Give, And It Will Be Given To You

Luke 6:37-42

Key Verse: 6:38

*Give, and it will be given to you. A good measure, pressed down, shaken together and running over, will be poured into your lap. For with the measure you use, it will be measured to you.”*

Today is the final message before Christmas messages are set to begin. That means that the Christmas season has officially begun. And, as you know, the Christmas season is the season of giving. According to a recent survey, Americans will spend an average of $800 in Christmas gifts in 2014. Of course it is good to give and to receive Christmas gifts, but as believers we are called to give something more. After all, John 3:16, which could be the key verse of the entire Bible, begins with the words, “For God so loved the world that he *gave* his one and only Son …” Our God is a giving God and we are also called to give.

Today, we have a continuation of Jesus sermon on the plain. Jesus prayed and chose12 disciples, whom he designated apostles. His vision was to train as a new breed of spiritual leaders. So as a matter of introduction, Jesus spoke about the foundations of a Christian lifestyle. They would be poor! They would be hated! But they would be blessed and their reward in heaven would be great! The life they were called to live was so different, so opposed to the ways of this world. They were to love their enemies! They were to be kind to the ungrateful and wicked! And in the passage for today, they were called to not judge or condemn, but forgive and to give.

Look at verse 37. “*Do not judge, and you will not be judged. Do not condemn, and you will not be condemned.”*

Here Jesus might have had in mind the bad example of the Pharisees and teachers of the Law. Jesus’ disciples left everything to follow him, and they were often hungry. But when they picked heads of grain to eat, the Pharisees judged them for breaking the Sabbath Law. Jesus himself came to do good, and to give life. But when he healed a man with a shriveled hand on the Sabbath, he healed a man with a shriveled hand, the Pharisees and teachers of the Law were ready to condemn Jesus. These so called religious leaders made a habit of judging and condemning others. It was because they did not go by the words of God. In fact, Jesus once told them *“You have a fine way of setting aside the commands of God in order to observe your own traditions”* (Mark 7:9).

Each of us also has our own ideas, styles, cultures, traditions and ways of doing things, as well as strengths and weaknesses. It is so easy to fall into the habit of judging others. But Jesus gives us a stern warning here, “Do not judge and you will not be judged.”

Of course this does not mean that we take a relative view of sin. We know that God will judge sin. The Bible says *“For God will bring every deed into judgment, including every hidden thing, whether it is good or evil.”* (Ecclesiastes 12:14). So do not judge, does not mean that we do not judge sin or identify sin as sin. Rather, it is a warning against a critical and judgmental attitude. Why do we judge and condemn others? The Bible tells us that it is because we do the same things. *“You, therefore, have no excuse, you who pass judgment on someone else, for at whatever point you judge another, you are condemning yourself, because you who pass judgment do the same things”* (Romans 2:1). Judging others may be a feeble attempt to avoid exposing our own weaknesses or to justify our own sins.

Another reason people judge is because they only see outward appearances. The great evangelist Charles Spurgeon and his wife raised chickens. They used to sell eggs that their chickens laid. They would not give the eggs away. They would not even give eggs to their close relatives, but made them buy the eggs. As a result some people said that the Spurgeons were greedy and selfish. But they accepted the criticisms without defending themselves. When Mrs. Spurgeon died, the story was revealed. All the profits from the sale of the eggs went to support two poor elderly widows. People had judged and criticized them by outward appearance without knowing all the facts.

Who are we to judge others? We are all fallen sinners. The Bible says, "...there is no one righteous, not even one." (Ro 3:23, 3:10) Even Jesus, the only righteous Son of God, did not come to condemn, but to save. John 3:7 says, *“For God did not send his Son into the world to condemn the world, but to save the world through him”* (John 3:17). Jesus did not judge or condemn others. Instead, he embraced all kinds of sinners with mercy and love.

There was once a woman caught in adultery. The Pharisees brought her to Jesus to see what he would do. Jesus could have condemned her, because he is was completely righteous and without sin. But he said to her, *"Then neither do I condemn you...Go now and leave your life of sin."* (John 8:11b)

That is why instead of negatively judging or condemning others, Jesus encourages us to do something positive for others.Look at verse 37-38, *"Forgive, and you will be forgiven.* *Give, and it will be given to you."*

I’m not an expert on the etymology of the word forgive. But when I see the word forgive and give together here, one principle comes to mind: We need to forgive, before we are able to give. Maybe this is why Jesus first mentioned forgive, before talking about give. One interesting example is that when a wife cannot forgive her husband, then she cannot give herself to her husband. They are very sensitive to the matter of forgiveness, as they ought to be.

According to a dictionary, ‘forgive’ means to stop feeling angry or resentful toward someone for an offense, flaw, or mistake. To forgive others is not easy. But we can forgive when we remember Jesus’ words from the cross. *“Father, forgive them, for they do not know what they are doing …”* (Luke 23:34). Jesus even forgave those who caused him such horrible pain and suffering.

None of us wants to be condemned. We all want to be forgiven. The good news is that God has already forgiven all of our sins through Jesus death on the cross. All we need to do is to believe it and accept it, and to continue to believe it and accept it from this point on until the very end of our lives.

In a sense, forgiveness is the first thing we need to give to others. But what else should we give? Giving is very practical. We are called to give our time and attention to serve others in whatever they need most of all. Especially, God’s way of giving is to first give the words of God. Let’s think about our key verse in terms of giving the words of God to others. “*Give, and it will be given to you. A good measure, pressed down, shaken together and running over, will be poured into your lap. For with the measure you use, it will be measured to you.”*

Do you want to have God’s words? We know how valuable it is to have God’s words! So if you want to have God’s words in abundance, then try giving God’s words to others, at least to one other person. When we give generously, God promises to give to us more than generously. *“A good measure, pressed down, shaken together and running over …”*

Sometimes a recipe calls for a level measure, but other times it calls for a measure that is pressed down, or shaken together. In both cases, the measurement is accurate, but with the measure that is pressed down or shaken together or even running over is a more generous amount. When we give, God gives to us more!

This principle can be seen in the geography of Israel. In Israel, water flows from the north into the Sea of Galilee and out into the Jordan River. So the Sea of Galilee is abundant is sea life. On the other hand, the water that flows into the Dead Sea is clogged up and does not flow into any major body of water. As a result the Dead Sea is saturated with salt, much more than any ocean, and is unable to support sea life; hence its name, the Dead Sea

This geography, also reminds us of the flow of Jesus’ ministry. Jesus carried out a disciple making ministry Galilee, and from there the life-giving words of God flowed in and through his disciples to the ends of the earth. On the other hand, the Dead Sea reminds us of the religious leaders in Jerusalem, who received the message, but did not believe or accept it. They could not offer any live-giving words of God to others, but became like whitewashed tombs. It is just as Jesus proclaimed, *“Woe to you, teachers of the law and Pharisees, you hypocrites! You are like whitewashed tombs, which look beautiful on the outside but on the inside are full of the bones of the dead and everything unclean”*

In many ways, God has blessed America with a rich spiritual heritage. He has given us freedom to worship God and has entrusted us with the Bible and the gospel message. Along with these spiritual blessings, God has also blessed America materially, more than any other nation. In the past Americans responded to God’s abundant blessings, by sending out more than one million missionaries. And, God continued to pour his overflowing blessings upon our nation.

But now, we could be in danger of forfeiting God’s blessings. We did not give the life-giving words of God to the other nations as fervently as we once did. We became rich, but did not use our wealth to serve God more. I can see the same thing in my own life. When our family was poor, somehow it was easy to make, but when our income increased, we had to think about it more. We continued to tithe, but it became more and more out of obligation rather than from a generous and thankful heart.

Once Jesus rebuked the lukewarm attitude of the members of the Church in Laodicea, saying *“You say, ‘I am rich; I have acquired wealth and do not need a thing.’ But you do not realize that you are wretched, pitiful, poor, blind and naked.* (Revelation 3:17) Does this rebuke now apply to the church in America?

I noticed that throughout our Bible Center, we have several Bible verses, maps and list of campuses to pioneer. Inside the front door of the Center there is a world map and banners with the words, *“Go make disciples of all nations”* and *“He will reward each person according to what he has done.”*  In the fellowship hall there is a US map with the words, *“A kingdom of priests and a holy nation”* and another world map with the words, *“Go and make disciples of all nations.”* In the computer area there is a map of the West Coast and maps of the LA area along with a list pioneered and un-pioneered campuses and a banner with the words, *“The harvest is plentiful, but the workers are few. Ask the Lord of the harvest, therefore, to send out workers into his harvest field.*”

As I looked at them, I realized that these maps, lists of campuses and banners became like relics to me, and I also became a relic. I was ashamed that I had become so corrupt and had so little to give to others.

The secret to receiving is to give. Especially, we are called to generously give the words of God to others.

Look at verse 39-40. *“He also told them this parable: “Can the blind lead the blind? Will they not both fall into a pit? 40 The student is not above the teacher, but everyone who is fully trained will be like their teacher.*

The Pharisees and teachers of the Law became blind guides. They were incapable of leading others to God. And, they were not open to Jesus teaching. But the disciples were different. Jesus disciples were ready to learn from Jesus. They were ready to receive training. The point of their training was to be like Jesus. They were to be like Jesus, but never to put themselves above Jesus. Even after being fully trained, they must continue to submit to Jesus’ leadership and authority.

Look at verses 41-42. *“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? 42 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’ disciples were called to be Bible teachers and shepherds for others. In order to be good Bible teaches and shepherds, they needed avoid falling into the same hypocrisy of the Pharisees and teachers of the Law. Before pointing out others sins, they first needed to attend to their own sin problem. They needed to first judge themselves based on God’s words. Hebrews 4:12 says, *“For the word of God is alive and active. Sharper than any double-edged sword, it penetrates even to dividing soul and spirit, joints and marrow; it judges the thoughts and attitudes of the heart.”* Before looking at others, we first need to take a good long look in the mirror. We need to find ourselves as sinners before the living words of God, and to repent and be forgiven of our sins. In order to be fully trained in the words of God, we need to have a humble and learning mind. We need to not only hear the words of God, so that they go in one ear and out the other, but we need to listen and obey and to put God’s words into practice.

In the past, I struggled well with the words of God. I wrote daily bread testimonies and weekly testimonies. As a result, I was well trained and filled up with God’s words, so God’s words were overflowing from my life. But after I became rich, so to speak, I seldom struggled with the words of God at all. As a result, I had very limited power to help others. In fact, I could barely take care of myself. Although God sent me several Bible students, I could not able to serve them well. I needed to train myself by first judging by God’s word, repenting and having my sins forgiven daily. Through today’s passage, I could see that Bible study with others is real Bible study, because it is not only for other, but even more for me. The more I give the words of God to others, the more God promises to give his words to me, so that I will be fully trained and God’s words will be abundant and overflowing in my life.

One word: give and it will be given to you.