The Golden Rule

Luke 6:31

September 17, 2017

"Do unto others as you would have others do unto you." You probably were taught that by your mother when you were growing up by a very, very wide margin, the best known of Jesus sayings, in any of his teachings. "Do unto others as you would have others do unto you." You will find the golden rule in both Matthew 7:12 and Luke 6:31. We're studying Luke's Gospel, so you can turn to Luke 6:31 in your Bibles, that's where we're going to be for a while. But in Luke 6:31, we read "and as you wish that others would do to you do so to them."

Over in Matthew's Gospel, which a Gospel that's aimed at the conversion of the Jewish people, Matthew records for his fellow Jews, what else Jesus said, which was very important, especially in a Jewish context. In Matthew 7:12, it says, "so whatever you wish that others would do to you do also to them, for this is the law and the prophets." That is to say the golden

rule summarizes the teaching of the law of Moses, and all the divinely inspired writings of the Old Testament prophets as well. That is quite a claim, quite a summary statement by Jesus Christ, and that makes this golden rule weighty, very, very far reaching, as we will see this morning.

As I anticipated, studying and preparing for this message, I knew that I would be exposed to the fact that the New Testament is not the only place where we find the golden rule written, or some version of the golden rule written. What I did not realize, and what I did not anticipate is how far and wide we find that principle that's embodied in the golden rule perfectly. I didn't know how far and wide I'd find it, or how universally admired that principle is. From religion, and philosophy to politics, from Emperor to commoner, and everyone in between, everyone admires the golden rule and acknowledges it as the pinnacle, the paramount ethical virtue.

Now, I'll quickly add that they don't, that doesn't mean that they always truly understand what they appreciate, especially as we have been informed by the very rich context of

Jesus teaching on love. And though they recognize the excellence of what they hear, the world doesn't understand the deep, deep wisdom of the golden rule at all. Very few people do, but we, beloved, are among the privileged few. These are things which 1 Corinthians 2:10 tells us that God has revealed to us by the Holy Spirit. So we are going to get an appreciation of that privilege that we have of understanding his truth and understanding the golden rule in all its glory and beauty. We have that privilege this morning.

What I'd like to do, as we walk through a little bit of an outline, is start by providing a short explanation of the golden rule. I want to set it squarely in its context so we see it most clearly. It's kind of like a diamond that set among the gems of a wedding ring. And you see that diamond's beauty when it's set off against those other rich gems. And that's how we're going to look at it this morning in its context. And then I'd like to show you the unparalleled uniqueness and excellence of the golden rule, as we compare and contrast with other expressions of it. And finally, I'd like to talk about how we apply this golden rule practically, because after all, we need to be doers of the golden rule, building our house on the strong foundation

of the rock, that is obedient faith is to not only hear and appreciate and admire, but then to do implement, and practice. That's what we are called to do.

So let's get right into the first point of our outline should be there in your bulletin written down there, the faithful explanation of the golden rule, faithful explanation of the golden rule. Any faithful explanation of this golden rule is going to require us to read the verse in its context. So let's get right into this first point by reading and we're going to read from verse 27 to verse 35.

Jesus said, "But I say to you who hear, love your enemies, do good to those who hate you, bless those who curse you, pray for those who abuse you. To one who strikes you on the cheek offer the other also. And from one who takes away your cloak, do not withhold your tunic either. Give to everyone who begs from you, and from one who takes away your goods, do not demand them back. And as you wish that others would do to you, do so to them.

"If you love those who love you, what benefit is that to you? For even sinners love those who love them. And if you do good to those who do good to you, what benefit is that to you, for even sinners do the same. And if you lend to those from whom you expect to receive, what credit is that to you? Even sinners lend to sinners to get back the same amount. But love your enemies, and do good and lend, expecting nothing in return and your reward will be great. You will be sons of the Most High for he is kind to the ungrateful and the evil."

You may notice that the golden rule Luke 6:31, it's sort of like a, like a pivot point that in that opening section of the main body of Jesus sermon, Jesus teaches about the true nature and the true character of divine love, which sets the standard and is gonna be the pattern for all true disciples. That's what we already went through in verses 27 to 30. We've already covered that. Then Jesus summarizes what he has just said about love with this principle of the golden rule, which has to do with using subjective reflection. We'll talk more about that.

But then he immediately pivots from that golden rule to teach the true motivation for practicing the golden rule, which is a summary of love. That's what you see what we just read in verses 32 to 35. Practicing the golden rule, as we see in those verses, verses 32 to 35, has nothing to do with self-interest. Rather, practicing the golden rule is about the all-surpassing reward of God, for all of those who take pleasure in manifesting his glory.

Again, Jesus is speaking, verse 27, he's speaking to those who hear, this instruction is for those who are counted as the blessing, namely, the poor, verse 20, or those who hunger and weep now, verse 21, those who are hated, excluded, reviled and spurned on account of the Son of Man, that's who this is for. Like the Son of Man, they are the ones who endure all that because their joy is wrapped up in being called sons of the Most High. When that is ascribed to them, that they are sons of the Most High, that's enough for them. Let the world deal out all the wrath and fury and persecution that it can, if I am counted as the son of the Most High, that's enough for me. As long as I'm able to reflect his character, as long as I'm able to manifest his glory, that is my reward. That's who this is for.

Because of that, people like that, their reward is great in heaven, they've, they've counted themselves, not interested in having the rewards of this earth, but rather just living for the glory of God and so God rewards them with what they didn't ask for a great reward in heaven, true sons enter into their true father's heavenly reward.

So Luke 6:31, the golden rule, it's a pivot point, summarizing Jesus' teaching on love and then providing a practical guide to obey, pointing us to a sound hopeful, reliable, steadfast motivation for our obedience. That is the reward and pleasure of our father in heaven. Now, with that, just as a introduction or summary, let's get a little more specific and make, make some observations about this most memorable statement, the golden rule, which really summarizes the kind of love that we're to practice, look at it again, they're in verse 31.

"And as you wish that as you would do to you, do so to them." As you wish that others would do to you do so to them;

that is a statement that has to do with your judgment, right? The ESV translation, it says "as you wish that others would do," the verb translated, would do, there is in the subjunctive mood, and it can just as easily be translated as, should do. So I think it's more clearly rendered, as you wish or as you desire, as you want, as you desire that others should do, do likewise to them. That's what Jesus is saying here. Jesus is appealing here to our internal innate sense of moral judgment. And the way it's stated, it's intended also to provoke our empathy, our empathy, our concern for others.

First, let's talk about your judgment. Like all people, all of you have an immediately identifiable sense of right and wrong. In fact, under the right circumstances, that is, somebody just asked you the question, you're able and willing to provide your opinion, oftentimes about moral judgment, aren't you? You know what ought to happen in any given situation and what ought not to happen? You can look at a news story and see if that's right or wrong, according to your judgment. You know, what should and should not be what ought to be and ought not to be? Everybody understands that. And some of us are all too willing to give our opinion on that, aren't we?

But not only that your sense of moral judgment and moral obligation seems to be clearest when other people are in view, right? That's when it's at its sharpest is when you're thinking about others. That's, it's, it's exercised at that point with keen interests, when others are in view, and then add this, when your own personal interests are at stake. So we can judge a situation over there with somebody else and we can make good right and wrong judgments about whether or not that ought to happen. Right? When it has to do with that person doing whatever he or she is doing, now, on my property with my stuff, all of a sudden my interest in that moral question becomes keenly personal, intimately important to me, right? We're easily blind to our own moral faults, our own obligations, our own sense of duty. And all the while we're keenly aware of the moral faults and obligations of other people, and even more so, even more intimately, when it has to do with us. We may not like to admit it, but that is true of us, isn't it?

Now, this is not to say, Jesus is certainly not saying that our moral judgments are infallible, they're not but everyone has a sense of moral judgment. Why? Because God created them that

way. All of us are created with a moral judgment. Everyone without exception exercises that sense of moral judgment all the time. It's how we live our lives. It's how we think through every situation, every decision. And we're particularly interested in exercising our moral judgment when it pertains to ourselves and to our own interests and all that Jesus is saying here and this principle is this: Turn that sense of moral judgment that you have, that everybody has, turn that sense of moral judgment to the advantage of other people, "as you wish that others should do to you do so to them."

Now, with the principle established, let's make a few important contextual and grammatical observations. These are these observations, I think, are vital, not hard to see, but we need to remind ourselves because they're vital to understanding the true meaning and the true implications of the golden rule for us as we're going to practice it. First, remember the context we always say this context, context, context, Jesus is speaking here to his disciples. He is speaking to those who hear, he is speaking to those who he defined there in verses 20 to 23 as the poor, the hungry, the weeping and the despised.

This golden rule has to do with Jesus' people, using their moral judgment as a standard of how to treat others.

So contrary to popular wisdom, unbelievers are utterly unable to practice this rule. They have the internal sense of moral judgment, but they do not have a regenerate nature. They do not have the power of indwelling, power of the indwelling Holy Spirit both to will and to do according to God's pleasure, they don't have any of that. Only believers have that internal change. Only believers have the internal indwelling Spirit of God, who teaches them, and trains them, and motiv, motivates them, and rebukes them, and exhorts them, and encourages them, and illuminates the truth to them. Therefore, only believers can really practice the golden rule.

Second observation, the golden rule is not, as it is commonly known, and as it is widely purported to be, it is not an ethic of reciprocity. That is to say, this is not about us, okay? This is not about us deriving some personal benefit. It's not even about a benefit to wider society. This is not about practicing the golden rule so we can together create a peaceful,

utopic, society where we can all live as one, you know, that's not the issue here.

And again, if we keep the context in mind. This is a summary statement about our practice of a divine love, which extends even to our enemies, our enemies who stay our enemies. This isn't about trying to produce a utopia by means of loving sentimentality and feeling. This is about raw practical love within the context of this dystopia, a world that's ruined by sin. Again, the context gives the lie to the view that this is an ethic of reciprocity, there's no self-interest involved at all and this is about believers practicing this not unbelievers practicing this, okay?

Augustine points out how ridiculous this principle would be if we're talking about unbelievers using their own sinful self-interest to apply this as an ethic. Here's what he says, "The thought occurred that if anyone should wish something wicked should be done for him and should refer this clause to that, as for instance, if one should wish to be challenged to drink immoderately," I like how he puts that, "and to get drunk over

his cups, and should first do this to the party by whom he wishes to be done himself, it would be ridiculous to imagine that he had fulfilled this clause."

You get what he's saying? "Do unto others as you would have others do unto you." That is get them drunk, because that's what they would like to do. Don't use your sinful self-judgment. This isn't for unbelievers to fulfill themselves. We need to take everything from the context that we've already learned about love and fill in all the gaps that we may have with this in this summary statement.

The love that Jesus commands here is one that loves enemy. Verses 27-28, it loves by doing good to the hating, blessing, the cursing, praying for the persecuting. We don't love to gain a favorable outcome, we can hope for that, but they are enemies because they're sinfully and rebelliously oriented toward Christ. So until they're regenerate, it is likely that all of our extension of Christ's love to them is going to result in getting socked in the jaw, which is what it says in verse 29.

Looking ahead to verses 32 to 35. This pushes the concern for reciprocity, that is getting benefit derived to myself, this pushes it way out of the picture. If you love those who love you, what benefit is that to you? Jesus' saying it doesn't have to do with you. Love your enemies, verse 35, do good lend, expecting nothing in return. That's what God does for us on a daily basis, a minute-by-minute basis. That's what Christ does for us. That's what we do as we mimic him, follow his example. That's what we do as sons in the Most High toward others, again, not an ethic of reciprocity. We expect nothing in return, except for maybe more punches in the jaw, maybe more muggings, maybe more things like that for the sake of Christ.

Remember, Jesus Christ is our perfect example of how to practice that kind of love. We know that he perfectly practiced this principle, using his moral judgment as the standard for how to treat others, and it ended with his crucifixion. He wasn't naively hoping for reciprocity from his enemies, in kind, he wasn't hoping naively that they would somehow be won over by his acts of grace and love, instead, he was demonstrating the love of God in order to redeem his enemies. If we're following

Christ's example of how to practice love for enemies, then we have no concern about reciprocity.

As we said last week our expectations and our attitudes are established as we observed, what happened to Jesus and how he acted in spite of that treatment. Third thing, third observation, notice the positive way that Jesus has stated this. We're going to talk about this more in a few minutes, but he doesn't say here, "However you don't want to be treated, don't treat others in that way." That is a good principle too, there's nothing wrong with that principle. But the do no harm ethic, it just doesn't go far enough. You can walk through life trying to passively avoid harming anybody else. That's how a lot of people in our culture live. Instead, Jesus says, "Do to others." This requires positive, thoughtful action, not just passive avoidance.

Fourth observation, the golden rule requires us to develop an essential quality which I mentioned earlier, it's the quality or the ability to empathize with other people. Notice how Jesus starts by acknowledging the internal thought life that is, as

you wish or as you want, as you desire and then he commands that there be a correspondence in external behavior, what we say what we do. In other words, obeying the golden rule is going to require us to think carefully, requires us to use our imaginations in a sanctified way. To empathize with other people, to get ourselves into their situation and think that through, what that must be like. To sympathize and to empathize with them, we're even to empathize with our enemies, to sympathize with their situation, empathize with their thoughts and feelings.

Peter commends us to do that when we think about unbelievers, he says, "When you think about unbelievers and their treatment of you, remember that you at one time were also just like them foolish, lost, chasing different lusts." Have sympathy have empathy for their situation, this stots, starts here with our thought life. It requires us to get outside of ourselves, our own self-interests, our own feelings, we have to get into other people's situation, we have to use our imaginations in a righteous way, not to come up with evil, as is the case with sinners. We need to use our imaginations to put

ourselves mentally in somebody else's position, then act accordingly for the good of others, that is love.

Fifth observation here, you can't see this in English. But the Greek verb tenses are very important here. Let me expand the translation, it's going to sound a little bit awkward to your ears, but I just want to give you a sense of the verbal aspect here the there are present tense verbs here, okay? And they can be translated this way, this verse could be translated this way this is expanded. And as you are wanting that others should continuously due to you, you likewise, continuously, habitually, do so to them. Okay, that's awkward, I know. But that gives you the idea. Jesus is talking about a continuous, habitual way of life. This is about how we always live as a regular habit of our Christian lives. This is what we're to pursue.

And that sense of verbal aspect that continuousness gives us a sixth observation, which I think is profoundly vital. The golden rule, it provokes maturity in our moral judgment and as it provokes maturity in our moral judgment, it grows in potency, that is power, with that maturation of moral judgments. That is

to say, the more you mature as a Christian, the more useful and effective and fruitful this rule becomes.

Again, we're going to revisit that a bit later. But think about it instead of using your moral judgment to indulge self interest. Instead of using your moral judgment for the sake of self-protection, self-justification, defending yourself, instead of using your moral judgment to condemn others and nurse your own self-centered wounds and petty offenses. Think about practicing using your moral judgment, not for the sake of self at all, but for the sake of other people for their good. As you do that, you're going to grow in moral maturity, you're going to grow in strength, you're going to become wiser in your moral judgment and moral behavior. And that is a reinforcing principle, continuing to help you to grow and grow and grow.

In that sense, this summary statement about how to practice Christian love is one of the most potent statements about the pattern of Christian growth. You can find this repeated in different ways all over scripture. I like what Paul said in Philippians 2:3, "Do nothing from selfish ambition or vain

conceit," but what, "in humility of mind count others as more significant than yourselves." That's the same thing stated differently.

Okay, so those six observations, those six points, I think, help us to understand what the golden rule is about what it means. Let's consider a second point. That is how far and wide people have recognized the excellency of this rule. Look at your outline, it's called number two, the universal recognition of the golden rule. As every freshmen Philosophy 101 college student knows, the stock and trade of their university professors is to undermine their Christian faith, right? And, and really, they love to go to the golden rule and they love to point out how Jesus ethical ideal, this golden rule just isn't that special, after all.

We find other versions of the golden rule in all the other major religions of the world. Hundreds of years before Christ, philosophers have been saying the same thing. In fact, that probably indicates, they say, it probably indicates that Jesus probably borrowed Christian, probably not Jesus, probably

Christians, well meaning Christians who wrote down the Bible has nothing to do with what Jesus actually taught, but they wrote down the Bible, and they put this in Jesus' mouth, because it would be good for their faith teacher to be like the other faith teachers and philosophers of the world, and so on and so forth. He just used to prop up his own teaching on an on ago. So they say, right?

I like to tell high school students, college students to be on their guard when professors try to diminish the uniqueness of Christianity by pointing out similarities in other religions and then suggesting the Christianity borrowed from other religions, for the things that seem similar. And first, I tell them to press that suggestion of borrowing, because it's just as likely that those other religions borrowed from Christianity or ancient Judaism than that Christianity and, then the other way around, right?

So I try to I try to say, look, press them similarities do not prove borrowing. But second thing I tell them, that it's okay to acknowledge when similarities exist but here's the key,

pay very close attention to dissimilarities, pay very close attention to differences. Think carefully about those. So go through some examples here, I want you to bear those two cautions in mind, think about which borrowed from which, and think about the differences. But keep this in mind, the very fact of the existence of some form of ethic of reciprocity, some form of principle of the golden rule in other religions in other philosophies, they're not wrong about that point, that's true. In fact, as I said, I was surprised at how far and wide and how ancient this principle actually is, virtually, the whole world is familiar with it.

In ancient Egypt, around 1800 BC, that's just after the time that Joseph ruled as second in command under Pharaoh, you can see something akin to what Jesus said, written in the tale of *The Eloquent Peasant*. It's a bit of a stretch, as you'll see, but listen to what it says, "Do for one who may do for you that you may cause him thus to do." That's catchy even in English isn't it? But it's not quite the same is it? What's the difference between that and what Jesus said? Reciprocity, yes. But it emphasizes and affirms from the very start the motive of self-interest.

If we move ahead about a millennia, about 1000 years, in the Judaism that came out of Egypt settled in the land of Canaan. We read this in the book of Tobit. Tobit 4:15, from around 721 BC says, "and what you hate, do not do to anyone." That's a negative form, isn't it? "What you hate, don't do to anyone." So does that parallel exactly what Jesus said? No, it doesn't. It's like the do no harm principle isn't it?

Moving eastward from Canaan, Palestine, moving eastward to ancient Persia, we read some similar wording in Zoroastrian texts, one from around 600 BC purportedly from Zoroaster himself, though that's a very debated point. But he says a couple things here, "That nature alone is good which refrains from doing to another whatsoever is not good for itself." A similar one, "Whatever is disagreeable to yourself, do not do unto others." That negative way of stating the principle is akin to the do no harm ethic, which again is passive, you could just pass through your life passively trying not to harm anybody else, trying not to do to anybody else what you hate done yourself. I don't like pins and needles shoved in my eyeballs. Therefore, I won't do that to other people. If I do that, I'm a

good person, right? That's the idea. That's a good thing. That's a good thing. I don't encourage thinking opposite. That's a good thing. Okay. But that is the most common way of putting it a negative way.

As you're going to see from the rest of these examples in ancient India, during the Vedic period, around 1500 to 500 BC, about 1000 year period there several strands of religion emerged in Brahmanism. Named for the Brahmins of the Vedic period, the priestly scholarly class, the religion that they practice was the prototype for Hinduism that came around 900 BC. And we read from one of their texts what we also find in later Hindu texts. This is what it says, "This is the son of Dharma," that is the word for duty, "do not to others what would cause pain if done to you." Similar, isn't it?

In Buddhism, which is just a reinterpretation of Hinduism by Siddhartha Gautama Buddha, there's a saying attributed to him written about the 500s BC, "There is nothing dearer to a man than himself therefore as it is the same thing that is dear to you and to others hurt not others with that which pains

yourself." Also this, "a state that is not pleasing or delightful to me, how can I inflict that upon another?" Jainism as well, another religion emerging out of Hinduism, another saying written down around 500 BC we read, "Therefore, neither does he," that is a sage, "cause violence to others, nor does he make others to do so." I'm glad of all these principles, but they're not exactly reaching the high ideal of Christ.

If we go further east into China, we read from Confucianism, "Confucius say," 500 BC, "do not due to others what you do not want them to do to you." Like the Indian versions, all those things are about the negative, the passive, the avoidance of doing harm to others. We read this from the Chinese philosopher Mencius, a Confucian scholar, and he wrote this around 300 BC, a more positive, more active, form. That is, "Try your best to treat others as you wish to be treated yourself and you will find that this is the shortest way to benevolence." That sounds a little bit more similar doesn't it? It's positively stated.

Also from China Taoism around 300 BC the scholar Lao Shu writes in the Tao Te Ching, "The sage has no interest of his own, but takes the interests of the people as his own. He is kind to the kind, he is also kind to the unkind, for virtue is kind, he is faithful to the faithful, he is also faithful to the unfaithful for virtue is faithful."

If we jump back from the east go to the west in Europe, we find similar sayings in the Greek philosophers. Xenophon, who died around 354 BC, and Socrates, who died around 338 BC, they lived roughly the same period and they promoted this virtue of self-interest. Socrates taught this, "You do to others, so they will do to you." Sounds very European, you hear some similar things from Damosthenes and, and Aristotle, both of them died in 322 BC, Aristotle said this, "Behave to your friends as we," or, "We behave to our friends as we wish our friends to behave to us." Nothing about enemies there, right? It comes close to what Jesus said. But again, there's not that higher, non self-interested ethic that's expressed in Luke 6:32-35.

Now, if we set aside the ancient Egyptian version, way back in 1800 BC, because that saying "Do for one who may do for you that you may cause him thus to do" that hardly rises to the level of Jesus' ethic. And as we look at the very earliest example, that we can find this golden rule principle, you know where it's found? It's written somewhere around 1400 BC. We find it in the Hebrew writings, Leviticus 19:18, "You shall not take vengeance, or bear a grudge against the sons of your own people, but you shall love your neighbor as yourself. I am the Lord." How about that? We come full circle, and find that the principle is crystallized there in Leviticus 19:18. "Love your neighbor as yourself."

That's really what Jesus is doing here. He's restating and reiterating and explaining and providing commentary on that most ancient ethic revealed by his father in the Law of Moses, "You shall love your neighbor as yourself." Why? What's the motive for it? What's the motive for that, Moses? Because, "I am the Lord," just as Jesus says there in Luke 6:35-36. It is the holy love in the character of God that provides us with the reason and the motivation for loving other people, even our enemies.

Jesus in the first century, he is in direct continuity, and in complete and total harmony with that ancient Law of Moses given around 1400 BC. And because of that perfect consistency, and harmony, you'd have to say that if there is any borrowing going on among the religions, it's the others borrowing from what God revealed, certainly not the other way around. It's not hard to see that either happening in the ancient world, other world religions borrowing ideas from the Hebrew and Christian worldview. The more we know and study about Islam, the more we find that it, Mohammed, borrowed and plagiarized stuff all over the place from the Old Testament from the Bible.

We see that happening all the time, the more we understand about ancient times a very dynamic picture emerges with constant movements among peoples and interchange of ideas among the people groups. We tend to think of the ancient world is pretty static and sheltered and isolated from one another static in their thinking, not really, people were, there were people like that, who stayed and lived and died in the same 50 miles 50 square miles and where they were born. But people, other people, were on the move, for the purpose of trade for the purpose of

commerce, or even for the purpose of conquest. Ideas migrated along with the people who carried them.

That miraculous exodus of the Jews from Egypt, a slave people coming out of the superpower of the world, that story got around. That story was known. It traveled far along with all those revelations of Yahweh, Israel's God, and all the ethics of living the principles of "Love your neighbor as yourself." It could be, then, that other world religions borrowed the concept of the love your neighbor ethic from the Law of Moses or from the Hebrew prophets.

Or it could also be this, that the revelation of the principles of the divine Law, they are inscribed on every single human heart, aren't they? As Paul wrote in Romans 2:14, "For when Gentiles, who do not have the written Law of God, by nature, when they by nature do what the law requires, they are a law to themselves, even though they do not have a written law. They show that the work of that written law is written on their hearts, while their consciences bear witness, their conflicting thoughts either accuse or excuse them."

So, perhaps they learned it from the oral reports about Moses about Yahweh, about his revelation about his word, passed it along the trade routes or perhaps this just comes from the testimony of their own heart, their own mind, their own conscience. They knew that this is a high ethic, that this is how they should live. In either case, what they knew and appreciated, what they upheld as an ethical ideal, like all unbelieving systems of thought, all the world's religions and philosophies, they fall so far short of the biblical ideal, written in Scripture. The profound truth of a self-sacrificing, disinterested, personally disinterested love, we can hear it in the way that all those different religions and philosophies state the principle.

In fact, just before Jesus came, there were some attempts among Jewish scholars and rabbis to state the same principle, which had long been acknowledged and appreciated, as we said, by all people in all places at all times. But we read from Shirak 31:15, which is around 200 BC we read this, "Be considerate of other people at the table and treat them the way you want to be treated." That sounds good, doesn't it? Until you read the

context. If you fill in with a fuller context here's what it says, "Be considerate of the other people at the table and treat them the way you want to be treated. When you get your food eat it like a human being don't smack and slurp. Nobody can stand that. It's good manners to be the first to stop eating. Stuffing yourself is offensive." Clearly written by a Jewish mother, right?

But fortunately, we also have another witness to this. The Talmud records the Rabbi Hillel, who doesn't just restrict this to table manners. There's a story from around 50 BC, 50 years before Christ, about 80 years before his ministry, and it's about the two most famous most popular Rabbis of that time, Shammai and Hillel. Shammai was a little harsher, Hillel was a little softer. Shammai, he was approached by a Gentile proselyte, a man who wanted to be instructed in the Law, and Shammai turned him away. He refused to teach a Gentile, didn't want to be associated with him, didn't want to touch him. But the gentler Rabbi Hillel said this, "What is hateful to you do not to your fellow man. This is the whole law. All the rest is commentary. Go and study." Interesting, the rabbi's identified that "this is the whole law all the rest is commentary."

I know that's the negative form. Jesus stayed in the positive but it's still similar, isn't it. And when Jesus came, he reasserted the ancient teaching of Moses, once again, for a people who had been deceived, who had been led astray, who had not been loving their neighbors as themselves. Rabbis were telling them you've heard said love your neighbor, but also hate your enemy. That is you have warrant to turn them away, like Shammai did.

So Jesus taught about the true nature of true love. He extended that expression of love to all defining the concept of neighbor to be anyone in need, including an enemy. He taught them about the remarkable endurance of love, which keeps on loving, even in the face of personal injury, even in the face of personal loss. And the excellence of Jesus' summary statement is in its concision, in its clarity, its memorable simplicity, "And as you wish that others would do to you do so to them." From Matthew's account, he includes the rest, Matthew 7:12, we find out that that golden rule sums up all the law and the prophets.

After Jesus taught this sermon on the mount, summarized his teaching on love with a golden rule, we find different versions of that same principle, we find it proliferate around the world, I mean, it comes, it pops up everywhere from Shintoism, in Japan, to Islam in the Middle East, even the paganism of the Romans all universally acknowledged the excellence of this principle, in fact, the golden rule, you know why it's called golden? It's because the pagan Emperor Roman Emperor, Alexander Severus, who reigned from 222 to 235, met an un… he, I think he started reigning around 13 years old.

So he met an untimely death, as emperors were prone to do. But he adopted this as his personal motto. He had Jesus words, inscribed in gold, hung up in his home, he posted this golden rule, now called the golden rule, because he inscribed it in gold and he posted it on public buildings throughout the city. Some say trying to unify all the diverse religions of Rome, others say he really believed it, really loved it.

The real question is, if this golden rule principle is so very golden, if it’s so universally recognized as excellent and

praise worthy, even taught and promoted by all religions and philosophies of the world, then why isn't it so universally practiced? Here's where we want to come to a third point in our outline, you can see it there in our bulletin there, hopefully, the practical application of the golden rule. This universally recognized golden rule, why is it not universally practiced? It's universally admired, why not practiced with the same appreciation?

Martyn Lloyd-Jones put it this way, "People hear this golden rule and they praise it as marvelous and wonderful and as a perfect summary of a great and involved subject. But the tragedy is that after praising it they do not implement it. And after all the Law was not meant to be praised, it was meant to be practiced. Our Lord did not preach the sermon on the mount in order that you and I might comment on it, but in order that we and I might carry it out." That's exactly right, why don't people follow it? Why don't people universally praising it, why don't they universally follow it. Because first of all, as we've said from the very beginning, you must be born again. You have to be born again to put this into practiced.

Back to the context right, Jesus gives this summary to his disciples to those who have ears to hear, eyes to see, a regenerate heart to understand, the indwelling power of the Holy Spirit to enable them to do this. Apart from the Spirit's work in converting the soul, the golden rule is an unattainable maxim a principle that's impossible and frustrating and it might as well be a dead piece of wood.

Because of that, there's an increasing number of former admirers of the golden rule principle who have decided it's no longer tenable. The golden rule is no longer practical and it should actually be abandoned. In the March 17th, 2016 article written by a man, an author, named Peter Economy, he writes an article that says this, quote, the headline *How the platinum rule trumps the golden rule every time*. He writes about Dave Kerpin and his new book *The Art of People* which says that "following the golden rule is all wrong, instead what we should follow what he calls the platinum rule." It gives his, quoting from him, says Kerpin, "We all grow up learning about the simplicity and power of the golden rule, 'do unto others as you would want done to you,' it's a splendid concept except for one thing, everyone is different and the truth is that in many cases

what you'd want done to you is different than what your partner, employee, customer, investor, wife or child would want done to him or her." So Kerpin came up with the platinum rule, "Do unto others as they would want done to them." Says Kerpin, "The golden rule, as great as it is, has limitations, since all people in all situations are different. When you follow the platinum rule however you can be sure that you're actually doing what the other person wants done and assure yourself of a better outcome." End quote.

That's the point after all, find out what people want, give it to them so you can get what you want. We're back to the same self-interest principle, aren't we? In another article Tony Alessandra also commends this platinum rule, and he notes this as one of its chief benefits. Here's the benefit of following the platinum rule, quote, "You do not have to change your personality. You do not have to roll over and submit to others. You simply have to understand what drives people and recognize your options for dealing with them." End quote. Both authors, they have recognized what so many others have tried and failed at throughout history that Romans 8:7 says so well, "The mind

that is set on the flesh is hostile to God for it does not submit to God's Law, indeed it cannot."

So many have misinterpreted the golden rule as some kind of ethic of reciprocity, do good to be treated analogously. Commentator Joel Green says "Others are to be treated lovingly, period. Without thought to reciprocating behavior." It doesn't work, it's true it doesn't work as an ethic of self-interest. Doing for others whatever seems best to the self, in order to benefit the self or doing for others what they want done to them so you can get whatever they've in their pockets and put it in your own pockets. As long as it's interpreted that way it's going to be an absolute failure, abysmal failure.

In fact, like all of God's laws and rules, and precepts and principles, apart from the Holy Spirit all his laws and all his rules, what do they do? They condemn the sinner, don't they? As Paul said Romans 3:19-20 "Now we know that whatever the Law says, it speaks to those who are under the Law so that every mouth may be stopped and the whole world may be held accountable to God. For, by the works of the Law no human being will be

justified in his sight, since through the Law comes knowledge of sin." The whole world, the whole world acknowledges the excellence of the golden rule.

And by that they are not justified, by that they are condemned. Because admiring it, they do not do it and not doing it they violate their conscience. They violate what they know they ought to do, but they do not do it. From east to west, priests and philosophers, sages and emperors, all mankind attest to the universal good of the golden rule. But they cannot keep it. Their minds attest to the truth of the rule but their sin natures, their sinful hearts, their sinful desires, their wants, their desires, their lusts, everything, everything battles against it. Their bent wills just cannot measure up, all fall short of the glory of God, right?

So like all God's Laws, the golden rule likewise condemns men. Apart from regeneration, it merely condemns. And for these people, those who try to practice the golden rule but can't, those who try to defang the golden rule, make it more palatable to themselves by saying it's just simply a do no harm ethic, or

those who try to say let's replace it with the platinum rule, whatever the case. Rather than bow before God, acknowledging the truth of his Law, rather than bow in humility acknowledging their inability to keep his Law, crying out for his mercy, pleading for his Grace, they suppress the truth in unrighteousness, don't they? They hold it down, and they condemn the golden rule, and they turn aside to a better, a new and improved platinum version, which accommodates their sinful self-interest.

But in order to keep the golden rule golden and in order to build upon the beauty of its truth. We have to build upon the bedrock foundation of regeneration and saving faith. Apart from regeneration and saving faith, you will not come to appreciate the beauty of the golden rule. Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ and you will be saved. Trust in him, look to his saving work on the cross, and God will justify you by his grace, through faith. Paul continues in Romans and just after pronouncing universal condemnation by the Law he pronounces a universal way of salvation by faith. He says "But now, the righteousness of God has been manifested apart from the Law, although the Law and prophets bear witness to it." But it's apart from the Law, it's

apart from you trying to muscle out obedience to the golden rule all on your own power. The righteousness of God, it comes through faith in Jesus Christ for all who believe.

Once you are saved by faith in Christ, you know what? The indwelling Holy Spirit of God, he points us to Christ, to see in him our perfect example. And the really really good news, is that after salvation, after redemption, after escaping wrath, eternal wrath in eternal hell, we now can pursue obedience to the perfect law of God and find the glorious freedom, the joy, the deep rich profound joy of Christ, that he found in that obedience. We're all mindful of Jesus' rhetorical question Luke 6:46, "Why do you call me Lord, Lord and you do not do what I tell you." We don't want to be like those with this church, we do not want to be like those who hear and don't obey. We want to combine faith with doing, we want to combine hearing with obedience, so that we build our house upon solid rock. So, in the interest of putting the golden rule into practice, into practical use, which is what Jesus meant us to do with it. Not just to admire it, right? But to put it in to practice.

Let me give you some practical tips, you can write these down if you want to. Number one, well I guess I should say previous to number one, number point five, be ye therefore saved, you know, be regenerate, put your faith in the Lord Jesus Christ. If that's not there, right, there's no foundation to build on. Okay, so, now that we've gotten that out of the way, point number one, right, point number one: Look to Christ. Look to Christ and particularly the heart level commitment that Jesus had to obey his Father's will. You find statements of this everywhere in scripture. He said in John 5:30 "I seek not to do my own will but the will of him who sent me." Again, in John 6:38 "I have come down from heaven not to do my own will but the will of him who sent me."

Like Jesus, and following after Jesus, we need to see doing God's will as vital to us as the food we eat because Jesus did. John 4:34 "My food is to do the will of him who sent me and to accomplish his work." Is that how you think about your life, is that how you think about your days, your minutes? As accomplishing the will for which God left you on this earth. Accomplishing his purposes, there's no greater joy. You were created for something better than shopping lists and laundry.

For, for work, whatever the work is, there's virtue in all that work isn't there. But you're created for something more. Our food is to do the will of the God who chose us, who redeemed us, who saved us, who adopted us as his own children, gave us of his Holy Spirit, and empowers us both to will and to do according to his good pleasure. That's our roll.

So second, you need to write this down, if you don't find that spiritual influence strong within you, pray. Number one look to Christ, number two, pray. Ask God to quicken you by the Holy Spirit. Ask him to stir your heart. Ask him to fill you with a longing to obey him, to do his will. Just as Jesus prescribed in Luke 6:31, "Just as you wish," as you will, as you desire, or want, "so do." But you're not going to go do if you don't find the will and desire within you to do, right? If you find that lagging behind, if you find that cold, go to him in prayer.

We find the same pattern in Philippians 2:12-13 "Work out your own salvation with fear and trembling." When he says work it out he doesn't mean go and put in more effort. It's really

like a mining metaphor to work down, dig down deep and pull to the outside, work out from the inside out, work out your salvation, that seed of truth and salvation that he planted within you bring that to the outside and do it with fear and trembling, that is, don't be flippant about obedience. Why, because it's God who works in you both to will and to work for his good pleasure. God by the Spirit gives us the will to do, and then the energy to do his good pleasure.

Third thing, number one, look to Christ, number two, pray, number three, keep in step with the Spirit. Keep in step with the Spirit. As he has revealed in the Word of God, that is walk in the Spirit not in the flesh. Galatians 5:17 says "For the desires of the flesh are against the Spirit, the desires of the Spirit are against the flesh, these two are opposed to each other to keep you from doing the things you want to do." Look you're not going to practice the golden rule or any other law of Christ if you're sowing to the flesh. Galatians 6:8 says "the one who," sows in his own flesh or, "sows to his own flesh will from the flesh reap corruption. But the one who sows from the Spirit will from the Spirit reap eternal life." Give yourselves to the will of God by walking in the Spirit. How?

Number four, saturate yourself in God's Word. Saturate yourself in God's Word. Find all your delight in him. We're gonna wrap up where we started this morning during scripture reading in Psalm 37. You can turn there if you want to but right in the beginning of the Psalm it says this in verses 3-5, "Trust in the Lord and do good, dwell in the land, befriend faithfulness, delight yourself in the Lord, he will give you the desires of your heart." How can he say that, that he'll give you the desires of your heart? Because the more you delight yourself in him the more your desires change, the more your desires change, the more he delights to give you the desires of your heart; commit your way to the Lord, trust in him, he will act.

It starts by us trusting in God, which means faith in Jesus Christ. We've talked about that foundational point five step, right? Those who trust in him they look to him and walk with the Spirit he gave us, and when you delight in him when you know and do his will God gives you the desire, the will, the power to do his will to obey his Word. That is Psalm 37:6, "He will bring forth your righteousness as the light, your justice as the noon

day." God is gonna work within you both to will and to work for his good pleasure.

And that's how the golden rule, for us, is gonna go beyond a principle that's admired by the whole world to a rule that's practiced by Jesus' true disciples. Loving our neighbor as ourselves, extending that definition of neighbor even to our enemies for the sake of Christ. This seems far, way far beyond us, but you know what it becomes attainable. Attainable reality and I'll say this it becomes an obtainable reality of habit, the way we live our life if we'll just obey. In fact as Jesus intended this is going to become a habit for us. "Whatever you wish that others would do to you, do also to them for this is the Law and the prophets." I like how Martyn Loyd-Jones puts this, encouraging us in obeying the Law of God he writes this. "All the detailed regulations," giving, "given in the Law of the Old Testament what it tells you to do, for example, if you see your neighbor's ox straying how you're to bring it back to him or if you see anything going wrong in his farm how you're inform it what wants and do your utmost to help him. All those laws are not just meant to lead you to say 'The Law says that if I see my neighbor's ox straying that I am to take it back therefore I am

to do so.' Not at all, it is rather that you must say to yourself this man is like myself. And it would be a grievous matter and a loss to him if he's going to lose that ox. For he's a man like myself and how grateful I would be someone returned my Ox to me, therefore I will do that for him. In other words," Loyd-Jones says, "You're to be interested in your neighbor. You're to love him and to desire to help him and to be concerned about his happiness. The object of the Law is to bring us to that. And these detailed regulations are nothing but illustrations of that great central principal." End quote.

Did you get that, the Law is not confinement; the Law is freedom. The principle is love your neighbor as yourself. Do unto others as you would have others do unto you. And what that is is a summary statement of all the Law and the prophets. Every negative prohibition, every positive command, it's all for your joy and freedom, beloved. I'm afraid in many churches today people are taught to despise the law as pharisaical legalism. That is a slander against the holy Word of God. Don't ever say that.

Yes, the Law is meant to drive us to Christ because we can't keep it. But once we come to Christ, we find within us a new nature. We find within us the living Holy Spirit who enables us now to love that Law, to understand it, to see its beauty, it's excellence and its holiness and to put that into practice in our lives. That's true freedom. As the psalmist said in the longest psalm in the Psalter "I will run in the path of your commands, for you have set my heart free." True freedom is pursuing obedience to Christ in all that he commands. And taking this principle into mind, it's about using your moral judgment not for your own self-protection but for your neighbor's benefit. It's learning to empathize with others.

And in light of Luke 6:27-30 particularly with anyone who might be oriented toward you as an enemy, the more you think about how you'd like to be treated in that situation, considering the dictates of love, we've already talked about. The more you act on that, regularly, habitually as a way of living your life, the more you're going to grow in maturity in your moral judgment, the more effective you're going to be in loving your neighbor as yourself. And all that just provokes

more growth, more joy, more love, more joy in Christ like obedience.