

Graphics, Audio and Video - Media Notes are highlighted in this background

- Word of Witness is a new element in the service before Joys and Concerns. I will introduce a video, which is in the Proclaim presentation. I will then transition to Joys and Concerns.
- Please record sermon at both worship services

Key Questions

1. What is this sermon about?
 - a. This sermon is about the golden rule and how it can make a difference in our lives.
2. Why is this sermon important?
 - a. This sermon is important because this simple rule has significant implications for how we live as Christians and it is sometimes overlooked because of its simplicity.
3. What are the next action steps?
 - a. Seek to follow Jesus' command to treat people in the same way that you want people to treat you.
4. What is the good news (bottom line)?
 - a. The good news is that by God's grace, we *can* treat people in the same way that we want people to treat us.

Context

This is the first sermon in the series, Restoring Joy: 5 Habits for Living Well. In this series we explore five important lessons the Bible teaches us about living well and experiencing real joy. Last night was the El Dorado high school prom.

This sermon has been prepared with the help of Finding Joy in Real Life: 5 Habits for Living Well sermon series at The United Methodist Church of the Resurrection which was April 14 to May 19, 2013. More information about this series can be found online at <http://j.mp/1mRQf4f>.

Metadata

- Topic(s)
 - Joy, Life
- Books of the Bible
 - Matthew
- Series
 - Restoring Joy
- Tags

- golden rule, reciprocity, joy, life, kingdom of God, enemies, love, action

Matthew 22:34-40, CEB

34 When the Pharisees heard that Jesus had left the Sadducees speechless, they met together. 35 One of them, a legal expert, tested him. 36 “Teacher, what is the greatest commandment in the Law?”

37 He replied, “You must love the Lord your God with all your heart, with all your being, and with all your mind. 38 This is the first and greatest commandment. 39 And the second is like it: You must love your neighbor as you love yourself. 40 All the Law and the Prophets depend on these two commands.”

Matthew 7:12, CEB

12 Therefore, you should treat people in the same way that you want people to treat you; this is the Law and the Prophets.

Response to Scripture

One: The Word of God for the people of God.

All: Thanks be to God!

Sermon Starter Video

- [Play sermon starter video.](#)
-

Introduction

Introduction to Restoring Joy: 5 Habits for Living Well

Today, we begin a new series in worship, Restoring Joy: 5 Habits for Living Well. If you read the entire Bible and tried to pick out some of the most important lessons about how we lived our lives, these would be those lessons. They are part of the foundation of faith. They help us live a life worth living. If you do these things, you will find joy, meaning and a life that really is life. If you find yourself in a place where you seem to have lost your joy or that zest for life, these are some of the practices that can help bring it back.

Each week, we are going to take a closer look at them and see how we can apply them in our lives. For the most part, these will not be new to you. It is likely that you know at least three or four, if not all, of them by heart. Today we focus on the ethic of reciprocity, or as it is more commonly known as the golden rule.

Sermon Notes and Scripture Study

I invite you to open your bulletin to a place where you can take notes during the message today. My hope and prayer is that, somewhere during the message, you hear God speaking to

you. I hope you will take the time to write it down.

Today, I hope that you will hear:

- Something new or find new questions
- Perspective on your life or something in your life that gives additional meaning to the message today.
- Guidance about how to live as a disciple of Jesus.

I invite you to write down some of the things that you hear in the sermon today and take your bulletin home as a tool to grow in your faith outside of worship. You can reflect on what you heard today, pray for people of our congregation and read scripture to prepare for worship next week.

Opening Prayer

Will you pray with me? O God, use these words to speak good news so that as individuals and as a congregation we will fear nothing but sin, desire nothing but you and live as part of your kingdom on earth as it is in heaven. Amen.

Introduction to the Golden Rule

“Treat people in the same way that you want people to treat you.”

This one phrase, Jesus said, could summarize the entire law and the prophets. This is a big deal and it is not one that we find only in Christianity. Many of the major world religions have a similar idea and even non-religious people would say that this is a pretty important thing.

What we know as the golden rule is also closely connected with one of the greatest commandments from Jesus. You remember that the first of the greatest commandments, Jesus said, was to “love the Lord your God with all your heart, with all your being, and with all your mind.”¹ “And the second is like it: You must love your neighbor as you love yourself. All the Law and the Prophets depend on these two commands.”²

We will talk about the command to love God with all your heart, being and mind in the last week of this series and today are going to talk a little bit about the second to love your neighbor as you love yourself. This is another way of saying and is a complement to the golden rule **“Treat people in the same way that you want people to treat you.”**

Criticism of the Golden Rule

As hard as it may seem, some people will criticize this simple concept and suggest that we need something else instead or maybe something beyond the golden rule to guide or life. This is the foundation for much of western Christian ethics and yet, there is some valid criticism to the golden rule.

The golden rule tells us to treat people in the same way you want people to treat you.

¹ Matthew 22:37, CEB.

² Matthew 22:39-40, CEB.

However, the problem is that what I want you to do to me may not be the same thing that you want me to do to you. Let me give you an example...

Sweet Tea Example

Did anyone here grow up in the South? Maybe you have traveled to the south for vacation or to see friends or family. So, how do they serve tea in the South? Sweet. How do we serve it most of the time around here? Unsweet and you can add some sweetener if you want.

Nicole and I met in seminary. She is from North Carolina. One Thanksgiving break, I was not going to purchase a flight ticket home and Nicole invited me to her parents' house for the holiday. It was a wonderful Thanksgiving with wonderful home cooked food. Before we headed back to DC, we had to eat at Little Richard's BBQ.

As we were ordering, everyone around the table ordered sweet tea and I thought that I might as well give it a try. So I ordered sweet tea, expecting to have a little sweeter drink than I would otherwise expect. I took one swallow and it was sweet. tea. It was almost like kool-aid.

I have since come to enjoy sweet tea and actually prefer it most of the time.

This is a small example of the critique of the golden rule. If you like sweet tea, and you treat others the way that you would like for them to treat you will serve them sweet tea. That person may or may not want to be treated that way.

Five Love Languages - Relationships Example

It works like this in relationships as well. Each one of us receives love in a little different way. Gary Chapman wrote about this in his book, The Five Love Languages. He outlines the following:

- Words of affirmation
- Acts of service
- Receiving and giving gifts
- Quality time
- Physical touch

We each have one or two primary ways that we like to receive love and we tend to try to show love in the same way. Most couples have a different love language, so you have to pay attention to how they actually receive love because it is probably not the same as yours.

Transition

It is not just a matter of treating others the way that we want to be treated as we are. We have to pay attention to the other person. We have to ask:

How do we treat others the way that they need us to treat them?

How do we treat others the way that they would like us to treat them?

Scripture

Second Great Commandment - Act in Love

This is where we connect with the second great commandment, where it says to love your neighbor as you love yourself. We remember that love is not a warm fuzzy feeling, it is a way of acting to bless, encourage and build up the other person.

When we seek to love our neighbor as ourselves, we are required to think about what would actually bless the other person. What would encourage and build up the other person? This is a proactive approach to loving our neighbors and following the golden rule.

Matthew - Summary of the Sermon on the Mount

Listen again to [Matthew 7:12](#),

“Therefore, you should treat people in the same way that you want people to treat you; this is the Law and the Prophets.”

This verse takes place at the end of the Sermon on the Mount. The word “therefore” reflects back on everything which Jesus had said up until that point. When we think about the golden rule, we are thinking about everything else that he has shared and all the guidance Jesus offers us in the Sermon on the Mount.

- Do not lie.
 - Treat people in the same way that you want people to treat you.
- Do not to say hurtful words to someone else.
 - Treat people in the same way that you want people to treat you.
- Do not to seek vengeance.
 - Treat people in the same way that you want people to treat you.
- Be faithful to your partner
- Love your enemies
- Do not to judge other people

All of these things are summarized in this one phrase: treat people in the same way that you want people to treat you.

Luke - Apply to All People

In Luke, the golden rule appears in a paragraph in which Jesus is talking about loving our enemies. This makes it very clear that the golden rule had a particular application with those people that irritate you, frustrate you, the people you just don't like or have mistreated you. You are to treat them the way that you want to be treated, not the way that they are treating you. This means that the golden rule does not apply only to the people that we go to church with, only friends or only your family. This means that we are to apply this rule to everyone.

Transition

The golden rule sums up the Sermon on the Mount. It is to be applied to all people. So

how do we actually do it? How do we make use of this rule in our everyday life?

Imagination - Connects us with Others

What it requires is imagination. You have imagine how I would want others to treat me, if I were walking in their shoes. How would I like to be treated if these are the circumstances that I faced? If I faced the opportunities and challenges which this other person faces, how would that impact the way I would want to be treated?

This is the power of the golden rule - connecting with other people.

Let me give you an example

Joe Stowell - Barista Example

I heard a friend tell the story of Joe Stowell, president of Cornerstone University. He was describing stopping by a coffee shop soon after they had opened up for the day. He was the second customer to arrive. He walks in and sees the first customer yelling at the cashier.

The first customer has a newspaper in one hand and a \$50 bill in the other hand. He's yelling, "I don't want a cup of coffee. I want to buy a paper. I just want to buy a paper. I have money to pay."

The cashier responds, "Sir, I'm really sorry they did not leave me enough change in the drawer. I can't break a \$50. Maybe if you bought a coffee or maybe something to eat I could make change for you."

"I don't want anything else! How many times do I have to tell you, I just want the paper?!"

Joe, hearing this man get more and more angry says, "You know, just put his newspaper on my bill. I'll take care of it." The man turns to him, gruffly says, "Thanks" and walks out the door with his newspaper.

When he stepped up to the counter the cashier said, "Thank you so much for doing that. I couldn't help him. You helped defuse a difficult situation. You really helped me out. You know, if more people acted like that, the world would be a better place."

What Joe Stowell had done was practice the golden rule. He thought about what it would have been like to be that cashier being yelled at by the man in front of him. Then realizing, I can help solve this problem. I can do something about this.

Transition

You know, that cashier was right. The world would be a much better place, wouldn't it? If everyone treated others the way that they would want to be treated.

God's Kingdom

This is the big idea when Jesus says, this summarizes the law and the prophets. When Jesus talks about God's kingdom and what it would look like, it is this kind of place. God's kingdom is a place where all people treat others in the way that they would want to be treated.

God's kingdom is a place where every person seeks to love their neighbor as they love themselves. Sometimes it doesn't take much to be able to do it.

Good News

The good news is that by God's grace, we *can* treat people in the same way that we want people to treat us.

We follow a God, who knows what it is like to be where we are and to walk in our shoes. In Jesus Christ, God became human and lived among us. For God, it is not a matter of imagining our life as humans. God knows the challenges and temptations which we face. Jesus lived, died and rose again that we might be able to experience life, share God's love with others and have the strength to live the golden rule.

Call to Action

This week, I invite you to seek to follow Jesus' command to treat people in the same way that you want people to treat you. Imagine what life is like for the person with whom you are interacting. If I was in their situation, how would I like to be treated? How do I use the words that I say or the actions that I take to bless, encourage and build them up? How do I proactively live out the golden rule? God empowers us to be able to love others as we love ourselves.

When we pay attention to what life might be like for someone else and begin to treat others the way that we want to be treated, we begin to experience what it is like to live as part of God's kingdom. When a whole group of people act like this and everyone is working together we have a clear picture of what God's will is like lived out on earth as it is in heaven. We find the joy restored in our own life.

Invitation

Did you know we have about 180 people in worship every Sunday at First United Methodist Church? That means that in El Dorado about 1 out of every 72 residents are here in worship on any given Sunday. How would El Dorado be different if every one of us woke up every day and said, God give me the strength to live the golden rule? How would dozens of marriages, families and children be different if we actually lived this out in our relationships? What would the places where we work or go to school be changed because we sought to follow the golden rule?

My hope and dream is that 20 years from now we can look back and see that we have left a legacy. We can see that El Dorado looks more like the kingdom of God because we practiced what Jesus preached to treat people in the same way that you want people to treat you.

Closing Prayer

God, please help me to treat people in the same way that you want people to treat you. God, please forgive me for the ways that I haven't done this. If you have a partner or family with

Second Sunday of Easter
Restoring Joy: The Gold Standard
First United Methodist Church of El Dorado
Text online at <http://j.mp/1IGnROn>

April 27, 2014
Matthew 22:34-40 and Matthew 7:12
Target Word Count: 2,325
Video online at [Insert Link Here]

you, pray for them that you might practice the golden rule toward him or her.

Help us to live the golden rule, to practice it every day and demonstrate what Christianity looks like to others in our city. Use us we pray. In Jesus name, Amen.