. That is the point of that story.

A lot of people just read it as the story of the prodigal son. And they miss what Jesus was trying to emphasize that if you don't have a right attitude to a younger brother who has fallen away, you'll be outside God's house. That was his problem.

He didn't have a right attitude towards his younger brother who had fallen away. He couldn't care less. He never went to his father and said, well dad, do you think I should go and look for my brother? And even

when his brother comes back, he's not happy.

Wrong attitude to a brother. That's why he was outside the house. So, the story of the good Samaritan.

What was Jesus emphasizing? Two religious people walk by and see a brother. Remember, that is your brother. It's not a stranger.

It's a brother from your church. I mean, it's not like we see a lot of people lying in the street here and there. I don't compare that to the story of the good Samaritan because among the Jewish people, they were all brothers.

Just like you know all of us here, we are brothers in Christ. They were brothers in Abraham. Every one of them.

And that chap who was there was one of his brothers. The rich man and Lazarus, it was his brother Lazarus who was outside the gate. And this person fallen by the wayside was a brother of the Levite, a brother of the priest.

He looks at him, he knows he's a Jewish brother. It's like seeing a Christian brother. The one who is your brother in Christ lying on the road.

That's the thing. If you want to understand that story for yourself, it's like seeing a brother in Christ in need and you do nothing about it. You just turn the other side because you've got to go and pray.

And then it says the Samaritan came along. The Samaritan is the people who is in the wrong denomination. You know, something like the Roman Catholics or some other denomination which we despise.

And somebody from that denomination comes. That's the point of the parable. All the holy people went and left him alone in this mansion.

And another dead denomination comes and picks him up and cares for him. And Jesus said, that's the person who did what God wanted him to do. Not all these religious people.

So there were a number of parables that Jesus spoke like that, where he spoke about an attitude to others. You remember the story of the laborers. What is the point in the story of the laborers? The attitude of the people who came first, the senior brothers in the church who worked for 12 hours, towards the junior brothers in the church who'd just come three months ago.

He said, how can you make them equal to us? We are senior. That was the problem. The attitude towards someone who you feel is junior to you.

I know at least three people who left our church because they were not made elders. At least three. Maybe more, I don't know.

You see, it's this idea that I'm senior. How in the world can I not be accepted? I mean, you've got to respect me more than these other fellows who just came the other day. I want to ask you whether that is there in the back of your mind, have you thought of a senior brother or sister who deserves a little more respect than some of these others? It's these attitudes.

They hinder our walk with God. What does the Lord require of you? Acknowledge your iniquity to God and to man. And have a good attitude towards people, towards all of them.

Bless them. Don't be jealous of anyone. Don't look down on anyone.

Don't think you're senior to anybody. None of us is senior. We're called to be a blessing to others.

We're not called to show off our seniority. You know, we can boast at saying that, oh, we don't have titles like pastor, reverend, father, this, that and the other. You know, people say, when I go to the Roman Catholic Church, can I call that man father, so and so? I say, forget it.

I don't mind calling him that. That's his name. That's his name.

But, you know the attitude we can have without using these titles? Where, when I consider someone as junior to me or inferior to me in the church, what's the difference between that and calling yourself father? You might as well call yourself father, so and so. That's the principle behind it. The principle behind it is, don't elevate yourself above others.

You are all brothers, Jesus said. And don't consider yourself as a senior brother. That's the same as saying, I'm a pastor, or I'm a father, or I'm a reverend.

And we can look down on those people who have done it. I'll tell you something. I have seen people who call themselves brother, who got a far more snobbish attitude than some people I've met who call themselves pastor and reverend.

It's true. Absolutely true. Humility doesn't come with just calling ourselves brother.

We can go by the letter. Ah, I don't call myself reverend. That fellow, look at him, he calls himself reverend and pastor.

He may be a humbler man than you. If you look down on someone, if you say you're a senior brother, how can these people be treated equal to me? You've got the same spirit. Sin is so subtle, and the devil would like you not to know it.

He'd say, those fellows, they've got the problem. You don't have the problem. Of course, you call yourself brother, so and so.

You don't call yourself pastor, do you? The problem is that fellow. I wish we could see ourselves. Oh Lord, I am the man of unclean lips.

That's what happens when we see the Lord. And then we don't look down on anyone. We don't despise anyone.

We seek to be kind and merciful. Think of the story of the woman caught in adultery. It's the same thing.

Jesus was highlighting the fact that these fellows are so much against somebody else. Jesus is against such people. Think of that man who had a withered hand, and the Pharisees would not want him to be healed.

And Jesus was so angry with them. All these stories teach us one thing. Jesus is angry with those who have a wrong attitude towards others.

I never want to have that in my life. I never want to think of myself as a senior brother. I never want to think of myself as more spiritual, or that God has to treat me different from all the other people in the church.

No, not at all. So dear brothers, it's only two things I said today. You keep them in mind.

I believe it will really change your life. Acknowledge your mistakes and sins. And treat other people exactly like the way you want to be treated yourself.

And ask God for the power of his Holy Spirit to do that. Let's pray. Thank you, Heavenly Father.

For your word, the entrance of your word, the unfolding of your word gives light. We want to walk in the light of that all our days. We want this to be intensely practical.

We want to see the things that you hate. We want to hate it ourselves. Help us, Lord, we pray, to walk in the light.

As you are in the light, we know your blood will cleanse us from all sin. And we can be forgiven before you and forgive others. Acknowledge our mistakes and humble ourselves and ask forgiveness from you and from one another.

And walk with you in brokenness. And treat others the way you have treated us with such tremendous mercy. With such tremendous compassion.

You have treated us way beyond what we deserve. Way beyond that, Lord. Help us to treat others like that.

To be large hearted in forgiving and in mercy. We pray in Jesus' name, Amen.

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