

LUKE 6: 31-36

31. And as ye would that men should do to you, do ye also to them likewise.

32. For if ye love them which love you, what thank have ye? for sinners also love those that love them.

33. And if ye do good to them which do good to you, what thank have ye? for sinners also do even the same.

34. And if ye lend to them of whom ye hope to receive, what thank have ye? for sinners also lend to sinners, to receive as much again.

35. But love ye your enemies, and do good, and lend, hoping for nothing again; and your reward shall be great, and ye shall be the children of the Highest: for he is kind unto the unthankful and to the evil.

36. Be ye therefore merciful, as your Father also is merciful.

During His earthly life, Jesus Christ taught in two ways. He taught people verbally. And, He confirmed His teachings by His personal example. Sadly, both His words and actions have been either not understood or rejected outright by most of society. He was even persecuted and put to death because His teachings were a major threat to the way that people wanted to live.

Society is so attached to the values of this world that it will not tolerate anyone questioning the correctness of its way of life. Our Savior's teachings, on the other hand, require us to sacrifice ourselves in many ways while the world encourages us to always do what we want to do. Are we then ready and willing to submit to such sacrifices when most of the people around us will not understand and will only mock us?

We want to be treated well by people. We are happy when someone does something good to us. We want to be loved by people. Such desires are natural. But, are we ready to treat all people as well as we want to be treated, especially when it might be rather difficult or uncomfortable for us to do so? Do we do good to all people or only to those whom we like or can benefit from? Are we ready to love all people, even our enemies, or are we very selective as to whom we show our love? Are we ready to help someone in need even when it will cost us money, time or effort that the person will never be able to repay? And, can we be merciful even to a person that has hurt us? Do we want to live a life of sacrificial love that the Lord is asking us to live? This is the dilemma that we face every day

This Gospel reading reveals that Our Savior expects His followers to adhere to a much higher standard than what is practiced in the world. But, why does God place such demands on us? Because, this is the merciful way in which He treats us. And, by behaving in this way, we show Him that we love Him, that we are like Him, that we are His true children. God knows that it is very hard for us to be able to behave in this manner in a sinful and evil world. So, He promises us a great reward for our obedience. We can become His children.

My dear brothers and sisters in Christ, no matter how hard it is to be a good Christian, it can be done. If we sincerely try, Christ will strengthen and aid us with His divine Grace. Together with His help we can become the lanterns shining in the blinding darkness of a sinful world, with a light that shows people who are seeking God the way to Him. Then, the good that we will be doing will overcome some of the evil in the world and will help our Christian family grow. Let us not tarry any longer but with prayer and in humility begin our work.

With Much Love in Christ,

Archpriest Serge Kotar