Commentary on Luke 6:31-36 - Call to Love Our Neighbor - Fr. James Homily September 27, 2026

In the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit >>Amen.

The Gospel begins with the golden rule (Luke 6:31-36). Do unto others as you would have them do unto you. Love everyone. Do good to everyone. Lend even with no hope of repentance. And your reward shall be great, and you shall be children of the highest. For he is kind to the to the unthankful and to the evil. Be ye therefore merciful, as your father is also merciful. In other words, we we are called to be like God in his goodness, in his love and his mercy. After all, what have we done to deserve his love and mercy? We have done nothing. In fact, we constantly offend him by doing things to the contrary. We are numbered among the ungrateful and the evil. That is who we are. But these commandments are not given from on high, far away, to do something foreign to our nature.

No, what our Lord Jesus Christ asked us to do is what we truly are, what we were in the garden before Adam and Eve disobeyed, that perfect humanity. And on our Orthodox life, we ask God to restore us to that pristine nature, that pristine beauty of the garden when we, like Adam, were sons and daughters of the most high. Yes, Adam was called the son of God. And our Lord Jesus Christ says to his disciples, "You are all sons of God." Yes, we are. Yes, we are. But we don't act like that. We often act something quite different. These virtues that are already within us awaiting perfection in Christ and through Christ. A few weeks ago, we had the exaltation of the holy cross. And we must always remember that whatever cross we bear, it is the instrument of our perfection. It is the instrument of our salvation that as we bear the cross in love, so God will make us more and more like Himself.

God asks us in this Gospel lesson to be as He is. We are to be merciful. We are to be good. We are to love. We are to give and give without expecting any return.

The difficulty as always, my brothers and sisters, is that we don't want to love our neighbors. We don't like being good or merciful in big things or in little things. We don't like it because we are fallen creatures and we all come to Christ wounded and imperfect in the little things in life. Think how that sets us off, makes us sin. I could think of rude drivers or bad service in a restaurant or those who cheat us, those who take advantage of us, those who disappoint us. But in spite of that, we are called to be merciful, loving, and good. We are not to repay evil with evil or to overcome evil with good.

And a final thought might be, are religious people better than non-religious people? Alas, no. But for seriously religious people, The verses like these from the sixth chapter of Luke's gospel call us to a higher standard. The Lord says, "Do not sinners even do the same?" The standard is above what the natural man is or the common sense understanding. We know, my brothers and sisters, because of this Gospel lesson we know what we ought to do. We know how we ought to live. We know the high and lofty standards that we ought to maintain. And when we fail, we are ashamed. What we have not what we have done is not up to what we ought to have done. And so brothers and sisters, all of us, bishops, priests, deacons, lay people, monks, and nuns, all of us repent and go to confession. But we press on asking God to help us to be merciful, good, and loving even to those who hate us or abuse us. Yes, we press on. We trust in the power of God. You know our our little litany always says, "...help us, save us by thy grace." It is God who will give the victory in our hearts not by our own power. And as we come to holy communion, brothers and sisters, we take him into ourselves physically as well as spirit that in all things he might be the Lord and Savior of our souls and in all things he might make us more and more like himself. Amen. Help us, save us, have mercy on us, and keep us, oh God, by thy grace

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