Luke 6:38c In fact, the measure with which you measure will be measured back to you.

I have to confess that this is one of the hardest texts there is to preach on. It is difficult because we have this work-righteous nature and my mind wants to see and read this section of what Jesus said in a very work righteous way. I want to believe that what I do and how I do it will make the difference in my life, especially in the issue of my eternal life. And yet when you read this text I think there are some very important questions to ask as you consider what the real lesson of this text is. So here are the questions I deem important to understand this text.

Do you think Jesus thought that what he said here was actually better than or a replacement of the Ten Commandments and the Law of God? Do you think that Jesus, God’s Son, who knew he was here to pay for our sins because we couldn’t be perfect like our heavenly Father, do you think Jesus is actually teaching that our works or our actions are what cause “our great reward? Do you think that Jesus really meant that we are to never judge any situation because isn’t it true that Jesus made judgements on those around him? Do you think Jesus knew the difference between the Law and the Gospel and what the impact on people is when you use those great doctrines of God’s Word?

Those will be our guiding questions as you look at this text under the theme: **THE MEASURE YOU USE.**

So let’s just start by address that first question: Do you think Jesus thought that what he said here was actually better than or a replacement of the Ten Commandments and the Law of God? I have to confess that I ask that question because on my social media page this very idea was being promoted by a mega-church pastor, that the beatitudes of Jesus were meant by Jesus to be a replacement of the Ten Commandments. Yet, what are the Ten Commandments? They are a summary of the Law of God. So is Jesus nullifying the Law of God? The answer would be “No.” In actually Jesus clearly tells us his position in Matthew’s record of the Beatitudes or the Sermon on the Mount. Just before Matthew records the same thing Luke records in our text, Jesus says: **“Do not think that I came to destroy the Law or the Prophets. I did not come to destroy them but to fulfill them. Amen, I tell you: Until heaven and earth pass away, not even the smallest letter, or even part of a letter, will in any way pass away from the Law until everything is fulfilled.”** Now, this is important to grasp. Important because clearly Jesus is not working to replace the Law or give us new laws or anything like that. Clearly Jesus teaches that the Law will be in place and valid until the Great Day of Judgment. So instead of thinking Jesus is giving us a new law to replace the old, how about just grasping that Jesus is actually preaching the Law, preaching it through some very specific applications in order to accomplish his purpose among his hearers!

Now just so you grasp that I am not crazy or stretching this text because it is hard, please note that the Apostles of Jesus grasped this same point. In the Epistle to the Romans, in chapter 3 where a righteousness apart from the Law is clearly taught what did the Holy Spirit inspire? These words (3:31), **“So are we doing away with the law by this faith? Absolutely not! Instead, we are upholding the Law.”**

Once we grasp Jesus is preaching Law, let’s just ask why He would do that? Well, . Jesus is the Son of God and as such, Jesus knew exactly what his hearers were up to, how they thought and what they needed to learn. The Jews before Jesus were a very self-righteous group. They thought they obeyed the Law. Thought they obeyed the Law of God perfectly and thus were holy and righteous before God himself. But they weren’t! What they did was “selectively” obeyed the Law. The Law said, “Do not steal.” But as long as I could get what was yours under the guise of upholding the Law, that was fine. A specific example of this kind of behavior would later be given by Jesus when he spoke of how a son would deprive his mother of her care by pronouncing the inheritance “corban,” dedicated to the Temple and therefore could not be used for mom (Mtt 7:11). So it is clear that Jesus is preaching law and making some very pointed applications to the people before him. Let’s look.

Our first lesson says this: **“But I say to you who are listening: Love your enemies. Do good to those who hate you. 28 Bless those who curse you. Pray for those who mistreat you. 29 If someone strikes you on one cheek, offer the other too. If someone takes away your coat, do not withhold your shirt. 30 Give to everyone who asks you, and if anyone takes away your things, do not demand them back. 31 Treat others just as you would want them to treat you.”** In truth, these words are the demands and commands of God’s Law to **“love your neighbor as yourself,”** but it was not what the people before Jesus practiced. They hated the Romans who controlled their land. They hated any and all gentiles because they were not Jewish. Instead of loving, they manipulated, maneuvered and conspired to get what they wanted. I am telling you that these words to these people would have struck their hearts, convicted them of personal sin on a level they would never have given thought to! Jesus’ words, that “double edged sword” cuts right down to and exposes the sin they were filled with! The real damning statement for them was that, **“Treat others just as you would want them to treat you.”** These proud, haughty, self-righteous people in that day and age were some of the cruelest and wicked people you could imagine. And if they couldn’t be cruel and wicked to the Romans or other gentiles, they practiced their godlessness on their very own people.

Now, before we go on, I don’t want you to think these words have no application to us today. We still need to think deeply about the lessons here. Do we love our enemies? Do we bless those who curse us and pray for those who mistreat? Are we willing to turn the other cheek and when someone takes be willing to give even more? These words are a great way to measure yourself. Jesus says that what he lays out here is God pleasing, do we still grasp that fact? In other words is your measure yours or God’s?

The next lesson. **“If you love those who love you, what credit is that to you? To be sure, even the sinners love those who love them. 33 And if you do good to those who are good to you, what credit is that to you? Even the sinners do the same thing. 34 If you lend to those from whom you expect to be repaid, what credit is that to you? Even the sinners lend to sinners in order to be paid back in full. 35 Instead, love your enemies, do good and lend, expecting nothing in return. Your reward will be great, and you will be sons of the Most High, because he is kind to the unthankful and the evil. 36 Be merciful, just as your Father is merciful.”**

Now I think these words are pretty easy to grasp and understand…we don’t like and are made uncomfortable by them, but they are really easy to grasp and understand. Do you get the feeling that God wants us to be different than the world? Do you get the feeling that our job is to be imitators and promoters of God’s love and grace! If you have that sense then I will tell you that you are very right. It is the whole point of this particular lesson and that point is summed up by Jesus in the ending words here: **Be merciful, just as your Father is merciful.”**

Do we practice the mercy that God has give us? I think of the parable of the steward, who got caught cheating his master. The master called him to account and was going to throw him in prison along with his family but the steward begged for mercy. The master completely forgave him his debt. Yet this guy went out and grabbed someone who owed him but a fraction he had been forgiven. Did he forgive, nope, he had his brother thrown in prison. The master heard and called him in. **“You wicked servant, I cancelled your debt because you begged me to. Shouldn’t you have had mercy on your fellows servant just as I had on you?”** That’s really the application that Jesus is using here in our text. You claim you have the forgiveness of God, you claim that Jesus wiped away all your sins and yet you do not graciously, mercifully treat your fellow Christians? What does that say about your faith? Again, I believe the words of Jesus struck to the very heart of sin found in the crowd of people before him.

Now it is this portion of the text where Jesus says, **“Your reward will be great and you will be sons of the Most High, because he is kind to the unthankful and the evil.”** I don’t think Jesus is promising us heaven here, rather Jesus is pointing out that when you live God’s way you are actually practicing the faith you should. You will feel great because you know you have acted in faith, you have been motivated by the Lord to be just like Him being kind and compassionate to those around you.

I want you to know that this is not something new in the area of faith. It is such a challenge to those of faith that one of the Apostle’s even wrote an entire Epistle to address the problem. To many people were claiming faith but when you looked at their lives, you didn’t see any evidence of that faith at all. It is the Epistle of James that we are studying in our week day Bible classes. The classic truth of James is found in chapter 1:22, **“Do not merely listen to the word and so deceive yourselves. Do what it says!”** I chuckle because so many want to dismiss James as work righteousness and yet James is upholding exactly what Jesus is teaching. **“Be merciful, just as your Father is merciful.”**

Then on to the last part of this lesson which I consider to be focal point of it all. Verses 37-38: 37 **"Do not judge, and you will not be judged. Do not condemn, and you will not be condemned. Forgive, and you will be forgiven. 38 Give, and it will be given to you. A good measure pressed down, shaken together and running over, will be poured into your lap. In fact, the measure with which you measure will be measured back to you."**

Notice that we are warned not to judge and that warning is repeated with a more specific word. Do not judge, do not condemn! You and I have no right to be condemning or to be people who look down harshly or condescendingly. That is what is being spoken of here. The point is made when the text says, **“In fact, the measure with which you measure will be measured back to you.”** What is important is that we make our decision on everything on the basis of God’s Word. Name anyone at any time who is not going to be judged by the standard of God’s Holy Word. Everyone is judged by God’s Word. That is the measure we are to use. You can see this truth as you contemplate what the text means when it says, **“Forgive, and you will be forgiven. 38 Give, and it will be given to you. A good measure pressed down, shaken together and running over, will be poured into your lap.”**

Again, the lesson reminds you to be generous and merciful in your life in whatever you are making judgments about. And we do make judgments. We do look at things and determine if they are right or wrong. We do consider actions and words as either good or bad. We do weigh whether a teaching or report is good and true or false and evil. We do those things. As Christians, we are simply to do those things in accord with God’s Word. That what the Jewish people, especially the religious leadership was completely failing to do. Jesus was driving them back to God’s Word. Measure everything by God’s Word and there will never be a problem, but measure with care and mercy. Measure in the same way it will be measure to you. And God will judge you by the standard of his Word. Here is how.

One day, some day each of us will be before the throne of God. At issue will be whether or not we had faith, faith as God describes it and faith as God has laid it forth. If you do not have faith, if you do not believe the Bible to be God’s Word from end to end, if you do not believe Jesus the Son of God and the very one to whom we will answer to, you will without any doubt end up in hell and it will not be pretty…eternally! It is not your right to pick and choose what you will believe and how, it is what God has established and God has said. It is His measure, God’s measure that will be used. Case in point, John 12:47-48 **“If anyone hears my words but does not hold on to them, I do not judge him, for I did not come to judge the world, but to save the world. The one who rejects me and does not receive my words does have a judge. The word which I spoke is what will judge him on the Last Day.”**  I am pretty sure that is clear!

But the person who believes in Jesus, who trusts that Jesus has forgiven sin, has granted the gift of eternal life and salvation is eternally saved. Again, mind you, this is not an empty faith or just empty words, but a faith that is lived and practiced. A faith that grasp that we are rotten, full time sinners who without Jesus have absolutely no standing before God but with Jesus we are children of God and heirs of eternal life. We hear and follow Jesus, even though it may be badly and such. We run the race, even though we may only limp or hobble along. We believe in Jesus because we know that by the standard of the Law of God we fall incredibly and absolutely far short of what God demands. Jesus is our only hope and confidence. Jesus is our sure defense and salvation. Jesus is the only measure that we are to use and consider. But remember, Jesus preached the law and showed us that we need Him. I need the measure of Jesus because on my own I cannot measure up. I need God’s mercy, I need God’s forgiveness, I need Jesus’ salvation. That’s what this text leads up to. To grasp our need of a Savior and to see that Jesus is that Savior. Amen.