



-- Read Luke 6:17-20

-- Pray

-- Introduction – Eight Examples of Unconventional Wisdom

1. Before you criticize someone, you should walk a mile in their shoes. That way, when you do criticize them, you're a mile away and you have their shoes.
2. Give a man a fish and he will eat for a day. Teach him how to fish and he will sit in a boat and do nothing all day.
3. If you lend someone \$20 and never see that person again, it was probably worth it.
4. It's always darkest before dawn. So if you're going to steal your neighbor's newspaper that's the time to do it.
5. Always remember you're unique...just like everyone else.
6. Good judgment comes from bad experience, and a lot of that comes from bad judgment.
7. There are two theories to arguing with women. Neither one works.
8. If at first you don't succeed, skydiving is not for you.

I give you this list this morning because the remainder of Luke chapter six is comprised of a sermon that Jesus preached, and it is replete with holy wisdom and instruction that goes entirely...and I mean *entirely*...against the conventional wisdom of our culture. And by conventional wisdom here, I am talking about the current thinking of our culture regarding how we ought to live and respond to others and the world at large. Whether or not we realize it, this conventional wisdom occupies an extremely influential role in people's lives, for it is by this conventional wisdom that most people live and move and operate in this life. By it they decide how to behave, and by it they try to make their place in society.

Unfortunately, however, the conventional wisdom of the world is often inimical to Biblical wisdom. More often than not, God's wisdom is drastically different from and diametrically opposed to the ideas of our secular society. In fact, Biblical wisdom usually turns our conventional wisdom on its head. As such, Christ's wisdom is bound to create difficulty for us as His followers, because, at first glance, the conventional wisdom it opposes seems quite wise. It often appears to make pretty good sense. Conventional wisdom usually seems to be quite logical, suggesting that up is up and down is down, that rich is rich and poor is poor. Biblical wisdom, on the other hand, gives the impression that up is actually down and down is really up, and that poor is really rich and that being rich can actually be the worst type of poverty. And, thus, we frequently scratch our heads, wondering, "How can this be?" God's Word so often seems so very paradoxical and, in the eyes of the world, completely crazy.

For example, biblical wisdom is full of apparent paradoxes such as these: Luke 14:11 – "*Everyone who exalts himself will be humbled, and he who humbles himself will be exalted;*" // James 1:9 – "*The brother in humble circumstances ought to take pride in his high position,*" and Matthew 10:39 – "*Whoever finds his life will lose it, and whoever loses his life for my sake will find it.*" There is no question that these kinds of statements fly in the face of conventional wisdom.

However, in these statements, which initially sound so backward, there is divine truth of profound importance and implication. And, at the same time, in the apparent soundness of conventional wisdom, there is usually little to no true wisdom at all. For, ultimately, biblical wisdom is the only wisdom that is true. Not only is the unconventional preaching of Christ infinitely wise, but it is also conveys inerrant, infallible truth. Very simply put, biblical wisdom can change our lives, and it most certainly will if we will allow it.

This type of wisdom—this countercultural, unconventional wisdom that changes lives—is the stuff of God's Word, and it is especially stuff of which the Sermon on the Mount is made. Verses 20-49 of chapter are Luke's version of the Sermon on the Mount that is most notably recorded in Matthew, chapters 5-7. What we have in this passage is nothing less than history's greatest Teacher sharing with us history's greatest sermon. Not only does this sermon turn conventional wisdom utterly on its head, but if we will really listen as we travel through it over the next several weeks, I am certain that it will turn all of us on our heads as well.

Let me begin, then, with a bit of background information about the Sermon on the Mount. It gets its name from the fact that the longer version of it that appears in the Book Matthew, is introduced like this: Matthew 5:1-2 – “*Now when he saw the crowds, he went up on a mountainside and sat down. His disciples came to him, and he began to teach them, saying...*” // The version of the sermon that Matthew records was preached on a mountainside, and, therefore, it is called “The Sermon on the Mount.”

Now, although there are variations between Luke’s account and Matthew’s, such as the obvious fact that Luke’s version is much shorter, there is little question that the sermon recorded here in Luke 6 is the same sermon that we know as “The Sermon on the Mount” from Matthew. Undoubtedly, both accounts are condensed accounts of Jesus’ sermon. Matthew certainly gives us a more complete summary and provides statements that are a bit more precise, but even his version is surely an edited version—that is, not even his longer version of the Sermon on the Mount contains everything Jesus said. However, both accounts contain very similar teachings, and both follow exactly the same flow and progress. Therefore, as we progress through Luke 6:20-49, we will be blessed to make frequent comparisons with Matthew’s account.

With that said, let me provide one last detail about this sermon of Jesus that is critically important to our understanding of it. That is, if we are going to properly understand these next 30 verses, and if we are going to apply them correctly to our lives for God’s glory and for our Christian growth, then we must understand this next point. Are you listening? Hear this: People usually want to treat the Sermon on the Mount primarily as a statement of ethics. But it isn’t. No, it really isn’t about ethics; it is a sermon about salvation.

That is the point I want you to hear about the Sermon on the Mount this morning: It is primarily a sermon about salvation. In fact, I believe it is probably the most definitive sermon that Jesus preached about identifying who is saved and who is not. // John MacArthur put it this way: “In the end, [the Sermon on the Mount] is about who is going to heaven and who is going to hell. It’s not about who is religious, it’s about who is saved. It’s not about who is living an ethical life, it’s about who knows God. And so it is a critical sermon from the lips of Christ Himself.”

Let me give you an example as to why this distinction about the chief purpose of the Sermon on the Mount is so very crucial. Let me quote to you from a recent article in *Christianity Today* regarding some comments Barak Obama made about

the Sermon on the Mount: “Obama said that while he does not believe in gay marriage, he does think the state should allow civil unions... ‘If people find that controversial, then I would just refer them to the Sermon on the Mount, which I think is, in my mind, for my faith, more central than an obscure passage in Romans,’ Obama said.

“Obama also cited the Sermon on the Mount in his June 28, 2006, ‘Call to Renewal’ address, saying, ‘Which passages of Scripture should guide our public policy? Should we go with Leviticus, which suggests slavery is o.k. and that eating shellfish is abomination? How about Deuteronomy, which suggests stoning your child if he strays from the faith? Or should we just stick to the Sermon on the Mount—a passage that is so radical that it's doubtful that our own Defense Department would survive its application?’”

Please understand, I do not mention this to be political. I have no intention of telling you whom you should vote for today. I mention this simply because it is a good current example of the unfortunate manner in which our world so commonly and misunderstands and mishandles the Sermon on the Mount. Now, I certainly do not know Mr. Obama’s heart. He may very well have received salvation through faith in Christ, or he may still be dead in his sins, and separated from the life of God, just like everyone else apart from Christ. I simply do not know; only God knows for certain. However, regardless of that, I am certain that he is misinterpreting and misusing the Sermon on the Mount, like so many others have done, by viewing it primarily as a passage about ethics, rather than a sermon about salvation.

Indeed, if so many of the people who so often quote the Sermon on the Mount to support their own unbiblical ideas would read it as I believe it is intended—as a sermon about who is and is not saved—how blessed they would be! How they would cease from self-justification and discover the life that begins with the unconventionally divine wisdom of Christ’s Words! How they would be convicted of sin and turn to Jesus Christ in repentance and faith! Let us, then not miss the point of this classic sermon. Let us hear the words of Christ as they are and cease from the temptation to fit them into our already conceived, or misconceived, perspective on God and His Word. As we progress through this remarkable sermon of our Lord, let us allow the conviction of the Holy Spirit to fall upon our hearts through the work of the Holy Spirit. Let us hear what Christ has to say about the true characteristics of the redeemed, and let us honestly survey our souls for these divine stamps of salvation.

So, let us, then, embark upon this journey into this marvelous and revealing sermon together. We will really begin to do so in earnest next week, because I feel that it is very important for our overall understanding of this sermon to conclude this morning's message by setting the stage for what is to come.

Look with me at verse 20, in which begins, "*Looking at his disciples, [Jesus] said...*" Notice: From this verse we clearly learn that Jesus directed the Sermon on the Mount primarily at His disciples. With that in mind, let's carefully define what Luke means here by "disciples." In this Gospel, Luke typically speaks of three different groups of people who are around Jesus.

The first is His "Apostles." Go back for a moment to verse thirteen. There we see that Jesus had identified the twelve men He had just prayerfully chosen as "Apostles." These men became preachers and church leaders in training, and they were the most intimate group of Jesus' followers. In verse 17, we read that Jesus descended from the mountain with them at His side.

The second group Luke identifies is "disciples." Again, in verse 17, we see that, as Jesus and His Apostles are coming down from the mountain, they come to a level place where they are greeted by a great multitude of what Luke calls "disciples," to be differentiated from the Apostles. These disciples were a mixed crowd of people with mixed motivations. As verse 18 tells us, they are largely drawn to Jesus for three reasons. The first is His power over the physical world, such as sicknesses and diseases. The second is His power over the spiritual world, as seen in His ability to cast out demons. And third thing which has attracted these disciples to Jesus is the power of His preaching and teaching. Thus, these people—whom Luke calls "disciples"—are committed to Jesus in some degree. They are disciples because they are Jesus' students. They are disciples because they have forsaken at least some area of their daily lives in order to follow Jesus, moving with Him as He moves and listening to Him day after day.

The third group of people around Jesus that Luke mentions is the crowds. In verse 17, we read, "*A large crowd of his disciples was there and a great number of people from all over Judea, from Jerusalem, and from the coast of Tyre and Sidon.*" Notice that there are two groups of people mentioned in this verse—"disciples," whom we have already identified, and a group Luke describes as "*a great number of people from all over Judea, Jerusalem, and from the coast of Tyre and Sidon.*"

Therefore, in Luke's Gospel, the most intimate group of followers is the Apostles. The middle group—the large band of learners and students—are the disciples, and then the curious group of fringe followers is the crowd.

Now, the reason why I have given you all of this background information about Christ's followers is to emphasize the point that it is to the group Luke calls "disciples" that this profoundly important sermon is most directly addressed. You see, the people in this group were at all different levels of faith in Christ. Some were entirely mesmerized by Him, others were wholeheartedly enamored, yet all of them were attracted to Him in some measure, believing to some degree or another that He could be the Messiah. Moreover, many of them had likely come to true salvation already, embracing Jesus Christ fully. These disciples were actively denying themselves, taking up their crosses, and following Jesus as their Lord and Savior. Others, although not yet saved, are purposefully pursuing the path that leads to salvation. However, there are some of these disciples who are surely stuck in neutral. Even in the very presence of Christ they hear, but they do not obey; they sit, and they soak, and they sour, but they do not see. In addition, there are undoubtedly others among these disciples who are hearing more from Jesus' preaching than their prideful hearts can stand, and they are slowly working themselves away from the path of true discipleship. In any case, these disciples are a diverse group, whose spiritual condition is all over the spiritual landscape.

Come to think of it, these disciples to whom Christ preached the Sermon on the Mount were very much like this congregation here this morning. Within this fellowship, we have that intimate group of very intensely involved people—the sort of the people who are serving the Lord with their entire lives. They are faithful witnesses who love Christ with all their heart, soul, mind, and strength. They live to work for Him, and they bring great glory to God's name.

In the same way, we also have among us that fringe group of people who are just checking things out. They are curious about what is going on here, curious about who we are, and curious about what the Bible teaches. Most likely, they have been attracted to come because of some experience they seen heard about in the church or in the authentic Christian life of a believer. Maybe you are here today as part of the curious. If you are, praise God with joy that you are. It is our great hope that, by the kindness of God, your curiosity will turn to commitment and that commitment to true, abundant life in Christ.

Just as with the crowd around Jesus, there is also in our congregation that group of disciples in the middle who are the students and learners. You are the people who are here most every week. You hear the teaching, you know most of the songs, and you are generally in the process of spiritual growth. Many of you sincerely know Jesus Christ as Lord, but, alas, there are surely at least some who do not. Some of you are becoming wholeheartedly devoted to authentic Christian living. Others, however, are just sitting in neutral, without making a real commitment to Christ. Maybe you are becoming disillusioned about discipleship because you don't really want to do battle with your sin, and you find yourself wanting to back out and give up. Yet, nonetheless, you are still here. Whatever the case, this congregation is just the type of group for whom the Sermon on the Mount is intended—a crowd just like us. Here, there are people who know Christ, people on the way to knowing Christ, people in neutral, and people who are on the way out because they're not willing to make the commitment.

And with the great privilege I have received to preach this passage to you today and over the next several weeks, I hope to communicate this message of Christ as faithfully as possible. It really is an awesome responsibility, and in light of it, I am certain that we, as Christ's disciples today, would be utterly remiss if we were to misunderstand the main point that Jesus was making to that group of disciples 2000 years ago. Hear this: Jesus certainly did not leave His disciples with the stirring words of the Sermon on the Mount so that we might use them to try to normalize homosexuality or quote them to justify unholy living. No, He spoke this message and He forever made it part of His word for a purpose much more substantial than those.

And here is the main point again: The Sermon on the Mount was so passionately and potently preached by Jesus because He wanted His disciples, both then and now, to know the criteria by which we can determine our own spiritual condition—whether we are among the blessed, as verses 20-23 indicate, or among the cursed, as revealed in verses 24-26. Of all the information for which we so often clamor, there surely is not any information more important to know than these criteria, and here they are in the Sermon on the Mount. This masterpiece of divine truth stands for all time as a litmus test for true salvation and spiritual growth. It communicates the attitude and actions of those who truly believe in Jesus Christ and have received the Holy Spirit and contrasts them against the attitudes and actions of those who do not.

To conclude, then, I simply want to direct your attention to the last four verses of this masterful sermon from the mouth of our Lord (verses 46-49), because one

of the best ways to understand what any sermon is really about is to look at the conclusion. The same is true with Luke's account of the Sermon on the Mount, which Jesus concludes by saying,

Luke 6:46-49 – “Why do you call me, ‘Lord, Lord,’ and do not do what I say? I will show you what he is like who comes to me and hears my words and puts them into practice. He is like a man building a house, who dug down deep and laid the foundation on rock. When a flood came, the torrent struck that house but could not shake it, because it was well built. But the one who hears my words and does not put them into practice is like a man who built a house on the ground without a foundation. The moment the torrent struck that house, it collapsed and its destruction was complete.”

Would we, then, be wise, or will we be cursed? Will we summon the humility over the course of this masterpiece of a sermon to survey our spiritual condition sincerely, or will we ignore the voice of our Lord in favor of self-justification or personal comfort? Will we hear these words and put them into practice, or will we build our lives and faith upon a foundation that will never hold? The chance is here. The choice is ours. Come... listen... ponder... and pray. Whatever you do, please do not miss this opportunity to hear history's greatest preacher, Jesus Christ, preaching history's greatest sermon, the Sermon on the Mount. If we will hear and put these words into practice, I can promise you that, just as Jesus is turning conventional wisdom upon its head, He will turn all of us upon our heads as well in an eternally glorious way. Praise be to God!