



Date: 16th February – 2nd March 2025

Theme: Teachings of Jesus

Bible Reading: Luke 6:17-49

(the Sermon on the Plain)

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PREPARATION FOR GROUP LEADERS

This material covers **three weeks**, from our Gospel readings from the Lectionary, looking at the teachings of Jesus from **Luke chapter 6 (Luke 6:17-26, Luke 6:27-38, Luke 6:39-49)**. There is plenty of food for thought in these readings; enough to cover more than one session. You can use it however works best for your group. In the 'Digging Deeper' section, the questions are only a starter. If you are doing this over two or more sessions, you may wish to ask the group to bring their own questions too.

PREPARATION FOR ALL PARTICIPANTS (before the session)

As you think about this session beforehand, take some time to reflect and pray. Ask yourself:

Which teachings of Jesus (or which Commandments of God) do I find the hardest?

Which do I desperately want to do better at?

Which commandment or teaching do I think the world would do well to pay attention to?

If you have time, read the Bible passage (and the small passage before it): **Luke 6:12-49**. This is a famous sermon of Jesus, often called **the Sermon on the Plain**. ('The Sermon on the Mount' is in Matthew's Gospel, and is slightly different, though it has similarities.) *What do you make of it?*

STARTING THE SESSION: A PRAYER

(Based on Psalm 1)

Help us, O God, to find delight in your teachings;
not to follow the advice of evildoers, or the path of destruction.

Help us to meditate on your words, day and night,
even when your teaching is hard or challenging.

May we be like trees planted by streams of living water,
bearing fruit, in season and out of season,
because our roots draw life from your Word.

Watch over our ways, dear God;

help us to stand firm, against the winds of opinion or the ways of the foolish,

and to face your judgement knowing that we have held on to your commandments of love. **Amen.**

FINDING OUR ROOTS

In small groups of 2-4 people, think together about the following questions:

What's the most memorable sermon (or inspirational talk) you've ever heard? What made it memorable? How did its message affect you? Did it have an impact on your attitudes or lifestyle?

Have you read the passage for this session? How do you think you would have responded to Jesus' sermon if you were in the crowd that day listening to Jesus?

READING THE SCRIPTURES - with background information

Read together the Bible passage: [Luke 6:17-49](#) (Or break it up into smaller parts, if necessary.)

In his ministry, Jesus gave many sermons and preached to many crowds. The Gospels do not always record them in full. **The Sermon on the Plain** (“level place”, verse 17) was given to ‘a great crowd of his disciples’. It may have been delivered as a single sermon to his disciples, as Luke has recorded it; or perhaps it is the highlights of a longer sermon; or it may be a collection of sayings and parables of Jesus placed together to give a summary of his early preaching ministry. In its structure and themes, it is similar to **the Sermon on the Mount** ([Matthew 5-7](#)), but Luke’s is shorter and there are some significant differences in the language and content. Both of these famous sermons are recorded as being near the start of his ministry. They both give us a radical vision, based on truly living out God’s values and reflecting God’s grace. To Jesus’ initial audience, they were difficult teachings, contrary to the ways of the world, and uncomfortable for many. They are just as challenging today.

DIGGING DEEPER

In **verses 17-26**, Jesus says some surprising things about **poor and wealthy people**. *What do you make of these words? How can the poor be happier than the rich? What are the life-giving things that money can’t buy? In what ways have the rich ‘already received their reward’? Do you think this is promising a reversal in heaven for the hungry and poor, or finding blessing in this life despite hardship?*

The invitation to **love our enemies** (**27-36**) is deeply challenging: God’s people should reflect God in ways of mercy, not merely focussing on the offence; shining light into the lives of others by reflecting love back at them, rather than perpetuating darkness. Loving enemies in this way requires courage and boldness. It is not about being walked over, but about rising above to show a different way. *How can this sort of radical behaviour help to challenge or change the other person? Can you give examples? And when is it important to speak out, not to accept bullying or hatred, and to seek justice?*

See **verses 37-42**. *How quickly are we to **judge others** before we get to know them? Does our media (and social media) actually encourage judgement and division? Do we need help taking the ‘log’ out?!*

*Of the teachings in the sermon, which is the hardest to reconcile in our society today? Jesus talks about a **tree bearing fruit**, either good or bad (**verses 43-45**). Is our world becoming dominated by bad trees? How can we produce more good fruit, and then plant the seeds for more good trees to grow?*

In **verses 46-49**, Jesus gives the famous illustration of **the two house-builders**, saying that the ultimately stronger house will be the one built on his words and acting on them (rather than simply giving ‘lip-service’). *What do you think this means for us today?*

Jesus’ teachings here were aimed at his **disciples** (followers, students). *How important is it that his disciples heard these words and learnt what was expected of them? What impact would it have on them?*

Jesus’ words were ‘**radical**’, but even more radical was **the way he lived**. *How important was it that they also saw how Jesus lived to back up his teaching? How empty or foolish would those words be without his way of life? How do we see Jesus enacting his own teachings on the way to the cross?*

*Of the teachings in this sermon, which one do you **personally** find the most challenging? How can Jesus help us to live up to his standards? How can groups like this support us, with the help of the Holy Spirit?*

*If a church tried to take these words serious and live by them, what effect could that have on the world around us? What might a **radical example** of grace, generosity or mercy look like in our context?*

In **verses 12-16**, Jesus calls **twelve disciples** to be his **apostles**. ‘Disciples’ are students who learn from their teacher. ‘Apostles’ are those sent out with authority from the one who sends. *What could be the significance of the **number 12**, and how could this relate to God’s action in the Old Testament?*

PRAYING TOGETHER

Pray for the needs of your group, community, church and the world. Pray for God’s help in following Jesus’ teachings. And say **the Lord’s Prayer** together (which is a radical teaching in itself!).