

Fil-Am Community Church
Pastor David Bennett
20 May 2012

“BE JUST AND FAIR”

Good morning Fil-Am, it is so good to see you this morning, I just wanted to say thank you again for taking the time out of your busy schedules to come fellowship with us. It is highly appreciated and not taken for granted.

This morning we are continuing on with our series from the teachings of Jesus called the “Beatitudes” Our verse for today is..

Matthew 5:6 from the NASB version says;

“Blessed are those who hunger and thirst for righteousness, for they shall be satisfied.”

The same verse in the Amplified Bible says;

Blessed and fortunate and happy and spiritually prosperous (in that state in which the born-again child of God enjoys His favor and salvation) are those who hunger and thirst for righteousness (uprightness and right standing with God), for they shall be completely satisfied!

The New Living Translation says;

“God blesses those who hunger and thirst for justice for they will be satisfied.”

Pay attention to the word “justice” or “Righteousness”. What does Jesus mean by these words “?”

In one unabridged dictionary I checked this week, I found over 25 definitions for the word “justice”.

You can also see by flipping through any of the news channels, the word “justice” is used over and over; many times it is used as indicating a lack of it.

What does it mean to live for justice? What in the world is Jesus talking about in this Beatitude?

In this case, Jesus actually gives His definition. Jesus actually just a few chapters later tells us what living a life of justice is all about.

Sometimes Scripture does that. In one verse it sets it up and a little bit later it defines it. Later on Jesus gives us His definition. This definition is so powerful that the definition itself has a name.

We call it the “Golden Rule”. Found in Matthew 7:12, where it says;

¹² *“In everything, therefore, treat people the same way you want them to treat you, for this is the Law and the Prophets.”*

Let’s look at the first sentence one more time. *“In everything, therefore, treat people the same way you want them to treat you,”* Now, this idea behind the Golden Rule has been around for thousands of years, yet this is the first time in recorded history that it was ever stated proactively.

You see, the idea of a Golden Rule is **nothing new**. As a matter of fact, the first recorded use of this rule as stated negatively goes back to 3,000 BC in a code in India known as the **Mahabharati’s Code**.

That code said it this way in 3,000 BC. This is the sum of duty. **“Do not unto others, that which would cause you pain if done to you.”**

Did you catch that? It kind of says the same thing just in a negative way. Don’t do to others what you don’t want done to you. But Jesus

turned the definition on its head and that's what makes His rule so powerful. That's why we know it.

It's not a **preventative** rule; instead it's a **proactive rule**. Jesus doesn't say—don't do. In other words prevent pain from others, instead He said proactively—do to others, what you would want done to you. Jesus always calls us to a proactive lifestyle.

Jesus says, take the initiative. Just as Jesus did in coming to the earth as our Savior, He took the initiative. Jesus said we should go out of our way to express love toward others, just as He modeled through His life sometimes going out of the way, distance wise, but oftentimes just going out of the way of convenience to meet the needs of others.

“Here's a simple rule of thumb for behavior. Ask yourself what you want people to do for you.” Jesus said it this way in Luke,

Luke 6:31 says, ³¹ *Do to others as you would have them do to you.* “

Take the initiative, Jesus said. Be proactive in living out the Golden Rule. Don't wait for others to harm you and then say—oh, that wasn't very nice. Instead, go out of your way.

Jesus teaches that **justice** is proactive. As Christians, we are to take the initiative. We are to take the initiative to live out the Golden Rule. You see, Jesus was an extremist when it came to justice and love. He calls us to extreme living. The Golden Rule living. So how do you live out the Golden Rule?

Well, when you study the life of Christ, you find that He gives us four proactive principles.

- Proactively, we should **recognize**,
- Proactively we should **unite**,
- Proactively we should **look**,
- Proactively we should **embrace**.

Let's look at these four principles.

1. Recognize the Needs of Others

To live out the Golden Rule, the first thing you need to do is to recognize the needs of others. You see there are two ways that you can live your life.

Each of those has consequences. You can live your life self-centered or you can live your life others-centered.

You can live your life self-centered and there are consequences to living a self-centered life. You can turn inward. You can think only of yourself. You can only care about your world and your motto would be—me, me, me, me, I, I, I. They are the type of people that have built that protective wall around them for security, and will not allow anyone or anything come in unless they approve of it.

Now over the short term, you could say that sounds pretty good. But in the long run there is something very problematic about a self-centered life.

One major reason is **“Because he, who dies alone, dies alone.”**

But you can live an others-centered life. You can say—I am far more interested in other people. I am going to find my satisfaction not in personal gain, not in fame, not in getting my name in the headlines, but in reaching out to others, in helping others, and making a difference for others.

Likewise, there are consequences for that. While you may give up some of the material gain that might come from the self-centered life for eternity your life makes a difference.

So which life are you going to live? Are you going to live an others-centered life, or are you going to live a self-centered life?

You see, you can come to church and be self-centered. Anybody can do that, but you cannot be a follower of Jesus without being others-centered. Why?

Because to follow Christ is to act like Christ, and Christ was others-centered.

It says in mark 10:45 (NASB) ⁴⁵ *For even the Son of Man did not come to be served, but to serve, and to give His life a ransom for many.*”

Think about it for a second that is an amazing statement.

Remember this is Jesus talking. Jesus, the Son of God. The One who was there from the beginning, who walked on water, who fed the 5,000, who faced down the Devil, who was crucified dead and buried, and then rose again after three days. .

He has been called the Prince of Peace, the King of Kings, I mean if anybody deserves to be served, rest assured Jesus did. Because He had the highest credentials of anyone who ever lived. He created everything. He was fully God incarnate.

Yet, He chose not to be served, but to serve.

Go back to that verse and pay particular attention to the words “to serve” and “to give” and see the connection between them.

You can see that to serve is to give. What does it mean to serve others? It means to give to others. To share your life. It means recognizing the needs of those around you and being proactive in giving what is necessary to meet those needs.

Now, as humans, we are really good at recognizing the needs of those we know well. I mean if a relative or close friend has a need and we are pretty good at meeting that need.

If someone in our inner circle has a need, we usually know about that and we are pretty proactive about it. But Jesus expands our circle. He calls us to get outside of our comfort zone and to reach out and to recognize the needs of those who are not necessarily inside of our inner circle. We were talking about this last week in IMPACT class using the example of Hosea, the prophet that was married to a prostitute. He was a living example of a parable, to show the people of Israel what they were doing to him, through the life of Hosea. Just as his wife was prostituting herself and being unfaithful to Hosea so too were the people of Israel prostituting themselves and worshiping Baal, the god of fertility.

Hosea went and bought back his wife, which was still selling her body. Instead of getting mad and trying to hold a pity party, with him as the guest of Honor. I mean you could almost see the gathering, listening to the mighty man of God saying look at the way she is treating me, what have I done to deserve this type of disrespect. I should not have to put up with this. She doesn't deserve my love and respect.

But how did he deal with it he went and bought her and lovingly brought her home. He was more interested in reconciliation than making her pay for her offenses. This is the same way God wanted to deal with the children of Israel; he wanted to bring them home.

OK, I don't want to get too far off the subject line or we will be here all day. So let us get back to the Sermon on the Mount.

If you look at what Christ did you will see he has a sense of humor. Actually, several time in the Sermon on the Mount, Jesus used humor. But like some of mine or Pastor Rolly's jokes, they really don't translate to the modern day audience.

Here is what he says in Matthew 5:47, *“⁴⁷ If you greet only your brothers, what more are you doing than others?*

Everyone does that.” Can't you just see the smirk on Jesus' face as He sits on the hillside and says—look; it's nothing remarkable if you help those you are friends with. I mean, anybody does that.

As a matter of fact, the literal translation says—even an atheist does that. What I am calling you to is to reach out to those who are not in your inner circle. It is as if through humor Jesus is reaching out and shaking us by the shirt and saying—Fil-AM, wake up. Don't just do good to your friends, do good to those who are not yet your friends, or those who will never be your friends.

Get outside of your comfort zone. Recognize the needs of those who don't know so well. Who are those we don't know so well? Who besides our friends are we to welcome?

It says in Proverbs 31:8-9, ⁸*“Open your mouth for the mute, For the rights of all the unfortunate.”* ⁹*Open your mouth, judge righteously, And defend the rights of the afflicted and needy.”*

Ensure justice for those who are perishing, yet speak up for the poor and helpless and see that they get justice. See that they are treated as you would want to be treated if you were in their place. See, once you start looking around and you are going to realize that needs are everywhere. Everybody has a need. It's all over the place.

People at your office, who have needs that you can meet. There are people in your apartment building, on the street, at the park, on the metro, everywhere you go in this city, you can't turn around without hitting someone in need.

Am I talking to anyone out there today?

Open your eyes to the needs of our community. Be proactive. It's the first step of living out the Golden Rule. Jesus calls us to live an others-centered life.

Remember when you study the life of Christ, you find that He gives us proactive principles.

- Proactively, we should **recognize**,
- Proactively, we should....

2. **Unite with Others**

Once you recognize those needs, unite with others in doing good. Unite with others. God's plan all along has been for us to accomplish His will together. We are to work together.

Think of it this way if I were to tell you I would play you in a volley ball game, you would look at me and say no big deal, no real challenge, but if I called Dale, Christine, Ian, Jon, Gil and Gene, now that my friend is a completely different matter. There is power in numbers; there is power when we come together, on ANYTHING.

That's why the church exists. We are a public gathering of believers. We are to join together publicly, to worship, to study, to fellowship and to live out the teachings of Christ, including this one on justice.

Look at how Jesus organized the early disciples. Jesus called the Twelve, His early disciples, to Him and He sent them out even though they were small in number, He still sent them out in pairs.

Mark 6:7, ⁷“*And He summoned the twelve and began to send them out in pairs, and gave them authority over the unclean spirits*”

Jesus said, when you work together you will have authority and power to deal with evil opposition. You see, when you start looking around, when you start recognizing the needs in our city, you are going to see tremendous needs.

You are going to see incomprehensible needs. How can we possibly meet those needs?

Then there are going to be formidable barriers to meeting those needs. And you will start to think—man, this is just too much. I can't do this alone. I'm just one person. Who am I to take on this big task?

It reminds me of the story, I am sure you have heard a million times but here we go one more time. There was a storm and the waves of the ocean had pushed thousands and thousands of sea stars up on the coast line. You see this little boy picking each one up and throwing it back into the water.

Then here comes the pessimists. A older man reminds the young lad, son there is no way you are going to be able to make a difference, there is just far too many to get them all. The little boy just looks back at him and throws one more back into the water and said, "I made a difference to that one."

Yes, you are, one person, but God designed you to work in harmony with others to make a difference. You see, one person working with another person on a common, God-ordained goal, can make a huge impact.

No wonder the writer of Ecclesiastes said, "Two people can accomplish more than twice as much as one because they get a better return for their labor."

Not only with two people working together get a better return for their labor, but when they are working together to fulfill a proactive, Christ-initiated service, they get His power to deal with evil opposition and they also get His presence.

Did you get what Jesus said in Matthew 18:20? (NASB) ²⁰ *For where two or three have gathered together in my name, I am there in their midst.*"

It says in the Amplified Bible, ²⁰ *For wherever two or three are gathered (drawn together as my followers) in (into) my name, there I AM in the midst of them.* "

One thing you should notice is that it doesn't say where, it is just when two or three come together in My name.

Jesus said, "I am there with them." When you are working for Jesus, whether it is here in the church or whether it is out across our city, or somewhere around the world like the team that just got back from medical trip to the Philippines.

When you are working for Jesus and you are living it out, living out His teachings in His name, you get Jesus and all that comes with Him behind you.

- You get all the power.
- All the presence,
- all the proactive preparation
- unlimited potential that He brings, you get it,

When you unite together under His banner to make a difference to live out the Golden Rule to bring about justice.

Here at Fli-Am , we are very committed to helping you to unite with others to do good. Some of you have experienced the evangelism ministry and outreach projects that we have done in the past. Like going to the laundry mat and giving away zip lock bags full of coins, or going to DC and passing out free cold water, or going to the mall and pass out free candy roses.

We are committed to that. Because we believe that as a church God has called us to be proactive in our city and in our country.

We are Christ's ambassadors.

It says in 2 Corinthians 5:20, ²⁰ "Therefore, we are ambassadors for Christ, as though God were making an appeal through us; we beg you on behalf of Christ, be reconciled to God."

God is using us to speak to you. We beg you as though Christ Himself were pleading with you. Receive the love He offers. Be reconciled to God.”

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3. Look for Small Ways to Help Others Daily

Ambassadors, who want to live out the Golden Rule, will look for small ways to help others daily. You see, the reality is, it is about small ways. Your Christian faith is about small actions every day.

- Reading devotion every day.
- Spending time in prayer every day.
- Going to home group Bible Study every week.
- Going to IMPACT Class every Sunday morning.
- Going to church every Sunday.

These are small things, but they reap great rewards. So much of what God does in our lives is about looking for small ways, small actions can reap big results.

Jesus said it this way in a passage that is sometimes referred to as the Great Compassion.

In Matthew 25:34-36, ³⁴ “Then the King will say to those on His right, ‘Come, you who are blessed of My Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world. ³⁵ For I was hungry, and you gave Me something to eat; I was thirsty, and you gave Me something to drink; I was a stranger, and you invited Me in; ³⁶ naked, and you clothed Me; I was sick, and you visited Me; I was in prison, and you came to Me.”

Jesus said—do you want to be blessed? He gives us eight ways to do it in the Beattitudes, but then He drives it home here on the one we are looking at today.

One of the themes on the Sermon on the Mount was to be blessed. Do you want to be blessed?

Jesus said—then share a meal. Offer a drink. Welcome a stranger. Give away some clothes. Assist the sick and visit the separated. Small acts with great eternal reward.

What are some small actions? Let's make this real personal. What are some small actions that you can take every day to help others? What are some small actions that you can take today? What is a small act that you can take today?

Remember that little silly saying. I think it went something like—yard by yard is hard, but inch by inch is a cinch.

The point I am trying to make is you have to take it one step at a time. You don't just decide overnight I'm going to be a marathon runner like Swen and just head out. It takes a lot of time and effort but it can be done, one step at a time.

How do you live out the Golden Rule? Inch by inch. Act by act.

Look around our community. Recognize the need. Get with others. Unite with them and then take small steps every day. Look, small steps that lead in the right direction will ultimately bring about the results.

Here is a concept that more American companies should take on. When we were so blessed to live in Okinawa for six and a half years you could see the Japanese businesses morning gatherings outside of their building, sometimes behind and other times in the front. They would not just do morning exercises, but they would clean the front portion of their establishment.

They would pick up any trash sweep the sidewalks and roads in front of their building. They were very active in making sure they kept their areas in a high state of police. This is just one small example of how you can make a difference by coming together.

They are small steps but they can be very costly steps. Small actions are going to cost you.

- They are going to cost you your time.
- They are going to cost you your energy.
- They are going to cost you some money.

But it's worth it to make the difference. You know, one of the great things about the Sermon on the Mount, in addition to living the blessed life style is the value of people. Jesus, over and over, tells us that people matter. That people matter more than anything else.

- People matter more than comfort.
- People matter more than schedules.
- People matter more than money.

Have you learned this lesson yet, that the only thing that really matters in life is other people? Have you learned to love people more than you love money? I hope so, because Ecclesiastes tells us that those who love money will never have enough.

How absurd to think that wealth brings true happiness. You see, money doesn't bring happiness. It's only temporary. It's here today and gone tomorrow. Invest your time, your energy, and your money in people.

Remember what Jesus said in Matthew 6:19, ¹⁹“ Do not store up for yourselves treasures on earth, where moth and rust destroy, and where thieves break in and steal. ²⁰ But store up for yourselves treasures in heaven, where neither moth nor rust destroys, and where thieves do not break in or steal; ²¹ for where your treasure is, there your heart will be also.”

Start with small ways every day and watch the investment grow. You see, it's only when you invest in people that you find true happiness. Happiness is not found in money, fame or title. It is found in helping people.

Do you want to be happy everyday? Then help someone everyday. Saints remember this, doing more of the same will not create a change in your life, if you want a change you have to make a change.

Remember when you study the life of Christ, you find that He gives us proactive principles.

- Proactively, we should **Recognize**,
- Proactively, we should **Unite**
- Proactively, we should look for small ways to **Help Others**
- Proactively, we should....

4. **Embrace the risk.**

There is a risk involved in what we are asking you to do. It's risky on our part because we are going to hand out all this money. But it's risky on your part because you have to decide how you are going to use it. Now, you can choose to sit on the sidelines. That's why we gave you the red card. You don't have to turn it in. They aren't numbered. No one is going to know. You can just sit on the sidelines. Or you can choose to get the \$5 and waste it on yourself. But I am going to challenge you to be proactive. I want to challenge you to embrace the risk.

Saints Christianity is an adventure. Let's live it to the fullest. That's what Jesus said in John 12:25, *"²⁵He who loves his life loses it, and he who hates his life in this world will keep it to life eternal."*

Let's go out this week and look for ways all around us for God to use us to make a difference. Look, I'm praying that God will take our small actions this week and He is going to work miracle after miracle after miracle in our community. He will, if you are committed to living out the Golden Rule.

It says in 1 Thessalonians 2:8, *"⁸ So we cared for you. Because we loved you so much, we were delighted to share with you not only the gospel of God but our lives as well."*

Can you imagine the impact if we all left here and concentrated on blessing someone this week.

Somewhere around 80-90 of use here this morning all going out, sharing in small ways your lives this week.

Let us Pray.....