

“With the measure you use, it will be measured to you” Matthew chapter 6 verse 38

One of my favourite tv programmes is the comedy sci-fi series 'Red Dwarf'. In one episode, the crew find themselves on a prison station in an area known as “The Justice Zone”. There, it is impossible to commit a crime, because whatever you try to do to someone else, you suffer the effects yourself. So one character tries to smack the other over the head with a shovel, and falls unconscious himself (the humour is subtle and nuanced).

The New Testament presents a principle which is less ludicrous, but still similar. Just as Jesus says that we should treat others the way we would like to be treated ourselves, so he also says that we should expect to be treated the way we treat others. To want it otherwise is simple hypocrisy.

Jesus links the idea to four areas. Two negative ones; judgment and condemnation and two contrasting positive ones; forgiveness and giving. The first two describe God's law, which prescribes punishment and death for those who violate it. When we judge and condemn people, dealing with them according to the strictures of God's law, then we are agreeing that people ought to be dealt with in this way, and so open ourselves to judgment and condemnation.

Forgiveness and giving describe God's grace, his preferred way of dealing with people. When we deal with people in this way, we agree that mercy is better than judgment since it brings life and reconciliation, and we become the objects of such treatment ourselves.

And Jesus describes what it is like to receive God's mercy and generosity; “A good measure – pressed down and shaken together, and running over – will be poured into your lap.”

So we are set at liberty to be generous in our forgiveness, mercy and giving, because when we give freely of these things, God gives back to us many times over.

Prayer

Father, please keep me from judging people by a law that condemns them, because I know that when I do that, I condemn myself. Thank you that in knowing Jesus as my Lord and Saviour, I receive your mercy and forgiveness. Thank you also that you make me rich in every way so that I can be generous on every occasion. May I not consider anything that I have to be my own, but yours, to be used for you glory and honour. And for whatever you choose to pour into my life in return, I am eternally grateful. In Jesus' name, amen.

All these devotionals can be found on our website inghamitechurch.org on the 'Resources' page. Click on the link to go there.