

All Saints Day, November 2, 2025.

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The Ethical Manifesto of the Kingdom

Sermon on Luke 6:20-31.

Before we turn to our Scripture this morning, let me begin with a story that moved me deeply this week — a story of faith, suffering, and victory. Cricket, often considered the British equivalent of baseball, is the most popular sport in India.

Securing the world championship is regarded as a symbol of national pride.

Following India's recent victory over Australia in the Women's ODI World Cup semi-final, the entire country celebrated. A young cricketer spearheaded the win — Jemimah Rodrigues — whose impressive century led her team to the final, making her an immediate national hero. But behind that moment of triumph was a year of pain and humiliation.

Just a year ago, Jemimah faced a religious controversy that cost her dearly.

Her gymkhana club membership was revoked because of false accusations. She was trolled mercilessly on social media, accused of promoting her Christian faith. She was excluded from several international teams, and many said it was because she was open about her belief in Jesus. Through all that, she kept quiet — but she kept her faith. Then came the semi-final. Against the seven-time world champions,

she fought through the pressure, the noise, and the memory of rejection — and delivered a record-breaking performance that carried India to victory. After the match, as the cameras rolled and the nation watched, Jemimah was asked to speak about her success. Tears filled her eyes as she said softly,

“The horse is prepared for the day of battle, but victory is of the Lord.”

It was a public testimony — a cry of faith turning into laughter. Her story reminds us that *those who weep now will laugh*. It reminds us that the *Kingdom of God belongs to those who trust in Him, even when the world rejects them*.

And that brings us to today’s Scripture passage from Luke’s Gospel. It’s often called the Sermon on the Plain. Now, when you hear the word “manifesto,” what comes to mind? A manifesto is a public declaration — a statement of purpose or intention. Throughout history, manifestos have shaped nations and movements.

Think about:

- The Declaration of Independence, which declared freedom for a new nation...
- The Declaration of the Rights of Man, which redefined liberty in France...
- And the Communist Manifesto, which shook the social order of its time.

Each of these claimed to present a new vision of the world. But none of them compares to the Sermon on the Plain. Jesus’ Sermon on the Plain is the Manifesto

of the Kingdom of God, a declaration not written on paper but spoken from the heart of God Himself. And here's the beauty: Jesus delivered his message not from a palace or throne but from a simple setting, standing among the common people—the poor, the hungry, the weary, and the forgotten. The Sermon on the Plain took place during his ministry in Galilee under Roman rule, a time marked by economic insecurity, migration, and hardship. Jesus speaks from the perspective of the oppressed—those threatened by political oppression, heavy taxes, and financial instability. As noted in Matthew, Jesus was the “son of a carpenter” from the peasant class, having grown up witnessing peers and relatives suffering economically and facing increasing financial burdens. His ethical teachings should be understood within this context: poverty, patronage systems, Roman imperial power, the honor–shame culture, and local debt and land practices. From this viewpoint, the sermon's ethics serve both as social critique and personal guidance. It expresses an ideology that challenges the current social order and imagines a new communal life, advocating social transformation and outlining the moral expectations of God's kingdom. It also functions as a manifesto for an eschatological community dedicated to serving God and supporting His divine plan. Jesus' ethical statements are normative, radical, and counter-cultural, not just idealistic or optional.

First, the Sermon on the Plains Invert Human Values (vv. 20–26)

Listen to His words:

“Blessed are you who are poor,...Blessed are you who hunger now,...Blessed are you who weep now, for you will laugh.”

And then, just as boldly,

“But woe to you who are rich...

woe to you who are well fed now...

woe to you who laugh now...”

How strange this sounds to our ears! How can poverty or hunger be *blessings*? And why is there an inclusion of woes to reverse the beatitudes found in Matthew’s Gospel? The reversal of the beatitude motif in Luke’s Gospel is a radical ethical and social prescription. It reorders status and resources rather than merely promising future consolation. Generally, Jesus’ ethics is softened either by spiritualizing it so that it becomes only an inner attitude, by treating it as a promise for the future only (i.e., “we’ll get to this in the eschaton”), or by adapting it to fit dominant social values. But the Sermon on the Plain is meant to be lived, and its demands are deliberately counter-cultural. Jesus’s ethical manifesto is both demanding and enabling. It demands an ethical transformation that presupposes a reorientation of life and communal structures. That means it is not achieved simply

through moral effort by isolated individuals. The ethical manifesto presumes new forms of social relations and shared life.

Second, the Sermon on the Plain is all about the Radical Ethic of Love

Then Jesus moves from blessing to behavior. A prescription of non-retaliation and enemy love is a strategic, community-forming ethics that weakens the logic of domination. To break the cycle of violence and retaliation, Jesus advocated for the radical principle of turning the other cheek and loving enemies.

He says, “Love your enemies, do good to those who hate you, bless those who curse you, and pray for those who mistreat you.”

Now, that’s not natural.

The world says, “*Love your friends, and get even with your enemies.*”

But Jesus says, “*Love even those who hurt you.*”

This is the radical ethic of the Kingdom. This teaching is impossible to practice unless the community as a whole forms a new life. Therefore, this ethics presupposes a communal transformation. Additionally, this transformative behavior is **a requirement** to belong to the kingdom-community. It’s not optional for “good” Christians—it’s foundational.

In the world, love is transactional—you love those who love you back. But in God’s Kingdom, love is transformational—it changes hearts and breaks the cycle

of hate. This kind of love isn't a weakness; it's a strength. It's the only power strong enough to overcome evil. When Jemimah faced mockery and hate, she didn't respond in kind. She kept her witness. She kept her heart pure. And in the end, her grace under persecution spoke louder than any words. Jesus is calling us not to *fairness*, but to *forgiveness*. Not to *revenge*, but to *redemption*. Not to *justice as payback*, but *grace that transforms*.

Third, the Sermon on the Plain gives us the Golden Rule, which is the Heart of the Manifesto.

And then Jesus gives what we now call *the Golden Rule*: “Do to others as you would have them do to you.” We often quote it as a simple moral rule — “Be nice.”

But in Jesus' sermon, it's so much deeper. This isn't about being polite.

It's about seeing others through God's eyes. And notice: He says this right after talking about *loving enemies*. That gives it its full power. He's saying:

“Treat even those who mistreat you as you would want to be treated.” That's not reciprocity — that's grace in action. That's the beating heart of the Kingdom's ethic. When we live like this, we make the invisible God visible.

Then, How to Live the Manifesto Today

What does this mean for us today? It means that there is an invitation to shape a distinctive community—an “eschatological community” that models kingdom life now. It further means that an expectation is placed on the church to form an eschatological community that practices the reversal Jesus proclaims, so the sermon’s ethics are visible and formative in the present. Yes, these are all hard. But it is possible when the Spirit of God transforms us from within. But praise God — that same Spirit is alive in us! He empowers us to live this Manifesto, to love as Jesus loved, to forgive as He forgave, to serve as He served. May the Holy Spirit fill us, strengthen us, and empower us to live this Manifesto, so that through our lives, the world might see the heart of the King. **Amen.**