

Reflection for Epiphany VII Year C

Luke 6:31 **The Golden Rule**

Nancy Wright-DeKuyper, Layreader, Christ Church

Sunday, February 20<sup>th</sup>, 2022

***Do to others as you would have them do to you.***

A frail old man went to live with his son, daughter-in-law, and four-year-old grandson. The old man's hands trembled, his eyesight was blurred, and his step faltered.

The family ate together at the table. But the old man's shaky hands and failing sight made eating difficult. Peas rolled off his fork onto the floor. When he grasped the glass, the milk spilled on the tablecloth. The son and daughter-in-law became irritated and decided to relegate him to another, smaller table in the corner, so that they would not have to put up with the spilled milk. Because the grandfather often dropped a dish or two, they served his food in a wooden bowl.

One day the father noticed his little son playing with wooden scraps on the floor. When he asked him what he was doing, he replied simply, "Oh, I'm making a little bowl for you and Mommy so that you will have something to eat from when you get old and need to sit in the corner."

Immediately the man and his wife realized how badly they had treated Grandfather. That evening, with tears of shame rolling down their cheeks, they escorted the grandfather back to the dinner table to eat with the rest of the family. For the remainder of his days, Grandfather ate every meal with the family. And for some reason, neither husband or wife seemed to care any longer when a glass was dropped, milk spilled, or a tablecloth was soiled. *(adapted from Grimm's Fairy Tales, tale number 78, c 1812)*

***Do to others as you would have them do to you.***

Tucked into the middle of of Luke's Sermon on the Plain (6:17-49) is a simple set of guidelines on how to live, and what is right and wrong. *The Golden Rule*, found in both Matthew (7:12) and Luke (6:31), is a simple yet powerful mandate to live by.

I thought the Grandfather fairy tale story by the Brothers Grimm was an apt one to relate today, as I'm sure most of us remember being taught *The Golden Rule* from early childhood and still try to live it today.

This universal rule-of-life is embraced by two billion followers of Christianity and all the world's major religions, so the beauty of its message is known to more than five billion people.

***Do to others as you would have them do to you.***

As Christians, we have been raised and encouraged to follow in Jesus' footsteps. Biblical accounts of Jesus' words and actions show us how we should treat others.



Jesus treated all members of society, no matter how low or how high their station, with respect, dignity, humility, and empathy. He interacted with society's outcasts and those shunned by their communities: he healed a bleeding woman, lepers, the sick, the lame, the deaf, the mute, the blind, the paralyzed; he encouraged his followers to give to the poor; he cast out unclean spirits; and an act that was the culmination of his true servanthood: washing his own disciples' feet on the night of the Last Supper (*John 13:1-17*). \*

*The Golden Rule* teaches us that the standard we set up for others must be the measure of our own conduct. To quote John Wesley, founder of the Methodist movement:

*Do all the good you can,  
By all the means you can,  
In all the ways you can,  
In all the places you can,  
At all the times you can,  
To all the people you can,  
As long as you ever can.*

We all can aspire to live like Jesus, but we are imperfect humans, and it's easier said than done! We make poor choices; we make mistakes: we haven't lived up to the proverb, "*Do as I say, not as I do.*"

We just don't exercise *The Golden Rule* as often as we can.

And now, more than ever, embracing *The Golden Rule* is needed.

With the COVID-19 pandemic entering its third year, the whole world is contending with its daunting challenges and its contagious spread. Many feel exhausted, lonely, anxious, and helpless about a situation over which they have no control.

"The misery of the...pandemic – with its death, illness, isolation and frustrations – have left many desperate for clear guidance on how to live safely. People want to protect themselves, their family and their communities, especially the most medically vulnerable members of it. This instinct is both understandable and profoundly decent." (*David Leonhardt, New York Times' The Morning Newsletter, February 11, 2022*)

But, unfortunately, there are those in our modern society who "espouse a general philosophy of looking out for the self—first taking what you want and need, and considering others later. This is the way of "get" or "take"—the natural, selfish way of life characterized by getting for ourselves and putting "me" first.

God's way is instead the "give" way—the way of giving, sharing and outgoing concern for others...It is the way of the Golden Rule." (*The Golden Rule in the Bible by Dave Johnson, lifehopeandtruth.com*)

And here is my behaviour observation reflecting Jesus' *Golden Rule*:

At the beginning of the first lockdown, the "me" attitude was apparent: hoarding toilet paper, dairy products, and canned goods were acts of selfishness.

Over the next several months a change in our daily behaviour became noticeably apparent, the “we” attitude emerged: people respecting social distancing and wearing masks, doing their part to limit the spread of the virus, each public health measure reflecting *The Golden Rule*.

Despite the recent nation-wide protests and blockades by a very vocal but small minority, I believe the majority of us respect the need for mandates and health guidelines to get through the pandemic as safely and quickly as possible.

COVID-19 has triggered a worldwide experiment in human behaviour like none other before, since the only real way to combat the spread of the virus is by influencing how we interact with each other and the world around us. (Article COVID-19: Golden rules for behaviour change, deloitte.com)

Our personal core values, such as love, empathy and reciprocity, are innately important during these unprecedented times. Jesus wants us to respond as he did.

Perhaps we should make *The Golden Rule* contagious, and find the greater good in all of us, and pledge to live it by adopting a modern-day version: **Do for all others, both directly and indirectly, what you would want done for you.**

Countless times the mantra of “*We’re all in this together*” has been spoken by politicians and the medical community.

And, yes we are!

So why not, with mutual understanding and respect, and following Jesus’ footsteps, live His *Golden Rule*!

*Amen*

## **Further reading:**

**All I Really Need To Know I Learned In Kindergarten** (Villard Books: New York, 1990, page 6-7)  
by Robert Fulghum

Most of what I really need to know about how to live, and what to do, and how to be I learned in kindergarten. Wisdom was not at the top of the graduate school mountain, but there in the sandbox at nursery school.

These are the things I learned:

Share everything.

Play fair.

Don't hit people.

Put things back where you found them.

Clean up your own mess.

Don't take things that aren't yours.

Say you're sorry when you hurt somebody.

Wash your hands before you eat.

Flush.

Warm cookies and cold milk are good for you.

Live a balanced life. Learn some and think some and draw and paint and sing and dance and play and work every day some.

Take a nap every afternoon. When you go out into the world, watch out for traffic, hold hands, and stick together. Be aware of wonder. Remember the little seed in the styrofoam cup: The roots go down and the plant goes up and nobody really knows how or why, but we are all like that.

Goldfish and hamsters and white mice and even the little seed in the styrofoam cup - they all die. So do we.

And then remember the book about Dick and Jane and the first word you learned, the biggest word of all: Look. Everything you need to know is in there somewhere. The Golden Rule and love and basic sanitation. Ecology and politics and equality and sane living.

Think what a better world it would be if all - the whole world - had cookies and milk about three o'clock every afternoon and then lay down with our blanket for a nap. Or if all governments had a basic policy to always put thing back where they found them and to clean up our own messes.

And it is still true, no matter how old you are, when you go out into the world, it is best to hold hands and stick together.

### \* **37 Miracles of Jesus in Chronological Order**

<http://blog.adw.org/wp-content/uploads/2018/03/37-Miracles-of-Jesus-in-Chronological-Order.pdf>

### **Living the Golden Rule** (article)

<https://www.franksonnenbergonline.com/blog/living-the-golden-rule/>

## ***Do to others as you would have them do to you.***

### **The Golden Rule: Philosophers**

“That character is best that doesn’t do to another what isn’t good for itself.” ~ *Zoroaster, Persia*

“Avoid doing what you would blame others for doing.” ~ *Thales of Miletus*

“What you do not want to happen to you, do not do it yourself either” ~ *Sextus the Pythagorean*

“Do not do to others that which angers you when they do it to you.” ~ *Isocrates, Greece*

“What you do not want done to yourself, do not do to others.” ~ *Confucius, China*

“We should conduct ourselves toward others as we would have them act toward us.” ~ *Aristotle, Greece*

“What you shun enduring yourself, attempt not to impose on others.” ~ *Epicetus, Greece*

## The Golden Rule: Religions

“Do unto others as you would have them do unto you.” (*Christianity*)

“That which is hateful to you, do not do to your fellow. That is the entire Law; all the rest is commentary.” (*Judaism*)

“No one of you is a believer until he desires for his brother that which he desires for himself.” (*Islam*)

“Hurt not others in ways that you yourself would find hurtful.” (*Buddhism*)

“This is the sum of duty: do naught unto others which would cause you pain if done to you.” (*Hinduism*)

We cannot be truly Christian  
people so long as we flaunt the  
central teachings of Jesus: brotherly  
love and the Golden Rule.

Martin Luther King Jr.