

Christianity Behind the Curtain

Luke 6:38-45

Manuscript and Discussion Guide for October 3, 2021

Stephen Davey

Summary: In our lives, we will often be tempted to put on various masks: one for work, another for home, a different one for our social interactions. As believers, we can even find ourselves going to church with a mask on, hiding our own issues and focusing on the problems of others. But Jesus encouraged His true disciples to examine their own lives honestly and thoroughly for sin—and make necessary changes—before confronting another believer with their issues. As disciples of Jesus, we should follow that command.

My grandson informed me recently that he had watched that classic movie, *The Wizard of Oz*. Hard to believe that's been around now for nearly 90 years.

I asked him—even though he's six years old now—if any of it was frightening to him. I can still remember watching it and being terrified by those flying monkeys. I had nightmares after that—and I was 16.

We talked about some of the scenes and especially about that moment when Dorothy and the Tin man and the Straw man and the Lion finally made it inside the palace of the Wizard and his face was up there on some huge screen. He was so impressive and amazing.

But then their little dog ran up and pulled back the curtain of a little booth, and inside was a little man whose face was

that same face being projected on the screen; he was in there turning wheels and levers to make all sorts of smoke and sound effects, speaking into a microphone.

When he realizes the curtain has been pulled back, and they were standing out there looking at him, instead of stopping the charade, he bellowed into the microphone: "Pay no attention to that man behind the curtain."

Movie quotation/scene adapted from, Bruce B. Barton, *Life Application Bible: Luke* (Tyndale, 1997), p. 167

That's the classic line, "Pay no attention to who I really am; never mind that man behind the curtain; just pay attention to my face up on the screen."

Well, Jesus is half-way through His sermon on the plateau, and He's about to

pull back the curtain and give us all a dose of reality.

So, take your copy of His sermon manuscript—it's found in Luke's Gospel—let's return to chapter 6.

Jesus is preaching now in a popular form that the Jewish community called *charaz*, which meant “stringing pearls.”

William Barclay, [The Gospel of Luke](#) (Westminster Press, 1975), p. 81

Jesus is stringing together, in rapid fashion, wise, life-changing, powerful statements. Some of them are connected thematically, and some of them can stand alone.

The more I studied these next few verses, the more clearly it struck me that what Jesus is doing here is stringing together some pearls that effectively pull back the curtain on us all.

He's essentially defining in realistic terms some of the characteristics of growing disciples. There's no smoke and mirrors here; no impressive sound effects; just the real thing—what it really looks like, and sounds like to be growing up as a disciple of Jesus Christ.

So, as we pick up this string of pearls, I want to make note of at least 4 characteristics of a growing disciple:

Genuine Generosity

We're now at verse 38:

“Give, and it will be given to you. Good measure, pressed down, shaken together, running over, will

be put into your lap. For with the measure you use it will be measured back to you.”

Luke 6:38

Jesus is using a sermon illustration here that his audience would have immediately understood.

Darrel Bock described this typical first century scene when he wrote: “The measuring of corn was carried out according to an established pattern. The seller crouched down on the ground with the measuring container between his legs. First, he filled it 3/4ths full and then shook the container around with a rotating motion to make it settle down. Then he filled it to the top and gave it another shake. Next, he pressed down on the corn with both hands, squeezing it all together. He then bore a hole in the middle of the pile and poured even more kernels into it, tapping it down periodically, until there was no more room for another kernel. In this way, the purchaser was guaranteed an absolutely full measure; it simply could not hold any more.”

Darrel L. Bock, [Luke: Volume One](#) (Baker Academic, 1994), p. 607

Even though Jesus is referring to this common custom, I want you to notice that the Lord changes it by adding two elements here. First, the Lord says here that the measuring vessel isn't just full to the brim, it's running over—it's spilling over into the recipient's lap.

The word for lap (*kolpon*) was a pocket created by the fold in the robe.

Ibid

It isn't just full; it's running over.

Secondly, I want you to notice here that the illustration isn't about selling grain or corn.

The word "sell" isn't found in Jesus' description here. The word Jesus uses is "give." Notice:

"Give, and it will be given to you. Good measure, pressed down, shaken together, running over . . ."

Get this: a growing disciple isn't pictured here as a generous seller, although it's great when you give somebody a good deal.



Would those who know you describe you as a generous person? What opportunities do you have to give? Ask God for the spirit to make the most of those situations.

But Jesus isn't commending a generous seller here, He's commending a generous giver. This is *how* you are to give.

In fact, Jesus doesn't even use the word money here in His sermon illustration. And that's because He's describing the characteristic of a growing disciple that

goes even deeper than your debit card—it's deeper than corn or flour.

Jesus is pulling back the curtain and showing us the disciple's spirit. Is it stingy and tightfisted or generous?

Adapted from R. Kent Hughes, *Luke: Volume One* (Crossway Books, 1998), p. 235

Do we live with this spirit? This is how you willingly give to meet the needs of others: your time, your talent, that bag of groceries, those words of encouragement, your spiritual gifts in serving the body, your home, your finances.

A growing disciple is described here as someone marked by this kind of genuine generosity.

Secondly, Jesus describes in parabolic form, what I want to label as:

Cautious Conformity

The Lord asks a rhetorical question here in verse 39:

"Can a blind man lead a blind man? Will they not both fall into a pit?"

Luke 6:39b

In Matthew's much longer sermon notes, the Lord connects this warning with the false prophets (***Matthew 7:15***).

Jesus has already connected blindness with the religious leaders in ***Matthew 15:14*** when He repeated this same parable. They are the spiritually blind leading people into spiritual blindness.

This was the fatal delusion of the scribes and Pharisees, the religious leaders in Jesus' day, who chose deliberate blindness in opposition to the light of Christ's gospel.

R.C.H. Lenski, [The Interpretation of St. Luke's Gospel](#) (Augsburg Publishing House, 1946), p. 375

This is a devastating condemnation by Jesus on the religious world of His day. They're pumping out disciples, but the disciples are no better off than their teachers.

They have a religious system producing graduates as blind as their professors.

Ivor Powell, [Luke's Thrilling Gospel](#) (Kregel Publications, 1984), p. 156

The point is to be careful who you're listening to—why? Because Jesus says that you're not just listening to them, you are becoming like them.

That is the warning of Jesus here in verse 40:

“A disciple is not above his teacher, but everyone when he is fully trained will be like his teacher.”

Luke 6:40

Jesus does *not* say that every disciple will be as smart as their teacher; or as eloquent; or as widely used as their teacher. Jesus says something far more frightening; He says you will become like your teacher.

We typically say, “Like father, like son.” Jesus says, “No, like professor, like pupil; like teacher, like disciple.”

In the ancient world, the teacher-student relationship was much more personal—it was verbal instruction; there wasn't a library where the teacher could send you to read the latest publication. You virtually lived alongside your mentor.

Bock, p. 612

You picked up their attitude, and even their nature.



Who are some of your mentors, and how have they changed you? Have you adopted an older person's attitude or nature? Was that mentor a godly example, or a worldly one?

In our educational systems, we do the same.

If I were to ask you to give me the name of some teacher you had in grammar school or middle and high school or college or grad school who was one of your favorite teachers, most of us could name a teacher or two, and it probably would have nothing to do with how smart they were. They probably weren't your favorite teacher because of their intellect as much as it was because of their spirit, their attitude, their perspective on life.

So as a growing disciple, be careful who you're reading and watching and following.

Jesus says here that you won't just *learn* from them, you will become *like* them; you're not just picking up a podcast, you're picking up a personality.

Growing disciples are marked by:

Genuine generosity.

Cautious conformity.

Now thirdly, they are marked by:

Honest Humility

Notice verse 41:

“Why do you see the speck that is in your brother’s eye, but do not notice the log that is in your own eye?”

Luke 6:41

Now stop here for a moment so we can get this rather comical scenario in view.

Here's a guy with a log sticking out of his eye—and the word here for log doesn't refer to some little 2 by 4, it refers to a load-bearing beam used in building the roof of a house.

David E. Garland, *Zondervan Exegetical Commentary on the New Testament: Luke* (Zondervan, 2011), p. 285

It could be 20 feet long. And it's just sticking out of his eye. So, he's just walking around knocking everybody over.

When he comes to church, everybody ducks under the pew!

But it's interesting to me that this guy is perceptive. **Jesus says** he sees his brother over there—the implication is that

this is another believer. He sees his brother over there on the other side of the sanctuary and his brother has a speck in his eye.

And this word for speck can be translated “a flake of wood.” Your translation may read “a splinter.” It's literally a speck of sawdust.

Bock, p. 614

But the key thing to keep in mind here is that both men have the same problem.

A speck of sawdust and a plank of wood are identical in nature, the only difference is the size of the problem.

J. Dwight Pentecost, *The Words and Works of Jesus Christ* (Zondervan Academic, 1981), p. 185

One guy has a rafter sized problem, and the other guy is just getting started. And Mr. Plank-Head spots Mr. Sawdust!

It's amazing that Mr. Plank-Head can see anything.

But the bigger problem here is the fact that Mr. Plank-Head doesn't want to leave it alone—he wants to perform surgery.

Jesus says in verse 42:

“How can you say to your brother, ‘Brother, let me take out the speck that is in your eye,’ when you yourself do not see the log that is in your own eye?”

Luke 6:42a

Jesus is describing this kind of comical scene: here's Mr. Plank-Head chasing Mr.

Sawdust around the synagogue trying to get him cornered.

In fact, the original construction for this phrase **“let me take out the speck”** can be translated, **“Hold still; hold still so I can take it out.”**

Adapted from Lenski, p. 380

This audience is no doubt laughing at this ridiculous scenario. We’re smiling, but we also realize that Jesus just pulled the curtain back and has shown us ourselves. And a growing disciple will get the point.

We have an amazing blindness to our own sin and an equally amazing perception of sin in the lives of others.

Adapted from Hughes, p. 239

We look at our sins through a telescope and the sins of others through a microscope.



How does it destroy a church when the congregation always focus on each other’s sins instead of their own? How can you be part of making sure that destructive tendency never arises in your local body?

We so easily spot the speck in others and pay no attention to the plank in ourselves.

Now Jesus doesn’t go on here to say to His disciples, “Look, don’t worry about it; that’s just the way you are.”

Not quite, He says further in verse 42:

“You hypocrite, first take the log out of your own eye, and then you will see clearly to take out the speck that is in your brother’s eye.”

Luke 6:42b

Don’t wear a mask to try and hide that plank; you can’t hide that beam of wood behind a curtain for very long. Deal with it; admit it; confess it!

Which means a growing disciple will adopt this kind of honest humility about themselves.

Let me take you back to **verse 41** for a moment: the Lord reveals why we miss the plank in our own lives.

He uses 2 different verbs for observing, you might circle them in your text.

Jesus says:

*“Why do you **see** the speck that is in your brother’s eye, but do not **notice** the log that is in your own eye . . .”*

The first verb for see is a word that means “to correctly observe, to see *with understanding*.”

So, it really is true, Mr. Plank-Head actually and correctly sees with understanding that his brother has a problem.

But Jesus then asks, “But why don’t you **notice** the log in your own eye.” Here

Jesus changes the verb to mean, “to see with reflection.”

In other words, this man failed to reflect on his own life, to recognize his own struggles and his own failures; in fact, it seems implied here that he preferred to focus on everybody else, while ignoring his own sin.

Here’s the action point that leads a growing disciple into holy living—honest humility: realistically reflecting with honest humility on what God needs to do in your own life, especially when you look around at others.

Can you spot their sin? Can you discern their weakness? Can you see even the smallest speck of sawdust?

Yes! But guess what? The next time you spot a sin in the life of your brother or your sister, ask yourself the question of reflection:

Do I see that sin in them, that spiritual weakness in them, that moral compromise in them, that personality problem in them; do I see that *in them* because it is in me?”

With that kind of honest humility and realistic reflection, your life will stay confessed and clean.

Now with that, don’t miss this counsel from the Lord here: Jesus goes on to tell us to take care of the beam in our own lives, but now notice. “Go help your brother get victory in his life.”

Notice the end of verse 42:

“Then you will see clearly to take out the speck that is in your brother’s eye.”

Luke 6:42c

See, now you’re ready to perform constructive surgery; you’re not going to knock everything and everyone over; you’ve got the right spirit: honest humility.

John Chrysostom once wrote in the fourth century, “[You’re now ready to] correct your brother, not as a foe but as a physician.”

Douglas Sean O’Donnell, [Matthew](#) (Crossway, 2013), p.190

God may very well want to use you in their lives to help, encourage, confront, and mentor them.

A growing disciple is experiencing these marks in his or her life:

Genuine generosity.

Cautious conformity.

Honest humility.

One more:

Internal Integrity

Verse 43:

“For no good tree bears bad fruit, nor again does a bad tree bear good fruit, for each tree is known by its own fruit. For figs are not gathered from thornbushes, nor are grapes picked from a bramble bush. The good person out of the good

*treasure of his heart
produces good, and the evil
person out of his evil
treasure produces evil, for
out of the abundance of the
heart his mouth speaks.”*

Luke 6:43-45

Again, Jesus pulls the curtain back and exposes two issues:

What are the works coming from our lives?

What are the words coming from our mouths?

He equates **works** to **fruit** here in this illustration. A bad tree can't produce good fruit, it will only produce bad fruit. The word here for **bad** means **decayed or rotten**.

The nature of the tree determines the character of the fruit. Which is why—he says here in **verse 44**—you don't go looking for figs from a thornbush or grapes from a bramble bush.

Jesus' audience would have laughed or smiled and nodded, “Of course you wouldn't do that.”

I'm not going to go out in my backyard and walk up to that white birch tree and, as much as my wife and I like that tree, get mad at it because it has never produced even one chocolate covered doughnut.

Wouldn't it be great to have a doughnut tree in your back yard? They don't exist—I googled it.

It's as ridiculous as a guy with a plank sticking out of his eye. Jesus is using comical hyperbole—exaggeration—so nobody misses the point.

You don't go to a bramble bush for grapes any more than you'd go to a birch tree for doughnuts.

Here's the obvious point: we produce outwardly what we are inwardly.

Which is why Jesus ends this discussion with a reference to the heart.

What's in our heart will show up on our hands.

What's in our heart comes out of our mouths.

What's in us internally eventually shows up externally.



Ask someone who knows you well how you communicate. Does their description of your words reflect how you want to be perceived? What changed do you need to make in your speech?

The curtain is pulled back and that fruit is hanging on the limbs of our lives—those words are floating in the air, having come out of our mouths.

In his commentary on this passage, Warren Wiersbe overheard a man apologizing to his friend for swearing, and he said, “That really wasn't in me.” And

his friend said, “It had to be in you, or it wouldn’t have come out of you.”

Warren W. Wiersbe, Be Compassionate: Luke 1-13 (Victor Books, 1989), p. 79

I’ve watched crime shows where the person is caught—they had pulled the trigger; they killed someone—and so often, they will say the exact same quote, “It wasn’t me, that’s not who I am.”

The truth is, our hands and our deeds and our words give us away.

Kent Hughes writes convicting words on this same text, “If a person’s conversation is ungodly, they are ungodly; if their words are graceless, they are ungracious; if they speak profanely, they are profane; if their conversation is worldly, they are worldly; if their words are mean, they are mean.”

Hughes, p. 242

What we say and do *externally* reflects who we are becoming internally down in our hearts.

John Phillips on this text put it this way: “We say what we say, and we do what we do because we are what we are.”

So the growing disciple gets serious about the root issue, the hidden issue, the heart issue, and the need for internal integrity to grow and develop by the transforming power of God’s Word through the ministry of Holy Spirit.

So that when the curtain gets pulled back, who we are behind the curtain in private is the same thing that shows up on the screen of public life.

It’s the same you; no, you’re not perfect, but you are progressing in genuine generosity, cautious conformity, honest humility, and internal integrity.

This is who you are becoming as a disciple of Christ.

Let me encourage you, disciple of Christ:

Keep going; Stay at it; Don’t quit; Press on; Stay the course.

And rest assured that He who began a good work in you will complete it on that day—Paul wrote to the Philippians—when you are finally in the presence of your Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ.

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