

The Master's Plan for Relationships ¹

✦ the golden rule (vv.27-36)

✦ the good measure (vv.37-38)

In the Name of Jesus our shining Epiphany Lord and Master, dearly beloved disciples, friends of Jesus:

Here's our third sermon on **The Master's Plan**. For **Fishing** took us off the grid into the real world of catching people to give them heaven. **The Master's Plan for Healing** is so upside down and inside out, what's online is mostly off base. Today **The Master's Plan for Relationships** seems totally unglued in social media with too much Hollywood and too little human contact. Mark Twain said, "A lie can travel halfway around the world before truth can put its boots on." But now you need hip waders because the lies are so deep. How can so many blessings like technology get so perverted for evil? Don't think too hard. Remember that brief time when one man and one woman were joined for life with God in paradise? What shattered the marital bliss of Adam and Eve? The blame game began when they rebelled against God. Our shining Epiphany Lord wants us fishing for souls in perfect healing by **The Master's Plan for Relationships**. His all-conquering love is meant to overflow your heart and life in...

✦ the golden rule (vv.27-36)

"Do unto others as you would have them do unto you." Sounds simple, doesn't it? Every marriage would be a perfect "10!" Friendship among ethnic groups and nations would override any threat of war. That's what we're looking forward to in heaven, **the home of righteousness** (2 Peter 3:13) – where "perfect love and friendship reign through all eternity." (CWH 730:5)

And yet, how can any of us do this? **"I say to you who are listening: Love your enemies. Do good to those who hate you. Bless those who curse you. Pray for those who mistreat you. If someone strikes you on one cheek, offer the other too. If someone takes away your coat, do not withhold your shirt. Give to everyone who asks you, and if anyone takes away your things, do not demand them back."** ² Natural born sinners can only *love, do good, and lend* to those who do all that for them. We all have three strikes against *credit* with God. So what kind of *reward* can any of us expect as fallen *sons of the Most High...unthankful and...evil*? Ah, get this! **"While we were enemies, we were reconciled to God by the death of his Son...."** (Romans 5:10) Our heavenly Father is truly *kind* to give us His *reward* of grace already in this life to overcome evil with good. ***Be merciful, just as your Father is merciful.***

The Holy Spirit says through Paul: **"The goal of this command is love that comes from a pure heart, from a good conscience, and from a sincere faith."** (1 Timothy 1:5) Preacher Martin Luther observed: "Love, as everyone already knows, is simply being kind to someone, showing that person goodness, and offering friendship. Now, there are some who preach and sermonize about love, but they slant it to their own point of view and to their own advantage. They...have love—but only for themselves and others like them. Meanwhile, they hate and persecute all good Christians....Choosing a couple of people who are pleasing to you, who do what you want, and then being friendly to those people is a long way from love. This is a soiled love that doesn't come from a pure heart. It's nothing more than dirt.

"For love that flows 'from a pure heart' thinks, 'God has commanded me to direct my love to my neighbor. My heavenly Father wants me to be favorable to everyone, friends or enemies, just as he is. He

¹ This is the third in a series of sermons on **The Master's Plan...for Evangelism** (S#1864), **...for Healing** (S#1865), and now **...for Relationships**. All can be heard at the New Life website below.

² EHV ~ *Evangelical Heritage Version* (<http://wartburgproject.org>) © 2019. NPH: 800-662-6022, Amazon-Kindle, LOGOS.

lets the sun rise and shine on both good and evil people.' God shows goodness to those who continually dishonor him and misuse what he has provided through their disobedience, blasphemy, sin, and shameful behavior. In the same way, he lets rain fall on both the thankful and the unthankful. He gives money, property, and all types of things from the earth to the very worst scoundrels. Why does he do this? Out of genuine, pure love. His heart is full and overflowing with love. He pours his love over everyone, leaving no one out, whether good or bad, worthy or unworthy. This love is righteous, godly, whole, and complete. It doesn't single out certain people or separate people into groups. [God] freely gives his love to all."³

You know there's only one human being who ever kept **the golden rule** without a single failure. That's on you! God put Christ on you in your baptism so you could die with Jesus to sin each day, a rise to new life, fully refreshed by grace in Christ. You have full **credit** with God to **love, do good, and lend** like Jesus. **The Master's Plan for Relationships** first fixed yours with God, now frees you to apply...

✠ the good measure (vv.37-38)

"Do not judge, and you will not be judged. Do not condemn, and you will not be condemned. Forgive, and you will be forgiven. Give, and it will be given to you. A good measure pressed down, shaken together, and running over will be poured into your lap. In fact, the measure with which you measure will be measured back to you." Yes, God expects a return on His investment in you, just as you want love and faithfulness too. In **good measure** God keeps pouring in, even when you're **running over**.

Lost in a crowd. Lost online. Lost in love. Lost in hurt. ***"The Son of Man is come to seek and to save the lost."*** (Luke 19:10) When Jesus teaches us to love our enemies, he's teaching us to rise above life's problems rather than being victims. In life's grand adventure with God you're not sitting around feeling sorry for yourself in "pity parties" attended by none. Discipleship plans, Bible studies, devotions all help God's **good measure** for us as stewards or managers of life's richest blessings in Christ.

Some lives are like stagnant ponds in the hot summer. The runoff from beautiful, well fertilized lawns, grows a ton of algae. You can sink and drown in the muck, or you can rise above and walk across on the scum. You need oxygen in your pond. That spouting geyser isn't just for decoration. The dear Holy Spirit in Word and sacrament keeps pumping an endless supply of oxygen to cleanse the water, save the fish, and blow away the stagnation. We need to keep refreshing constantly in Christ!

Think how Joseph applied **the good measure** by **The Master's Plan for Relationships** with his brothers. As much as depended on him, he had tried to live at peace with them. But Joseph's brothers sold him into slavery. For twenty years it seemed his best efforts to do good always cost him – his freedom, his honor, his everything but God. God was with Joseph and raised him miraculously to be the Prime Minister of Egypt, second only to Pharaoh. When his brothers needed food from Egypt in the famine, Joseph tested them, then forgave them. He overcame evil with good in God's name. (Genesis 45)

Every congregation including ours, has souls enjoying all the benefits with little or no thanks back to God. They ***"rob God"*** (Malachi 3:8ff) of offerings – time, talent, treasure, testimony. The LORD's peaceful river is blocked by some who seal themselves off like the Dead Sea, water flowing in but nothing flowing out. God wants to pour in more blessings, but in their Dead Sea plants die, bodies float, mineral mud makes cosmetics, but there's no beauty in it. Count it pure joy when God digs painful channels out of your life until you cry out to God for the outflow. In God's **good measure** you can flourish and grow in grand opportunities like our *God-Lived Life* series on discipleship. **The Master's Plan for Relationships** grows **the good measure** by immeasurable grace from God and applies **the golden rule** to lift others up in love with Jesus. Thanks to Jesus, you live in a restored relationship with God. He wants the love of Christ to overflow into all your **Relationships**. That's **The Master's Plan**. As God keeps pouring in and you pour out, no matter how good or bad it seems right now, the best is yet to be. Amen.

³ Martin Luther. *By Faith Alone* © 1998 by World Pub. DailyReader © 1999-2001, Wheeler/Rairdin. www.laridian.com
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