



The unfolding of your words gives light.

To Seek and to Save

An Exposition of the Gospel of Luke

³⁷“Do not judge, and you will not be judged^a; and do not condemn, and you will not be condemned^b; pardon, and you will be pardoned^c. ³⁸Give, and it will be given to you. They will pour into your lap a good measure—pressed down, shaken together, *and* running over^d. For by your standard of measure it will be measured to you in return^{a, b}.”

^a **6:37 Do not judge, and you will not be judged.** This text is commonly used to speak of a future judgment by God on those who violate its commands. There is certainly a time set when God will judge the living and the dead, but in this text Jesus spoke mainly of sowing and reaping in this world. God’s short term judgments often come in the form of natural consequences built into His world, including getting back from others what we dish out.

People have used this statement of Jesus to imply that God will judge people who point out sin in others. This idea is incorrect on two counts. First, Jesus is not against any kind of judging, for he elsewhere assumed and commanded it (Luke 7:43; John 7:24). Unrighteous judging is more than pointing out behavior that God has already pronounced sinful. Critical people—judges—create their own standards of judgment.

Second, Jesus is not talking first about God judging the critical people. He is saying that people with a critical spirit (like the religious leaders with whom He often dealt) will reap the consequences of their lifestyle. The judgment that comes in return is criticism from other people, not God. This is about sowing and reaping.

When you live this way your preferences and convictions become the standard by which others should be judged. Paul scolded the church at Corinth for engaging in this type of judging:

But to me it is a very small thing that I may be examined by you, or by any human court; in fact, I do not even examine myself. For I am conscious of nothing against myself, yet I am not by this acquitted; but the one who examines me is the Lord. Therefore do not go on passing judgment before the time, but wait until the Lord comes who will both bring to light the things hidden in the darkness and disclose the motives of men’s hearts; and then each man’s praise will come to him from God. Now these things, brethren, I have figuratively applied to myself and Apollos for your sakes, so that in us you may learn not to exceed what is written, so that no one of you will become arrogant in behalf of one against the other. 1 Corinthians 4:3-6

^b **6:37 do not condemn, and you will not be condemned.** The word translated “condemn” comes from a similar category as the word for “judge,” but condemning takes the judgment a step further. The word used here is related to another word often translated “take vengeance,” but with a prefix (*katadikazo*). The woman caught in adultery in John 8 may have been guilty of the charges leveled against her, but those who sought to condemn her were blinded to some vital information because of their prejudices.

So Jesus is saying that it is not only wrong to set yourself up as the standard for judgment, it is also wrong to pronounce your own sentences on those you judge.

^c **6:37 pardon, and you will be pardoned.** The word translated “pardon” means *to release* or *to send away*. It is used over sixty times in the New Testament, a few times of a man divorcing his wife. Here Jesus speaks of letting people go—of giving up the right to get even or harbor grudges.

Do you suppose Jesus’ half brother James was listening to this sermon? James later wrote, “For judgment will be merciless to one who has shown no mercy; mercy triumphs over judgment.” (James 2:13).

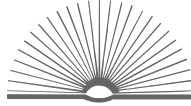
^d **6:38 Give, and it will be given to you. They will pour into your lap a good measure—pressed down, shaken together, *and* running over.** The reference to weights and measures is likely an economic one. The “lap” or “bosom” likely refers to the pocket created by an apron when it is held out. This is a means of carrying goods. A vendor in Jesus’ day (and still today) who

The Gospel of Luke
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wished to be generous would make sure a product was packed down into a container and more than filled the vessel. This is the way Boaz treated Ruth:

So she lay at his feet until morning and rose before one could recognize another; and he said, "Let it not be known that the woman came to the threshing floor." Again he said, "Give me the cloak that is on you and hold it." So she held it, and he measured six measures of barley and laid it on her. Then she went into the city.
Ruth 3:14-15

^a **6:38 by your standard of measure it will be measured to you in return.** This is the law of the harvest. You reap what you sow.

^b 6:37-38 The great trouble that comes when we put ourselves in the place of God is that we are not like Him. For example:

- We make up rules based on our own selfish kingdom.
- We issue unjust consequences when others really are wrong.
- We seek our own revenge.
- We are not merciful.
- We hold tightly to earthly riches.

Critical spirits and stinginess are contagious. They come from hearts that treasure too much the kingdom ruled by self—the kingdom we create when we want to be God. Jesus spoke to a Hebrew crowd that had been ruled by *institutionalized legalism*—the dark kingdom where men replace God and His judgments.

Having spoken in the beatitudes of the hearts of those who have lost their attraction to this kind of power-grab, Jesus now addresses the earthly consequences of clinging too tightly to the kind of treasure men crave in their own kingdoms.

Only those who have been wronged are in a position to offer a pardon. Only those who know others in need are in a position to give. Why does our flesh recoil at the thought of reaching out to the vulnerable? Because we are not like our heavenly Father.

Here are the ways you can sow mercy instead of judgment.

1. Make sure you are not stricter than God is. What does His word say?
2. Fight the urge to take pleasure in seeing people pay for their sins. This is particularly important if the sin was against you.
3. Create around yourself a culture of giving. How much selfish living do you encourage by your actions? Go back to the cross and see what Christ-followers esteem instead of self (Philippians 2:1-11).

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