

# Congregational Study: Luke's Epiphany

## February 4, 2025

### Home Study: Luke 6:37-42

#### INTRODUCTION

Have you ever been to a masquerade party, at which everyone is wearing a mask? You can see the costumes, and peer at the masks covering up the faces, but it's hard to know who the people really are. Maybe if you know their mannerisms, vocal patterns, and body language, you'll be able to figure out their true identities.

God always knows the real me, and the real you. There's no hiding from him, and no masking our identities. The word "hypocrite" comes from an old Greek word referring to a person wearing a mask. We may think that we're able to hide our true selves from others, but we can never hide anything from our omniscient God. He knows every thought, every desire, every action, every word.

#### TODAY'S READING

Jesus' sermon continues in today's reading, as he talks to his followers about the way they relate and interact with others. His teaching is very direct, as we'll see. The Lord gets right at the heart of the way we so often think about others, and the way we so often treat them. "Don't be a hypocrite," he urges.

Read Luke 6:27-42 in your Bible.

Jesus first mentions two specific activities, and directs his followers (including us) to avoid them. Judging others, and condemning others, should not be done by us, Jesus tells us. Surely he knows that these activities are absolutely normal, common, ordinary, everyday behaviors for people like us. Everyone, it seems, judges others, at least occasionally. All of us are accustomed to condemning and criticizing people around us. Jesus says, however, that it should not be so among his followers. He wants us to act differently than the people of the world act, and to treat others in a radically new, drastically different fashion.

*Are these challenging directives from our Lord? How many times a day, on average, do you normally find yourself judging (in your mind, at least) another person? Or condemning someone else? Is Jesus really serious, in saying that we should not judge or condemn? Do you need help from God in order to live in the way that he's describing?*

Jesus goes on to say, in straight-forward fashion, that his followers should forgive. We all know that it's not easy to forgive someone who's wronged us. It's very hard to let go

of grudges, to move past hurts and insults. But Jesus says, simply, “Forgive, and you will be forgiven.”

*Have you ever been in a situation in which you’ve found it very hard to forgive another person? Did your feelings change and soften, as time passed? Do you need God’s help to forgive that other person?*

Jesus tells us, next, to give. He wants his followers to be generous, to open their hands and hearts to the needs of others. God has blessed each of us with material gifts and treasures, and he wants us not to hold on too tightly. Jesus encourages his followers to be ready to pass along those blessings, to give. He adds a wonderful promise in verses 38-39, letting us know that we can’t ever outgive God. When we give generously, abundant blessings will come our way.

*Do you consider yourself to be a generous person? Do you need help when it comes to giving, and being willing to share your blessings with a joyful and sincere heart?*

Jesus tells us a wonderful parable, to emphasize how ridiculous it is for us to continue pointing out the flaws and weaknesses of others. Here’s where the “mask” idea comes in. We may pretend, with other people, that we’re pretty good. We may act piously, and present ourselves as respectable, upstanding citizens. But God knows – and we all have to admit this reality – we are poor, miserable sinners ourselves. That’s who we really are. “Don’t be a hypocrite (mask-wearer),” Jesus is telling us. “Don’t look down on your neighbor, or anyone else. You’re no better than others. Be non-judgmental, and non-condemnatory. Be forgiving, and quick to give to others. Don’t point out the speck in someone else’s eye, while you’re walking around with a giant beam sticking out of your own eye!”

#### PRAYER

Jesus, Lord of my life, help me to live according to your teachings. Help me to change and grow, in my relationships with others. May your sacrifice for my sins bring joy to my heart, and may your selfless love for me move me to love others in the same way. Let your teaching today take root in my soul, and bear fruit in my life. Amen.