

(The Full Gospel) 18. Learning Gentleness From Jesus

by Zac Poonen

Zac Poonen's sermon emphasizes the importance of learning gentleness from Jesus to foster compassion and mercy in our interactions with others.

Scripture: Isaiah 28:21, Zephaniah 3:17, Matthew 5:7, Matthew 11:29, Matthew 23:13-36, Luke 10:25-37, John 4:17-24, John 8:1-12, Ephesians 4:2, James 2:13

Topics: "Gentleness", "Mercy"

Description

Zac Poonen emphasizes the importance of learning gentleness and humility from Jesus, as instructed in Matthew 11:29. He contrasts Christ's gentle approach to sinners with the harshness of the Pharisees, highlighting that true gentleness involves not probing into others' pasts or judging them harshly. Poonen warns against the sin of curiosity and encourages believers to embody Christ's gentleness in their interactions, reminding them that mercy is essential for receiving mercy from God. He calls for a self-examination of how believers preach and treat others, urging them to reflect Christ's character in their lives.

Transcript

"Learn from Me, for I am gentle and humble in heart" (Matthew 11:29).

Jesus told us to learn two things from Him - humility and gentleness. Generally speaking, many have spoken and written about the humility of Christ. But not much is written or spoken about the gentleness of Christ. This has led to an imbalance in the personal lives of many believers and also in the church.

We see Christ's severity in the way He rebuked the Pharisees (Matthew 23) and Peter (Matthew 16:23), and in the way He turned over the tables of the money changers and drove them out of the temple (John 2:14-16). That represented one aspect of God's nature that Jesus manifested.

But we also see the gentleness of God in the way Jesus dealt with notorious sinners.

We see something of the gentleness of Jesus in the way He spoke to the woman of Samaria, for example. Jesus had asked her about her husband. The woman immediately changed the subject and asked Jesus a totally unrelated question about worship (John 4:17-24). And we see there that Jesus did not press the issue of her immoral past, but allowed her to change the subject, and answered her question about

worship.

If we embarrass another person by probing curiously into details about their past life, or by repeating things that touch sore points in their life, we can be certain that we have learnt NOTHING of the gentleness of Christ from the Holy Spirit.

Curiosity is a sin that even many believers have not recognised as a demonic vice. Our flesh has a great longing to know about the evils that others have done, and so will always be desirous of listening to the sins of others, even when they are shared under the pretext of being prayer-requests. Such information however will never do us any good, but on the contrary will pollute our minds, prejudice us against others, make us evil, and hinder our witness and our ministry for the Lord. That is how Satan leads many believers astray.

We must never allow others to tell us about their past lives even voluntarily, for man must confess his sins only to God, not to other men.

Sin must be confessed only in the circle in which it was committed.

Sins of the thought-life and those committed in private that hurt no-one but ourselves, must be confessed ONLY to God. But sins that hurt another person, must be confessed to God as well as to that other person. Sins committed against a local body of believers must be confessed to God as well as publicly in the assembly meeting.

A gentle person will always be cautious never to say anything that will probe curiously into the private areas of another's life or into his past. If we accidentally touch someone at a sore point, and see the person's discomfiture, we should be quick to change the subject and act as though we know nothing. That is gentleness.

We see the gentleness of Jesus also in the way He dealt with the woman caught in adultery (John 8:1-12). Jesus certainly did not condone her sin or call her sin by some other name. He called her adultery 'sin' and told her very clearly that she must not commit sin again. But He did not throw stones at her for being sinful.

God does not throw stones at sinners. We must never forget that.

There are two ways to preach about victory over sin. One is the way Jesus preached it, without throwing stones at people. The other is the way the Pharisees preached it, by condemning people.

The gentleness of Christ is missing in the words of many who preach on victory over sin. They tell others not to sin, but they also criticise them, accuse them and refer to them by hard names. The Pharisees were like that. They preached about righteousness, but they considered everyone "accursed" who did not belong to their group (John 7:49). We find the same attitude in many believers today.

Jesus on the other hand, preached a much higher standard of righteousness than the Pharisees ever did. But He never called any sinner by bad names. He loved them and won them to a godly life, through His gentleness.

The woman caught in adultery realized that while the Pharisees had come only to point out her sin and to accuse her and expose her, Jesus wanted to save her. And she must certainly have been saved and become one of Jesus' disciples, after that encounter with Him.

When Jesus preached to that sinful woman, He did not preach doctrine to her, but encouragement. He came with a message of salvation from the power of sin, and not just with a doctrine on holiness.

A lot of today's "holiness-preaching" however majors on doctrines that define the old man and the flesh, and the new and living way through the flesh etc. But rarely do we see the gentleness of Jesus in those who preach these profound truths. And so sinners are not attracted to such Pharisees, as they were attracted to Jesus.

This is where all of us who preach holiness would do well to examine our own lives and see how our message comes across to others. Is the gentleness of Christ present in our ministry?

Christ must be manifest in our flesh, if others are to be drawn to Him. We must allow the Holy Spirit to show us the gentleness of Jesus, and to transform us into that likeness if we are to fulfil our ministry.

Do you throw stones at others? Do you point an accusing finger at another? If so, then you are more like the Devil than like God. For it is Satan who accuses. God never accuses. The Bible tells us very clearly, "God will love you and not accuse you" (Zephaniah 3:17 - TLB).

The Bible says that judgment is "an unusual and extraordinary work" of God (Isaiah 28:21). That is not what God does normally or usually. With man however it is different. Judging others is his normal work. This is where it becomes clear that man has been infected by Satan's poison.

It is easy to deceive ourselves that we are growing into the likeness of Christ, when we are not. If we haven't got rid of the habit of accusing and judging others, we are certainly not growing in Christlikeness.

The Bible says that we should not seek to be teachers (James 3:1).

What do teachers normally do? When they come home from school each day, with all the books of their students, they correct and correct and correct.... That is what they do, day after day, and year after year.

We are not to be like those teachers, going around correcting others and giving them marks, day after day. Those who do so are warned in that same verse that they will be judged more severely.

If we are gentle, we will make allowance for the failures of others, and believe that there could be hidden factors that we are unaware of, that may have caused them to fail.

Suppose you came home from work one evening, and saw that your son had done a sum wrong in his homework, and scolded him severely for it. And then if your wife showed you 10 sheets of paper in which your son had tried to do that very sum for one hour before you came in, how would you feel? Wouldn't you regret having been so hard on your son?

That is how it is when we judge others. We do not know, for example, how much a person had resisted a sin before he actually fell into it. We only see the person's fall and judge by what we see. But God sees the hours in which that person struggled and fought to avoid falling, and judges more mercifully than we do.

Ephesians 4:2 reads, "Be gentle. Be patient with each other, making allowance for each other's faults because of your love (TLB)."

In the book of Job, we see an example of God's gentleness. There we read how Job complained and murmured against God during his sickness (Job 3 to 31). His words were full of unbelief and bitterness,

and he should have been judged severely by God. But God loved Job and made allowance for him. He knew that Job was under much pressure, because he had lost all his property and his ten children in one day, had become sick with an incurable sickness, and on top of it all, was also being accused by his wife.

Further, Job was living at a time when "overcoming grace" was not available - unlike today. And so God spoke gently to Job and did not hold his words against him. God knew the background situation and so He was gentle. We usually never know anything of the background situation. And so we are hard. That is why the Bible tells us not to judge.

In Isaiah 61:2, we read that the Lord Jesus was anointed to proclaim "the favourable year (365 days) of the Lord and the day (1 day) of vengeance of God".

We know from Romans 11:22 that God is both kind and severe - but it is only in Isaiah 61, that we read that the proportion of God's kindness to His severity is not 50:50 but 365:1!!

That gentle nature is what we are called to partake of.

Jesus told His disciples that only those who are merciful to others would receive mercy from God (Matthew 5:7).

Mercy in the New Testament means more than just forgiving others who have harmed us.

In Luke 10:25-37, at the end of the parable of the good Samaritan, the actions of the Samaritan are referred to as his "having shown mercy" to the needy man (verse 37). So we see that mercy also means showing kindness to the needy ones who come across our path.

The Bible warns us that, "there will be no mercy to those who have shown no mercy", but encourages us by telling us that "if you have been merciful, then God's mercy toward you will win out over His judgment against you" (James 2:13).

In the light of that verse, let us consider how it will be in the day of judgment for two believers - one who was merciful to others and one who was not.

Brother A comes first and stands before the Lord. He was a sincere believer on earth, but one who had not got full victory in many areas. But he was one who fully forgave everyone who did him any harm, and showed kindness to needy people around him. The Lord will look at him and say, "Well, A, there are a number of things in your life that deserve punishment. But I see that you were constantly merciful and gentle to everyone who came across your path. So, I'll treat you just as you treated those others. You can go - free. There is no judgment for you."

Then comes Brother B, who was one who had victory over sin in all conscious areas of his life. He thinks to himself that if Brother A, who was much worse than him, got off so lightly, then he himself would certainly receive a high commendation from the Lord. But B was a brother who was hard and unmerciful on other believers who did not have victory over sin, and constantly referred to them as part of the "harlot" and not a part of Christ's Bride (as though God had given Brother B the task of selecting a bride for His Son!!). Brother B also looked down on believers in other groups and felt that only those who belonged to his own group were God's elect. And now the Lord says to him, "I appreciate the fact that you sought to battle against sin so wholeheartedly. That was good. But you were so hard on other believers and so unmerciful in your judgment of them. So, I'll treat you just as you treated those others. You have to be

judged - severely."

What a surprise B will get when he hears those words from the Lord. Many who are first here will be last there.

There was no partiality there in the Lord's treatment of A and B. To both the Lord said exactly the same words: "I'll treat you just as you treated those others." And they both got exactly what they deserved.

This is not an imaginary scene that I have portrayed, but something that we are going to see most certainly when Christ returns - for God's Word can never lie.

Read James 2:13 again if you still have any doubt about it.

Year after year goes by in the lives of many believers without their ever getting rid of this Satanic habit of being hard on others and judging them unmercifully. Let us determine that this year will be different.

Let us ask God for His grace and for the power of His Spirit to finish with all judgment of others this year, to finish with all curiosity into the private lives and affairs of others, to finish with all being busybodies in the matters of others, to finish with all criticism of other brothers and their wives and children.

Let us instead pursue increasingly the path of partaking of the gentleness of Christ. Then we shall not have lived this year in vain.

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