



Worship Service Theme: The Golden Rule

Helpful elements:

Green table covering (Ordinary Time)

Welcome: Welcome! It's so good to be together to celebrate faith and community today. My name is _____ and I'll be leading our worship time. Our theme for today is **the Golden Rule**.

What is the Golden Rule? Say it with me: "Do unto others ... [*pause*] as you would have them do unto you." Who do you think said that in the Bible? Jesus!¹ We'll be taking a closer look at that famous instruction today, and how it affects our lives and our faith.

Please pray with me as we open our time together.

Opening Prayer: Great and loving God, we ask your Holy Spirit to bless our time together and refresh us with your presence. In the midst of a world full of trouble and strife, we thank you for watching over us, guiding us, and as we confess our sins, for forgiving us. Enable us to enter your presence today joyfully and reverently, and let us depart with the assurance that our sins are forgiven. Fill us, O God, with the peace that passes all understanding. Amen.

Opening Hymn: Doxology

Statement of Faith: Let us affirm our statement of faith by reciting Psalm 23, "The Lord is my shepherd," together:

¹The Lord is my shepherd; I shall not want.

²He maketh me to lie down in green pastures: he leadeth me beside the still waters.

³He restoreth my soul: he leadeth me in the paths of righteousness for his name's sake.

¹ Matthew 7:12

⁴Yea, though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, I will fear no evil: for thou art with me; thy rod and thy staff they comfort me.

⁵Thou preparest a table before me in the presence of mine enemies: thou anointest my head with oil; my cup runneth over.

⁶Surely goodness and mercy shall follow me all the days of my life: and I will dwell in the house of the Lord forever.

Suggested Hymns:

For the Beauty of the Earth

Savior, Like a Shepherd Lead Us

First reading: From the Gospel of Matthew: Matthew 7:1-5, 12

Jesus said: "Judge not, that you be not judged. ²For with the judgment you pronounce you will be judged, and with the measure you use it will be measured to you. ³Why do you see the speck that is in your brother's eye, but do not notice the log that is in your own eye? ⁴Or how can you say to your brother, 'Let me help you take the speck out of your eye,' when there is the log in your own eye? ⁵You hypocrite, first take the log out of your own eye, and then you will see clearly to take the speck out of your brother's eye. ...

¹²"So whatever you wish that others would do to you, do also to them, for this is the Law and the Prophets."

This is the word of the Lord; thanks be to God.

Suggested Hymns:

Holy, Holy, Holy

Jesus Loves Me

Second reading: From the Gospel of Luke: Luke 6:27-28, 31, 35

Jesus said: ²⁷"But I say to you who hear, Love your enemies, do good to those who hate you, ²⁸bless those who curse you, pray for those who abuse you. ²⁹To one who strikes you on the cheek, offer the other also, and from one who takes away your cloak do not withhold your tunic either. ... ³¹And as you wish that others would do to you, do so to them. ... ³⁵[L]ove your enemies, and do good, and lend, expecting nothing in return, and your reward will be great, and you will be called children of the Most High, because God is kind even to the ungrateful and the evil."

This is the word of the Lord; thanks be to God.

Suggested Hymns:

Softy and Tenderly

Leaning on the Everlasting Arms

Interactive Homily: Let's think a little more about the Golden Rule, "Do unto others as you would have them do unto you." Jesus says the entire Law and Prophets' teachings can be summed up with this one rule.

- What do you think it means to "do unto others as you would have them do unto you"? What are some examples? [*start by saying the first part of each sentence and let the group finish the rest*]
 - If you wish people wouldn't judge you ... don't judge them.
 - If you wish people would overlook your faults ... you forgive their faults.
 - If you wish people would take care of you ... you take care of others.
 - If you wish people would treat you with respect ... you treat people with respect.
 - [*generate more examples – generosity, honesty, etc.*]
- Some ancient thinkers stated the Golden Rule in the negative: "Do *not* do to others what you would *not* want done to you." How is the Golden Rule different?
 - The Golden Rule is stated in the positive: *do* good.
- I wonder what you think: Is it easier to *not do* bad things, or is it easier to *do* good things?
 - Actively choosing to do right may take more effort!
 - Doing the right thing isn't always easy, is it? When we're treated badly, how do we sometimes want to respond?
 - It's tempting to treat others badly in return, to get revenge.
- Jesus says, "do unto others." Who is "others"?
 - Everyone!
- Who is it *easier* to treat the way you want to be treated?
 - People we love or like: family, friends, nice people, clean people, people "like us"
- Who is it harder to treat the way you want to be treated?

- People we don't like, are suspicious of, strangers, people that don't sound or look like us, people who are "not like us"
- People we think we *can't* help; younger, stronger, richer...
- Everyday people we may not notice; waitresses, postal workers, store clerks, children...
- Why should we follow the Golden Rule? What's the outcome? Let's read Jesus' words again: "Love your enemies, and do good ... **and** your reward will be great, and you will be children of the Most High, **because** God is kind to the ungrateful and the evil."²
 - What does Jesus say is our motivation to treat others the way we want to be treated?
 - "Your reward will be great!"
 - Who will reward us? Will those we care for be the ones who reward us?
 - No; our reward comes from God.
- What kind of reward does the scripture say we will receive?
 - We will be called "children of God."
- Who do children take after?
 - Their parents! We will be God's children, in God's family, because we act like him: God is merciful and kind even to those who are not.
 - That's a family I want to be part of; how about you?

Let's take a moment to silently pray and reflect on God's call to love and treat others as we would like to be treated.

(Silent Prayer) ... Lord, hear our prayers. Now let us pray the Lord's prayer together:

Lord's Prayer: Our Father, who art in heaven, hallowed be thy name. Thy kingdom come, thy will be done, on earth as it is in heaven. Give us this day our daily bread, and forgive us our trespasses, as we forgive those who trespass against us. And lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil. For thine is the kingdom, the power, and the glory forever, Amen.

Suggested Hymns:
This is My Father's World

² Luke 6:35

When the Saints Go Marching In

Third Reading: Quote on the Golden Rule

This is from former President Barack Obama's address to the graduating class of Notre Dame in May 2009:

"For if there is one law that we can be most certain of, it is the law that binds people of all faiths and no faith together. It is no coincidence that [this law] exists in Christianity and Judaism; in Islam and Hinduism, in Buddhism and humanism. It is, of course, the Golden Rule – the call to treat one another as we wish to be treated. The call to love, to serve, to do what we can to make a difference in the lives of those with whom we share the same brief moment on this Earth."

Suggested Hymns:

He's Got the Whole World in His Hands

Amazing Grace

Fourth Reading: Aesop's Fable: The Lion and the Mouse³

A Lion lay asleep in the forest, his great head resting on his paws. A timid little Mouse came upon the Lion unexpectedly, and in her fright and haste to get away, the Mouse ran across the Lion's nose. Roused from his nap, the Lion laid his huge paw angrily on the tiny creature to kill her.

"Spare me!" begged the poor Mouse. "Please let me go and someday I will surely repay you."

The Lion was much amused to think that a Mouse could ever help him. But the Lion was generous and finally let the Mouse go.

Some days later, while stalking his prey in the forest, the Lion was caught in the coils of a hunter's net. Unable to free himself, the Lion filled the forest with his angry roars. The Mouse recognized the Lion's voice and quickly found the Lion struggling in the net. Running to one of the great ropes that bound him, the Mouse gnawed it until it parted, and soon the Lion was free.

"You laughed when I said I would repay you," said the Mouse. "Now you see that even a Mouse can help a Lion."

Suggested Hymns:

Blest Be the Tie that Binds

Swing Low, Sweet Chariot

³ <http://read.gov/aesop/007.html>

Closing Blessing: (Strike bell as you say the word “Lord”)

The Lord bless you and keep you; the Lord make his face shine upon you, and be gracious unto you; the Lord lift up his countenance upon you, and grant you peace. In the name of the Father, and the Son, and the Holy Spirit. Amen.

Closing Hymn: Doxology (Reprise)