

**Holy Trinity Lutheran Church  
Des Moines, Wash.  
February 7, 2010**

**Luke 6:37,39-49**

**What a Difference Jesus Makes!**

- 1. The difference in what we believe**
- 2. The difference in how we judge**
- 3. The difference in our fruit**

**Hymns: 81 – 92 – Distribution: 493, 310 –  
Closing: Glorify Thy Name**

All Scripture quotations from the NIV

**Luke 6:37,39-49 –**

***"Do not judge, and you will not be judged. Do not condemn, and you will not be condemned..."***

***He also told them this parable: "Can a blind man lead a blind man? Will they not both fall into a pit? A student is not above his teacher, but everyone who is fully trained will be like his teacher.***

***Why do you look at the speck of sawdust in your brother's eye and pay no attention to the plank in your own eye? How can you say to your brother, 'Brother, let me take the speck out of your eye,' when you yourself fail to see the plank in your own eye? You hypocrite, first take the plank out of your eye, and then you will see clearly to remove the speck from your brother's eye.***

***No good tree bears bad fruit, nor does a bad tree bear good fruit. Each tree is recognized by its own fruit. People do not pick figs from thornbushes, or grapes from briars. The good man brings good things out of the good stored up in his heart, and the evil man brings evil things out of the evil stored up in his heart. For out of the overflow of his heart his mouth speaks.***

***"Why do you call me, 'Lord, Lord,' and do not do what I say? I will show you what he is like who comes to me and hears my words and puts them into practice. He is like a man building a house, who dug down deep and laid the foundation on rock. When a flood came, the torrent struck that house but could not shake it, because it was well built. But the one who hears my words and does not put them into practice is like a man who built a house on the ground without a foundation. The moment the torrent struck that house, it collapsed and its destruction was complete."***

What would your life be like if you did not know Jesus? Think about that for a moment:

- What would you be doing today?
- What would you be doing right now?
- How would that change your outlook on life?
- Would that change anything with the way you have set up things in your home? Or in the interaction of people at home?
- Would it change any of the purchases you've made in your life?
- Would it change anything with your job? Or the way you work?

I must admit that it's a scary thought for me what life would be like without Jesus. Personally, I've never had a time in my life when he wasn't there.

**In our reading, Jesus mentions three ways that he is to make a difference in our lives. As we contemplate this deep question of what life would be like without him, let's see from his words what a difference he makes!**

**1** – In Luke 6 Jesus said, ***"Can a blind man lead a blind man? Will they not both fall into a pit? A student is not above his teacher, but everyone who is fully trained will be like his teacher."***

Jesus illustrates the first difference in our life by picturing a blind guide. The Bible pictures the spiritually unenlightened person as being blind. Can you imagine the futility of a blind person leading another blind person along a path? To fully appreciate Jesus' illustration, you have to remember that roads in Jesus' day were no walk in the park. If you watched the Christmas movie "The Nativity Story" this past Christmas, you saw a very accurate depiction of roads in Palestine in New Testament times as Joseph and Mary made their way to Bethlehem. The roads were rocky and treacherous, with streams that even washed over them. It was hard enough to travel when you could see!

Who were the blind guides of Jesus' day? Listen to Matthew 15, where Jesus addressed

some blind guides: *“Some Pharisees and teachers of the law came to Jesus from Jerusalem and asked, ‘Why do your disciples break the tradition of the elders? They don’t wash their hands before they eat!’ Jesus replied, ‘And why do you break the command of God for the sake of your tradition? For God said, “Honor your father and mother” and “Anyone who curses his father or mother must be put to death.” But you say that if a man says to his father or mother, “Whatever help you might otherwise have received from me is a gift devoted to God,” he is not to “honor his father” with it. Thus you nullify the word of God for the sake of your tradition. You hypocrites! Isaiah was right when he prophesied about you: “These people honor me with their lips, but their hearts are far from me. They worship me in vain; their teachings are but rules taught by men.” Jesus called the crowd to him and said, “Listen and understand. What goes into a man’s mouth does not make him “unclean,” but what comes out of his mouth, that is what makes him “unclean.” Then the disciples came to him and asked, ‘Do you know that the Pharisees were offended when they heard this?’ He replied... ‘Leave them; they are blind guides. If a blind man leads a blind man, both will fall into a pit.’ “*

The Pharisees had added their own teachings to the teachings of God’s Word. Therefore, Jesus calls them “blind guides.” The worst teaching they had introduced was that your relationship with God was good when your outward works are good, no matter what motivation or faith was in your heart. Therefore, Jesus also called them “whitewashed tombs.”

Here is our first lesson. What difference does Jesus make in your life? **He makes a difference in what we believe.**

What would you believe, if Jesus weren’t the center of it?

- Perhaps you would be attracted to the teaching that our world is Mother Earth and is above us. Perhaps you would be enticed to worship nature as god and feel that mankind is its servant, even its intruder.

- Perhaps you would be attracted to the philosophy that says, “Do what feels right and good.” If it gives you pleasure and joy, it wouldn’t be wrong. Use your own opinions to figure out your morality and goals.
- Maybe the notion that hell exists would be ridiculous to you. A place of fire and darkness? A place of punishment for people that you would consider “not so bad?” Ridiculous, you might say!

What difference does Jesus make? All the difference in the world! He tells us, *“All have sinned and fall short of the glory of God.” (Romans 3:23) “The wages of sin is death.” (Romans 6:23)* The Word of God is clear that all people by nature are sick and dying in their sinful condition and have no manmade cure available. But when we were headed for the grave and for an existence apart from God forever, God tells us what to believe. He sent his Son as the Lamb of God to pay for our sins by his suffering and death! He won our forgiveness and through faith in him we have a home in heaven after this life.

Not only do we believe that fact, but every teaching of God’s Word guides our lives as we look to God’s book for what we should believe. What a difference this makes!

**2** – Our text continues and tells us another way that Jesus and his teaching makes a difference in our lives. Jesus said, *“Do not judge, and you will not be judged. Do not condemn, and you will not be condemned... Why do you look at the speck of sawdust in your brother’s eye and pay no attention to the plank in your own eye? How can you say to your brother, ‘Brother, let me take the speck out of your eye,’ when you yourself fail to see the plank in your own eye? You hypocrite, first take the plank out of your eye, and then you will see clearly to remove the speck from your brother’s eye.”*

Jesus tells us this makes a difference in our judging. Judging?! Some people might be surprised to hear that we should be judging. Today we often hear people say, “Who are you to

judge me? Nobody should do any judging!” It can be quite a sensitive issue. Can a Christian ever judge? To answer that, let’s look at a few other passages from Scripture:

- *“The spiritual man makes judgments about all things, but he himself is not subject to any man’s judgment.”* (1 Corinthians 2:15)
- *“Stop judging by mere appearances, and make a right judgment.”* (John 7:24)
- *“Warn a divisive person once, and then warn him a second time. After that, have nothing to do with him.”* (Titus 3:10)

It’s clear that we can’t take Jesus’ statement in Luke 6 to mean that a Christian can never judge. So what does he mean?

Jesus example shows us. He pictures an eye doctor or friend that wants to help another person. This unfortunate person has a piece of dirt in their eye. And this friend is extremely willing to help. However, he has a beam in his own eye. Jesus’ picture is a humorous one, for the word for “beam” used here means a load bearing timber for a house. It’s not a small piece of wood. Can you imagine a person such as the one pictured on the front of the Worship Notes today asking you if you need help with the little speck in your eye?

A teacher I once had pictured it as fingers on a hand. Be careful how you point your finger at someone to point out their faults, for there are three other fingers pointing back at you!

Jesus point is clear. Planks come before specks. What planks might you need to address before you are fit to find specks?

- Do you get upset about the way other people in your family or at work treat each other, but you forget that your insensitive remarks come pretty often also?
- Do you get upset about the half-true story that was circulated about you or

your friend, but you’re pretty willing to share the gossip when you have a good story?

- Do you get fed up about someone else’s attitude, but forget that you have a problem controlling your own anger?
- Do you shake your head at our materialistic world, but forget that your overindulgence in food or drink continues?

Remove the planks first! Thank the Lord we read in 1 John 1: *“If we claim to be without sin, we deceive ourselves and the truth is not in us. If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just and will forgive us our sins and purify us from all unrighteousness.”* When we confess our sins to the Lord, he washes us clean in the blood of Jesus Christ. Forgiveness is ours.

Then we are fit to help with specks. Why would we be interested in finding specks in our brother’s eye? Are we nosy busybodies? We hear in 1 Timothy 2, *“(God our Savior) wants all men to be saved and to come to a knowledge of the truth.”* God wants people to see the error of their ways and find the forgiveness he has to offer. We want this too! This is our sincere motivation in pointing out unrepented sin.

What kinds of sins might we look for? Matthew 18 tells us, *“If your brother sins against you, go and show him his fault, just between the two of you. If he listens to you, you have won your brother over. But if he will not listen, take one or two others along, so that every matter may be established by the testimony of two or three witnesses.”* No specific sin is mentioned that is worthy (or not worthy) of pointing out. But suffice it to say that this had better be a sin that you are certain has an unrepentant heart behind it!

How might we address such a sensitive topic with a brother or sister in faith? Galatians 6:1 tells us, *“Brothers, if someone is caught in a sin, you who are spiritual should restore him gently.”* Ephesians 4:15 also says, *“(Speak) the truth in love.”* Do it gently, yet truthfully. Say:

- “I’m talking to you about this because I care.”

- “This is what God says about your situation, not what is merely my opinion.”
- “The difference between us is that I’m forgiven of my sin and you’re not.”

**Jesus’ attitude and teaching make all the difference in the way we judge!**

**3** – We see one other way that Jesus makes a difference in our lives as we read Luke 6. Jesus said, *“No good tree bears bad fruit, nor does a bad tree bear good fruit. Each tree is recognized by its own fruit. People do not pick figs from thornbushes, or grapes from briars. The good man brings good things out of the good stored up in his heart, and the evil man brings evil things out of the evil stored up in his heart. For out of the overflow of his heart his mouth speaks.”*

This last lesson today is picture of fruit. I don’t know the last time you picked figs or grapes, but we can relate to the illustration. Can you imagine if this spring, when everything is getting ready to bloom again, that you would walk into your back yard full of dandelions and find that a large red delicious apple was attached to each dandelion stem? Can you imagine seeing the moss in your yard this year and finding that it was producing stems that bore beautiful cherries? Unthinkable!

Jesus says the same is true of a Christian’s life. Fruit comes from God’s fruit trees, not from weeds. Fruit is the Bible’s picture of good works in a Christian’s life. A believer with genuine faith will produce good works. It’s as much a fact as a fruit tree producing good fruit. You do not need to threaten them! Can you imagine going to the blackberry bushes hanging over your fence and threatening them by saying, “You’d better grow and produce blackberries this year!” Don’t bother! They will. It’s a natural occurrence and you can count on it.

We also ought to remember the proper role of good works in our lives. Jesus said, *“I am the vine; you are the branches. If a man remains in me and I in him, he will bear much fruit; apart*

*from me you can do nothing”* (John 15:5). Good works come after we are attached to the branch, Christ. They do not convert us. They do not save us. They do not earn forgiveness. They are natural results of conversion that we do naturally and willingly. They show our faith.

It feels quite strange that I would have to apply this to your lives in a sermon. “Go do good works!” It’s strange because you will do them naturally, sure as your blackberry bushes will produce. You naturally are going to ask yourself as you live your life, “Does this bring glory to my Lord? How can I glorify and imitate the One who has saved me?” You will apply it:

- At work
- In your words
- As you obey your parents
- In the way you spend your money
- In your recreation
- In the way you drive your car
- With all your use of time

**This makes all the difference in the world for our life of sanctification!**

What would your life be like if you did not know Jesus? As I said at the beginning, it’s a bit of a scary thought for me. As Jesus closes his instruction to us today, we also see that it has a scary end. When you do not build your house on the rock but on the sand, your destruction will be complete and final.

So as we leave God’s house today, let’s be thankful. Jesus has made all the difference in our lives:

- 1. He makes a difference in what we believe**
- 2. He makes a difference in how we judge**
- 3. He makes a difference in our fruit, our life of good works**

May our lives be different! And may God bless us in our new life. Amen.