

LAMPLIGHTER

JUNE 2008

THEME: JESUS SAID...“Do To Others”

JOHN 20:30, 31

*“So in everything, do to others what you have them do to you,
for this sums up the Law and the Prophets.” Matthew 7:12*

Dear Servants of Christ,

There are items that while we know them, we are better off when we are reminded of their importance in our lives. The Golden Rule above would be one of those things. It is something that we learned from early childhood, but invariably it gets placed in the far corner of our minds and we simply forget to apply it in various circumstances of life. The so called Golden Rule is found in negative form in rabbinic Judaism, Hinduism, Buddhism, and Confucianism. It occurred in various forms in Greek and Roman ethical teaching. Jesus stated it here in positive form, but obviously, such a rule plays an important role in the lives of people everywhere.

Incorporated into our culture, we hear people say things like: “What goes around; comes around.” We hear others speak of “karma” – good or bad. If given the choice, we always hope for good, so we take no chance. We are nice so that nice things will happen to us. Even the Scriptures remind us that we reap what we sow. If we sow seeds of anger, hatred, resentment, bitterness, and strife, then why would we ever expect to reap a harvest of love, kindness, respect, patience, or understanding? With these things being applied as they typically are in our lives, we can experience several outcomes – guilt: for not doing what we should be doing; frustration: we know what we should be doing, but often find ourselves doing the exact opposite; hopelessness: we are unworthy servants who deserve God’s condemnation and damnation. These are always the results of our trying to redeem ourselves through the Law.

The Good News is that Jesus fulfilled the Law and the Prophets in our behalf. He did for us what we were unable to do for ourselves. He performed the work of salvation without counting the cost to Himself. Such passages as Mark 8:31, Luke 24:26 and Luke 24:46 demonstrate Jesus’ understanding of the cost for redemption. The Apostles give witness to the cost as well. Acts 20:28, 1 Corinthians 6:20, 1 Corinthians 7:23, and 2 Peter 2:1 bear testimony to their revealing that understanding to their readers. In all these passages Jesus never says the cost is too great, nor does He say that He is unwilling. Instead Hebrews 12:2 says, “Let us fix our eyes on Jesus, the author and perfecter of our faith, who for the joy set before him endured the cross, scorning its shame, and sat down at the right hand of the throne of God.”

Jesus does this without any expectation of a reward. While we often approach requests with the mindset of what am I going to get out of this, how much will I be paid, or what is my reward, Jesus does not ask such questions. He is content simply doing the Father’s will. Yes! There are passages that speak of our reward as: 1 Samuel 24:19, Matthew 5:12, Ephesians 6:8, Colossians 3:24 and Hebrews 11:26; but the promised reward is not our source of motivation. Like Jesus we are motivated not by the Law, not because it is demanded, required, or expected, but by the Gospel, for we ourselves have received grace upon grace. For this reason we reach out to others with the same kindness, love and forgiveness that God in Christ has given to us.

Unlike all the teachers before him, Jesus places a new spin on the previous understanding of the Golden Rule. As the first listeners to Jesus (Matthew 7:28-29 “When Jesus had finished saying these things, the crowds were amazed at his teaching, because he taught as one who had authority, and not as their teachers of the law”), we stand amazed at His teaching. Jesus does not motivate by the Law but by the Gospel of God’s love, mercy and grace. We do to others what we would have them do to us as an example of cost without counting and acting without reward. Through such sacrificial living, may God’s name be glorified and others brought to the true knowledge of Christ’s redeeming work!

Close with prayer, the Lord’s Prayer, Benediction, and Song – #84 “Let Us Ever Walk with Jesus”