

Luke 10:25-42

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[0 : 00] This fall, we are walking with Jesus on the road to Jerusalem and looking to pick up on the wisdom that will enable us to walk well along the way.

Today, we have two scenes that sit side by side in Luke's Gospel. The story of the Good Samaritan and the gathering in the home of Mary and Martha.

In the first scene, we'll find this splendid character of which we'll make a composite that is the lawyer.

And in the second scene, these two sisters. In the first, it will become obvious that he is not yet walking with Jesus along the way.

While in the second, it is clear that you're considering the lives of two people who have recently begun to journey with Jesus. Two scenes, side by side.

[1 : 15] Both scenes well known. Almost still within conventional knowledge whether or not individuals have grown up reading the Bible.

And yet known for different reasons. By taking them together, it creates the tension, doesn't it? For by way of emphasis, they almost seem to contradict each other.

The first is generally treated as a call to action. To love in a manner that crosses the issues of race, class, geography, and friendship.

The Samaritan's love is rightly heralded as an example of mercy to be emulated by all.

To put it as cleanly as possible. You cannot talk to me of your love for God if you have no love for your neighbor.

[2 : 15] It overcomes a history of hatred. Here, you and I will learn that love knows no boundaries.

The second is a party at the home of Mary and Martha. And generally treated, it's not treated as a call to action, but a call to inaction.

To remember that serving others, even this bow-tied entourage of Jesus, his disciples, isn't as important as it's cracked up to be.

Here, we learn that listening to the Lord is the one necessary thing in all of life. So to put them together, which is it?

Are we called to action or inaction? Are we to get out there and love our enemies? Or are we to get back in here and listen to the Lord?

[3 : 28] Obviously, both scenes convey truths. But what did Luke intend? I have to confess, I've wondered this week if our conventional understanding of the first scene, the story of the Good Samaritan, is at least incomplete.

All true, but incomplete. I'm beginning to wonder if Luke might have intended for us to take something away from the Good Samaritan story that our restricting it to a call to action misses.

In other words, while a life of mercy is a biblical truth, that's the end. Go and do likewise. The question is that the single truth or even the primary truth?

After all, the scene opened with a question. Do you see it there? Early on in the text, what must I do to inherit eternal life?

And if the answer is simply be a neighbor to those in need, then the Christian community has some explaining to do on why the death and resurrection of Christ is in any way necessary.

[4 : 53] I want to explore the characters. The first scene. The lawyer. Three questions. Who was the story of the Good Samaritan aimed at?

What was the intent and the heart condition of the lawyer? And how might our answers to those affect our understanding in accordance with Luke?

Who was the story of the Good Samaritan aimed at? It's right there in the opening verse. Put your eyes on it for yourself. It's aimed at a lawyer. This is a category of persons that has already been

mentioned by Luke with an interesting insight on what they were putting their hope in for eternal life. I want you to make a composite sketch of how Luke handles lawyers. Chapter 7, verses 28 through 30. Already mentioned by Luke and therefore should inform our understanding of this lawyer. When the ministry of John the Baptist came, Jesus responded, I tell you, among those who are born of women, none is greater than John. That's 728. Yet the one who is least in the kingdom of God is greater than he.

[6 : 12] When all the people heard this, and the tax collectors too, they declared God just, having been baptized with the baptism of John. Now, notice our character is coming, and he's coming in contrast to the group of people who declare God just.

Verse 30, But the Pharisees and the lawyers rejected the purpose of God for themselves, not having been baptized by him.

Who is this that has come to Jesus then as a lawyer in chapter 10? Well, at least we know this. For Luke, he is constantly categorizing humanity in two groups.

The sinners, the tax collectors, and others who are willing to look to God to justify them, i.e. Simeon and Anna awaiting for God to take action that would make us right with God.

In contrast to the Pharisees and lawyers who will not declare God as the justifier, they reject it. For they will declare themselves just by their actions.

[7 : 31] Lawyers. Another window into the makeup of this person. Turn to chapter 14 and verse 45.

Or do I have it wrong? 11. I'm sorry. Chapter 11 and verse 45. Notice, this is in a section where Jesus is railing his woes against Pharisees and lawyers.

In verse 42, there is a woe to the Pharisees who are tithing yet neglecting justice in the love of God. These you ought to have done without neglecting the others.

Woe to you Pharisees for you love the best seat in the synagogues and the marketplaces. Woe for you are like unmarked graves and people walk over them without knowing it.

Notice verse 45, our set of characters. Here he is. One of the lawyers answered him, Teacher, in saying these things, you insult us also.

[8 : 40] And he said, Woe to you lawyers for you load people with burdens hard to bear. The lawyers were tithers.

They were alms givers. They were engaged routinely in acts of mercy on their streets. They were regularly helping those in need.

Yet somehow missing the love of God. Let me give you one more view of this group as we do this beluga-like whale charcoal sketch of lawyers.

Chapter 14, verse 1-3. One Sabbath, when he went to dine in the house of the ruler of the Pharisees, they were watching him carefully.

And behold, there was a man before him at dropsy. And Jesus responded to the lawyers and Pharisees, saying, Is it lawful to heal on the Sabbath or not? But they remained silent.

[9 : 51] Then he took him and healed him and sent him away. And he said to them, Which of you, having a son or an ox that has fallen into a well on a Sabbath day, will not immediately pull him out. And they could not reply to these things.

Again, the lawyers in the category of the religious ones who we now know justify themselves before God and whose hearts are far away from God.

It's interesting here in chapter 14 because the question relates to Old Testament law, Torah. What do you do when someone's ill? Or what would you do if an ox was in a ditch on the Sabbath?

Now this is important for you to realize because when you and I think of lawyers, we think of what? The law school on 61st. When in actual fact, you should be thinking of the div school in the quadrangle.

For the lawyers in Luke are those who give interpretation of law, namely Old Testament law.

[11 : 00] You're looking here at someone in the OT or a teacher within it. You're looking at a religious individual who's filled with a wealth of knowledge on the Hebrew Scriptures.

Well, that's what we've gathered. The lawyers to which this good Samaritan is aimed at are those that rejected the ministry of John the Baptist.

They stood among a group of people who for Luke were always trying to justify themselves before God rather than to have God do something for them. It is aimed at one who did external signs of almsgiving acts of mercy to those in need.

It is aimed at a teacher of the Old Testament, a biblical scholar who feels he knows what it takes to have a healthy relationship with God. And what was his intent?

I love the way Luke as a narrator gives you these little glosses doesn't he that help you interpret his text. look at verse 25 of our text and behold a lawyer stood up to put him to the test.

[12 : 23] This is his intent. Luke chooses a word here that he only uses one on one other occasion. It's from the mouth of Jesus in rebuke to Satan.

and Jesus says you shall not put the Lord your God to the test. Luke 4 12 It's at a time that echoes Exodus 17 when the people wanted to prove that God was with them.

And Satan came to Jesus and said show me some proof that you're the real thing. what's the intent of him there? It's deceitful wicked and evil.

Now know this then about the lawyer. He is not coming as an open handed seeker looking to learn from Jesus.

He has rejected the ministry of Jesus and John and he has come to demand that in some way Jesus demonstrate that he knows what he's talking about when he speaks of things concerning eternal life.

[13 : 41] Well that changes the game a little bit. So intent deceitful this disbelieving man who is out to show that God is not with Jesus is the one who asks what must I do to inherit eternal life?

His heart's in the wrong place. Here's a man who felt eternal life was gained by his own understanding and his own life lived well.

And if you're wondering about the category of persons Luke will make it clear by chapter 18. One last glance outside of our text take a look this category of persons in verse 9 of chapter 18.

He also told this parable to some who trusted in themselves that they were righteous and treated others with contempt. Well isn't that the lawyer?

When Jesus responds love the Lord your God with all your heart soul strength and mind and your neighbor as yourself here is one who felt he loved God with all that he had.

[14 : 59] Yet Jesus is able to put his finger on the one area where he is no lover of God for he is not a lover of neighbor. In chapter 18 two men went up into the temple to pray one a Pharisee and the other a tax collector we might just as easily have called it a lawyer.

The Pharisee standing by himself prayed thus God I thank you that I'm not like other men extortioners unjust that is not right adulterers or even like this tax collector I fast twice a week I give tithes of all that I give but the tax collector standing far off would not even lift up his eyes to heaven but beat his breast saying God be merciful to me a sinner I tell you this man went down to his house justified rather than the other for everyone who exalts himself will be humbled but the one who humbles himself will be exalted!

And with that our composite of the lawyer is complete is a man that needed to know that he needed mercy it is not so much a story that is merely meant to send him on his way to complete acts of mercy you know this because Luke has told you again in Luke 10 concerning his intent when Jesus had answered him what was the response of Luke in verse 29 but he desiring to justify himself said and who is my neighbor it's a man who had limits on love and yet felt that he was fine before God well how might this elevate our understanding of the text you can leave that we'll pick it up later that phone here's a man who felt that life was simply about doing notice again the intricacies of the text verse 25 what shall

I do to inherit eternal life verse 28 and he said to him you've answered correctly do this you want to be right with God yes love God with all you have and love your enemy as yourself go do that go do that you'll be right with God all the way down to the very end in 37 go ahead and do this what was Jesus aiming at it's not simply a call to merciful action the intention of Jesus is to help this man come to his senses is to call him up short it's not to say you get eternal life by being kind it's to say you can't do this it's not merely to say be merciful let me put it this way if you only understand the good Samaritan as a call to arms or action to be merciful you are stating things that are true but incomplete what Jesus wanted that last question to do was to leave this man in this state well Lord have mercy on me because I cannot love my enemy as I love myself and that's what I think the import is for Luke for you for me if you've never read the story of the good Samaritan and finished by crying out Lord have mercy on me your understanding is incomplete for to love your enemy is beyond your ability isn't that what we're seeing in the world today this is why the gospel is good news and why Luke goes on to show the death and resurrection of Christ as the instrumental means by which if we receive that that he has justified us then he gives us his spirit that enables us

to fulfill this command go and do likewise and to learn to love in a way that goes beyond race class geography that's what's needed today the tribune today we'll talk about 12 things that our city needs and I still believe the most important thing our city needs is Christians who are living out the truths of the gospel the gospel is our need for I will not forgive others until I am fully ensconced in the depth of

[20 : 34] God's love for me and what he has done for me a call to mercy yes but underneath it the need for mercy your religion is of no value in establishing a claim on eternal life your alms giving to the poor is of no value in establishing a rightful claim on eternal life I read the good Samaritan now and say Lord have mercy because I understand that only in Christ am I able to accomplish this in my neighborhood which I am called to do think of

Corrie ten boom for those of you who know her forgiving her prison guards face to face for acts of atrocity on what grounds was she able to do this not out of the kindness of her heart but out of the strength of the gospel that was coming forth from her heart think of John Perkins who was beat in the south in the front end of the civil rights era what enabled him to forgive his enemy and to move beyond race not merely the sense that he wanted to demonstrate that he had a little more to him than others no it was because he had been convicted by the strength of the gospel and the mercy that had been shown him to Christ by Christ think of Martin Luther King Jr.

writing a letter in the Birmingham jail saying an injustice here is an injustice everywhere how does one begin to walk out the call to love your neighbor as yourself for Luke we show mercy best when we understand the mercy of God toward us fully we live in a unique neighborhood and the call on this congregation is one of the more unique calls in all the country for I know of very few places where issues of race class geography friendship collide like they do here may the streets of our neighborhoods know the love of

Christ's mercy because each congregant here has been touched by the king and is aware of the kingdom and is empowered by the spirit to truly love your enemy as yourself then we come to the party at Mary and Martha and for this I'll be quick all of a sudden the story of Mary and Martha in the home isn't a contradictory story it's a complimentary one these wonderful characters these sisters who both learn the same lesson that the word of Christ is the essential thing for following him in the kingdom

Martha is often slammed isn't she I think she gets the bad end of the stick this was a woman of action she was engaged in good things I don't know what it's like can you imagine all the disciples rolling in through your front door these you know twelve fishermen and who knows who else they got around them and Jesus is there and suddenly your living room your kitchen your hallways your bathroom filled with fifteen or so gangly smelly fishermen men it takes a lot to put down some food in front of them she was doing the right thing a good thing but it's not the essential thing service for Christ is not as important according to the words of

[25 : 53] Jesus as sitting before the word of Christ now this has been drawn home to me recently in the last six months for you know I'm a person of action like I've always told my children two things you need to do in life one give your life to Christ two get something done for him before you look him in the eye you know that's a bias for action my understanding of the Christian faith the last six months I've seen my heart begin to re-engage with the joy of sitting under the word of Christ to hear someone read a scripture text and to find it enlivening to me to hear the words of our songs or your voices lifted up in praise to regain a heightened sensitivity to knowing that I cannot live well for

Christ if I do not hear the word of Christ it's just impossible any other way well that's what Jesus says and what Mary gets well that'll never be taken away from her are you a non-Christian here today are you not yet following with Jesus along the way are you like the lawyer who reject the ministry of the Baptist and separate yourself from the ministry of Christ and declare yourself just on your life being lived well this word is clear for you may today you walk out of here saying Lord have mercy are you here today recently taking up with Christ learning to live like

Christ as these sisters these early adopters in Christ learn to love his word for in it you will live well our heavenly father two scenes both of which draw us back to hearing from you and I pray Lord that we would give ourselves to the weekly hearing of your word so that we might go forth from here ministering in mercy as recipients of the same our Lord we we want to hear a word from you help us to recognize that when we read our

Bible out loud we do hear you speak and give us an appetite in Christ's name amen to to to to to!