



## **"People Under Construction"**

**Rev. Dr. Scott Field**

**Luke 6: 43-49**

**March 3, 2019**

**9:15 AM Service**

*<sup>43</sup>A good tree can't produce bad fruit, and a bad tree can't produce good fruit. <sup>44</sup>A tree is identified by its fruit. Figs are never gathered from thorn bushes, and grapes are not picked from bramble bushes.*

*<sup>45</sup>A good person produces good things from the treasury of a good heart, and an evil person produces evil things from the treasury of an evil heart. What you say flows from what is in your heart.*

*<sup>46</sup>So why do you keep calling me 'Lord, Lord!' when you don't do what I say? <sup>47</sup>I will show you what it's like when someone comes to me, listens to my teaching, and then follows it. <sup>48</sup>It is like a person building a house who digs deep and lays the foundation on solid rock. When the floodwaters rise and break against that house, it stands firm because it is well built. <sup>49</sup>But anyone who hears and doesn't obey is like a person who builds a house right on the ground, without a foundation. When the floods sweep down against that house, it will collapse into a heap of ruins."*

Luke 6:43-49 NLT

### **When All is Said and Done, More is Said Than Done**

We're winding up our engagement with Jesus' Sermon on the Plain found in Luke 6.

The Gospel of Luke provides this short summary of the teaching of Jesus:

You can choose what kind of life you intend to live. He points out the difference between a life that experiences God's blessing and a life that is cursed. It is pretty much the opposite of what our culture regards as the "good life" and the "not good life".

The way we treat others should reflect the compassionate love of God that doesn't blink at the truth of who we are, how we behave, and the way we treat others, but also offers grace that is intended to capture our hearts and lead to our Christ-centered devotion.

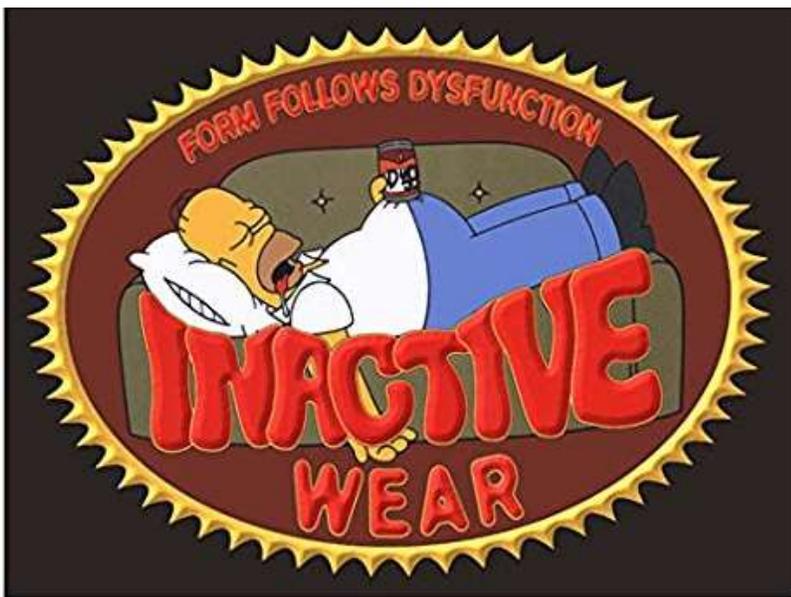
Today, then, Jesus gets up close and personal. Impression management is one thing. Reality can be something quite different – in fact, quite the opposite. We use the way we present ourselves in order to put ourselves in the best light...to others, to ourselves, and to God.



### Digital Me and The Real Me

Social media almost begs for this, since being “friends” in a digital way can often mean that we are not friends in a “real” way. And so, the tendency to portray my “better self” instead of my real self is pretty much standard.

### Fit and Trim Me and the Real Me



An article in *The Wall Street Journal* asks, "Why work out when you can just buy the clothes and look like you did?" The article explores a growing trend in the athletic apparel market—people are buying sports clothing without actually practicing the sport. The article notes "the U.S. athletic apparel market will increase by nearly 50 percent to more than \$100 billion at retail by 2020, driven in large part by consumers snapping up stretchy tees and leggings that will never see the fluorescent lights of a gym." For instance, sales of yoga apparel increased by 45 percent but yoga participation grew by less than five percent.

The trend isn't limited to yoga. Outdoor and camping retailers have debuted new lines of hiking boots and flannel shirts for people who probably have no intention of actually hiking and camping. Retailers are also rolling out jogging pants and preppy, \$90 men's running shorts for men who may never jog.

Sara Germano, "Yoga Poseurs: Athletic Gear Soars, Outpacing Sport Itself," *The Wall Street Journal* (8-20-14)

According to fashion psychologist Dawn Karen, a person who exercises may be perceived as attractive; so, wearing clothing meant for working out makes people feel healthy and fit, even if they aren't.

"People want to be healthy. They want people to know they live a healthy lifestyle, exercise and take pride in themselves. You want people to *know* you live a healthy lifestyle," Karen told HuffPost. "But at the same time, half of these people are actually really lazy. You may do a yoga pose for two minutes and then say, 'OK, there. I did my exercise.' There's a psychological aspect of wanting people to know this about you and for you to know it about yourself. It makes you more attractive to others — to friends, to family, to a mate.

[https://www.huffingtonpost.com/2014/12/17/athleisure-workout-clothes-not-working-out\\_n\\_6323520.html](https://www.huffingtonpost.com/2014/12/17/athleisure-workout-clothes-not-working-out_n_6323520.html)

### **There's No Place Like Home – to Reflect Our Self-Image**



According to a survey by the American Institute of Architects, 64 percent of architecture firms are reporting increased interest in outdoor living spaces: places for adults to relax and for kids to play. People say they want "a luxurious outdoor world" right in their backyard so they can escape their everyday lives, hang out as a family, and spend time outside while staying at home.

At least that's what people *say* they want. But there's just one problem: Evidence shows that for all of their good intentions, most families don't actually spend time in their backyard retreats. A 2012 book titled *Life at Home in the Twenty-first Century* revealed the results of an in-depth study of middle-class Los Angeles families. Researchers from UCLA recorded hours of footage while carefully documenting how families actually spent their time.

According to their research, children averaged fewer than 40 minutes per week in their yards (a little less than six minutes per day). Adults logged less than 15 minutes per week. All of these families benefitted from sunny Southern California weather. They had nice porch furniture, trampolines, even pools. They just didn't use them. But the researchers also noted a profound disconnect between belief and action: Most families told the researchers that they were using their backyards often, but the researchers' observations proved otherwise.

One of the researchers noted, "Rather than use their outdoor retreats, people would retreat by turning on a [TV, computer, or video game] screen. People don't like this image of their lives. So, they don't acknowledge it." Instead, families "perpetuate the illusion" of spending time outside because that's clearly the ideal. *Laura Vanderkam, "Column: Backyards are highly overrated," USATODAY (10-4-12)*

## **What We Claim to Believe and How We Behave**

We could go on and on with examples of ways we behave that contradict what we say is real and true about ourselves. This is how Luke 6 ends with the conclusion of the "Sermon on the Plain." We say that Jesus is Lord, but we do not obey him.

Comedian Louis C.K. reports:

*I have a lot of beliefs.... And I live by none of them. That's just the way I am. They're just my beliefs. I just like believing them—I like that part. They're my little "believies". They make me feel good about who I am. But if they get in the way of a thing I want, I [sure as heck just do what I want to do].*

*Quoted from David Zahl, "So Nice of Louis C.K. to Think of That (But Never Do)*

Jesus makes the point by distinguishing between two houses.

With one the builder dug deep and laid the foundation on rock. The other house was built on the ground with no foundation. Then the river overflowed and a torrent of water hit both houses. One house was not shaken. One house collapsed and was completely destroyed. That's probably a cautionary tale if you are building in a place like Johnstown, Pennsylvania, but Jesus wasn't actually talking about houses. He was talking about people – about you and me and anybody else – who claim that he is their Lord.

Why do you tell yourself and tell others that I am your Lord, when you don't do what I say?

That's a good question:

Why don't I do what you say, Jesus?

If I'm honest, some of it comes from uncertainties about Jesus himself.

- Does the Lord have my best interests at heart – or do I have to look out for myself?
- Will following the Lord ruin my fun?
- Will obeying Jesus restrict my freedom?
- Will following Jesus separate me from others?
- Will obeying Jesus have me going places and dealing with people that I'd rather prefer not to go or to deal with?

- I don't give my passwords out to other people; it's pretty hard to give my whole life over to you, Lord.

That's actually the other question, isn't it?

What does it mean for me to say that Jesus is my Lord?

Globally or cosmically it means his is the highest authority in the universe – including in my life at this time in this culture on this planet.

Historically it means he is the Creator of all, the sustainer of all, and the judge of all.

Personally, it means he is the highest authority in my life and the judge at the end of my life.

All of it comes to the question of who calls the shots in my life?

Who is in charge?

Who has the last word...and the first word, too, for that matter?

Now clearly, as we look at the earliest disciples, we recognize that this matter of conforming our lives to obedience takes place over time. There will be times of disobeying, times of wandering off, times of preferring our way to God's way, times of going on auto-pilot with the ways we used to behave before Jesus' love captured our attention. This is not a call to perfection, but a call to move beyond just calling Jesus Lord and moving on to obeying his word.

Garrison Keillor tells this story:

"Larry the Sad Boy ... was saved 12 times in the Lutheran church, an all-time record. Between 1953 and 1961 he threw himself weeping and contrite on God's throne of grace on 12 separate occasions--and this in a Lutheran church that wasn't evangelical, had no altar call, no organist playing "Just as I Am Without One Plea" while a choir hummed and a guy with shiny hair took hold of your heartstrings and played you like a cheap guitar. This is the Lutheran church, not a bunch of hillbillies. These are Scandinavians, and they repent in the same way that they sin: discreetly, tastefully, at the proper time. ...

Twelve times! Even we fundamentalists got tired of him. ... God did not mean for us to feel guilt all our lives. There comes a point when you should dry your tears and join the building committee and start grappling with the problems of the church furnace and ... make church coffee and be of use, but Larry kept on repenting and repenting."

*Quoted in "What IBM Taught Me About Repentance," by John Ortberg, in Christianity Today, August 12, 1993, submitted by Wayne Hollaway.*

In a few moments we will be coming to the Lord's Table. Jesus welcomes all of us to remember his atoning death and resurrection on behalf of all who believe in him. We are welcomed to the family of God no matter who we are, what we've done, what's been done to us, or where we've been. Jesus invites to his table all who are weary and overwhelmed; the energetic and overwhelmed.

The old liturgy of Holy Communion for the Methodist Church includes this invitation:

Ye that do truly and earnestly repent of your sins,  
And are in love and charity with your neighbors,  
And intend to lead a new life, following the commandments of God,  
And walking from henceforth in his holy ways:  
Draw near with faith, and take this Holy Sacrament to your comfort,  
And make your humble confession to almighty God.

Repent: turn away

Reconcile: extending love and compassion to others

Obedience: intending to live according to the commandments of God

Draw near to receive the assurance of God's grace that saves and strengthens you.