

Reflection on Luke 6:27-38

Some might say, “this is crazy talk.”

However, these words aren’t just challenging and confusing, they are the heart of Jesus’ Sermon on the Mount and the very heart of the Christian gospel.

Jesus comes to proclaim a kingdom of God that is almost different in every way from the kingdom of the world, the kingdom that says you should look out for number one, that you love those who love you and hate those who hate you, that life is meant to be lived, finally and always, quid pro quo.

So after setting out his crazy – at least according to our experience in the world – vision for the Christian life, he does two things.

First, he assails the logic of the kingdom of the world.

How can we honor things we do out of our own self interest?

Doing good to those who do good to us, loving those who love us, may be the norm, but it is essentially self-centered and nothing to be admired or emulated. And following in that pattern won’t move us beyond the violence-saturated and scarcity-driven history of the world. We have to find a new way forward.

Second, he offers the only motivation strong enough to withstand the pull of the culture to look out first and foremost for our own interests and invite us to take that new path. He points us, that is, to the very nature of God – the one who is merciful and loving even to those who don’t deserve it.

And that includes us.

The only thing that invites love that transcends self-interest, you see, is being loved. And the one thing that prompts mercy, that is not self-serving, is receiving mercy. So Jesus directs our attention to God, the one who abounds in compassion, mercy, love, and forgiveness.

And because that’s so hard for us to believe, Jesus ultimately won’t just talk about that love, he’ll show it, spreading his arms wide upon the cross to offer God’s loving embrace to each and all of us.

Crazy?

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