

# Who is my neighbour?

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[0:00] Just continue to pray here. Father God, we thank you for this day. We pray that you would come now by your spirit and that you would open our hearts and minds to receive what it is that you want to say to us today.

We pray that you would take what little it is that I have offered and that you would break it and bless it and multiply it. In Jesus' name, amen. You can sit down.

This is funny. Yesterday, Michelle asked me if I would be preaching this morning. And I said no. But as soon as I got to the church, David came to me and said, could you preach?

Because tonight I'll be preaching at Evensong. So I guess out of everyone here, I was the most prepared, I guess. Yeah, so today I'm going to speak on the text that I read from the gospel in Luke. I'll be using my own Bible, though, as George sometimes does. He uses the English Standard Version. I'll be using the New International Version. So when we look at this particular text, we see that Jesus is telling us to love our neighbors as ourselves.

[1:34] And this is a very common teaching all throughout Scripture. It's not exclusive to this text. He tells us all throughout the New Testament that we are to love our neighbors.

And all throughout the epistles, we're told the same thing by the apostles. And if we're honest with ourselves, we would admit that it's not always easy to love our neighbors.

I know I have a hard time loving my neighbors sometimes, especially when they do things that I don't understand or that are just difficult things to love people by.

But let's take a look at the text and see what Jesus recommends on how we can... Well, for one thing, who is our neighbor and how do we love them?

So let's look at the text. What happens is a lawyer comes to Jesus, and he calls him teacher, and he asks, What must I do to inherit eternal life?

[2:47] This is an important question. He asks, What must I do to inherit eternal life? He's not asking, What must I do to receive eternal life?

The assumption is that he's with the in crowd. He believes that he is a child of God and that he will just quite naturally receive the kingdom of God as his inheritance.

This is not an outsider coming to Jesus. This is a Jewish man talking to another Jewish man about a popular topic of the day.

He tests Jesus to see what he thinks one must do to hold on to the inheritance that he already has. But instead of answering him, Jesus turns it around and asks him his interpretation of the law, something that he obviously knew very well.

He was very familiar with the law. He was a lawyer. And this is what he says. He says, To love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your strength and with all your mind and to love your neighbor as yourself.

[4:04] And then Jesus responds by saying that you have answered correctly and that if you do this, you will live. But the lawyer wanted to justify himself.

He wanted Jesus to see that he was righteous and blameless. He thought very highly of his religious achievements and his understanding of the law.

And this is not a foreign attitude in the New Testament. Later on in this gospel, Jesus tells of a Pharisee who stood up in the temple and prayed in a loud voice, God, I thank you that I am not like these other men, like these robbers and evildoers and adulterers.

And he points to a tax collector at the back of the church. He says, I thank you that I'm not like this tax collector. He says, I fast twice a week and I give a tenth of all I get.

Meanwhile, the tax collector stood at a distance. He couldn't even look up to heaven. And he beat his breast and said, God have mercy on me, a sinner.

[5:11] And it was the tax collector who went home justified, not the Pharisee. The lawyer asks, who is my neighbor? He was looking for a loophole.

He wanted to do the least amount of work and still obtain the greatest reward, which is eternal life. He knew the law, but when it came to living it out, his pride and his religion caused him to seek self-justification.

Instead of asking, how do I love my neighbor? He asked, who is my neighbor? What he's really asking is, how little must I love and still be considered righteous and receive inheritance of eternal life?

And Jesus responds to him by giving an illustration of this good Samaritan, which is only found in Luke's gospel.

It's not found in any other gospel. He describes a man, Jesus describes a man who is robbed, stripped naked, and left for dead. And three men walk by.

[6:28] The first is a priest, and the priest is a man who is in the service of God. He represents the height of piety, but he passed him on the other side of the road.

And then next comes a Levite who would be like the priestly assistant in the temple. I guess he would be like an Arteza student.

And he responds in the same way. He avoids him. He walks by him on the other side. And then finally comes our hero, the Good Samaritan.

He saw a stranger in need, and without judgment or fear, he had pity on him. He bandaged and tended his wounds with oil and wine. He put him on his animal.

In my text, in my version it says donkey. He put him on his donkey. He took him to an inn and took care of him. And then the next day he gave the innkeeper enough money to cover his expenses for, I think, I read in a commentary that he covered his expenses for at least 24 days.

[7:44] Two denarii would be enough money to stay at an inn for at least 24 days. So he was concerned about this man's full recovery.

He didn't just come and tend to certain needs. He tended to all of his needs. He gave him more than was required.

He went the extra step with him. He didn't just stop at one place. He made sure that this man was completely recovered and completely taken care of. And Jesus asks the lawyer the obvious question, who was the neighbor?

Who of the three was the neighbor? And the obvious answer would be the Good Samaritan. to be a neighbor is to be sensitive to the needs of those around us and to do something about it regardless of who they are or where they're from.

If they're around us, they're our neighbors. And this is the thing about the gospel. It declares us all the same.

[9:00] It levels us all. It's the great leveler. It says that there's no difference between any of us before God. That we are all, in God's eyes, there's no partiality between, in God's eyes, that we're all the same.

And that each one of us has been created with the purpose of bringing glory to God. God has made us in his image regardless of where we're from, regardless of our nationality or our gender or anything else.

And we are to respond to one another in mutual respect and love. Now, if I was to stop here, I'd be falling short of touching the main artery of this text.

The story would be no more than a moral teaching about being a nice person. In a sense, it would just be humanism, just go out and be a nice guy.

Let's go back to the beginning and look at the first question for a minute. the lawyer asked, what must I do to inherit eternal life? This is not an outsider, like I just said, asking how to be saved, but this is someone who believes that he will inherit eternal life.

[10:29] So the other issue in the passage is about eternal life and what is required in order to inherit it. Now, just the thought of this makes my little Protestant hairs stand up.

It sounds like works, doesn't it? It sounds like works. Is Jesus saying that in order to get into heaven, you've got to just be a nice person, you've just got to do a lot of nice things?

Many people would say yes and then end the sermon here and go off and just be a nice person. I'll race you to the finish line, see who can get there first.

This was the mentality of the Pharisees to observe the law perfectly and to follow the rules perfectly at the expense of other people.

It was all about self. The same thing happened up until about the 15th century. If anyone disagreed with the ecclesiastical structure or traditions of the church at that time, they were either killed or maimed.

[11:44] But things changed when Martin Luther stepped out on the scene. When he read his Bible, he recognized that it's not about keeping the rules.

In Romans 3, 22-24, it says, a righteousness from God apart from the law has been made known, to which the law and the prophets testify.

This righteousness from God comes through faith in Jesus Christ to all who believe. There is no difference, for all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God and are justified freely by his grace through the redemption that came by Jesus Christ.

When Luther, Luther, Luther, I spent a year in Korea and they have a hard time distinguishing between R and L. They have a middle sound, so I get that confused sometimes.

Anyway, Martin Luther read this text, and his entire understanding, his entire vision of God was changed.

[13:00] He was convicted by the Spirit, the weight was lifted, the burden of trying to be righteous and to keep the law completely was lifted from him, his eyes were opened, and he was made a new person, he was made a new man by this realization.

Justification comes through faith, not works, and it spread like wildfire across Europe.

Eternal life is free to all who would put their faith and trust in Jesus Christ. Calvin got a hold of this idea, colleges were established, churches were transformed, transformed, missionaries were raised up and sent out into the world, and the Holy Spirit broke out, and it was declared that eternal life is free to all who would put their faith and trust in Jesus Christ.

This is what happens to our hearts when we come into contact with the living God through his word. Our hearts are softened and made capable to fulfill these two great commandments that Jesus claims, to love the Lord your God with all your heart, with all your soul, with all your mind, and with all your strength, and to love your neighbor as yourself.

The Christian life is all about overflow. God pours his love into our hearts by his spirit, and then we are given the strength and the ability to love those around us.

[14:53] Love, as we read it in the New Testament, is not something that can be contained or boxed. The nature of God's love is such that it cannot run out or be overpowered by anything.

God's love for us is uncompromising and unconditional. He does not all of a sudden stop loving us because we have done something so terribly wrong. Like a loving father instead, he opens his arms and he always welcomes us to come to him.

We see God's love for us perfectly manifested on the cross where he sent his son to die. For this is the reason that Christ was born, to take within himself the sins of the world and to pour out his blood as an atonement for our sins.

For this is what God requires for the sacrifice of sins. The lawyer asks Jesus, what must we do to inherit eternal life?

If you want to live forever in heaven with God, then you must come to the cross and look up at the bloodied Christ with nails in his hands and his feet who suffered for you and for me.

[16:25] If you want to know the love of God for us, then we must inspect the cross, we must fix our eyes upon Jesus with his arms outstretched.

He invites us to come to him and to lay down the weight of our sins and sorrows and the pain of this world. He takes all of it within himself, within his own body.

If we had spiritual glasses and we were to look around to the other side of the cross, we would see all of God's wrath, and all of God's anger being poured out onto Christ, Jesus absorbed all of the punishment of our sins that we deserve in himself.

For Jesus was not just a man, he was the Son of God, the sinless Christ, who lived his life in complete obedience to the Father, and did only what he saw the Father doing, and spoke only what he heard the Father speaking, and loved just as God loved, for he was God in the flesh.

And he gives us two great commandments, to love the Lord our God with all our heart, with all our soul, with all our mind, and with all our strength, and to love our neighbors as ourselves. Love. I would recommend that for any of us to, for this to make any sense at all, then we've got to do what

Christ did.

[18:05] If you claim to be a Christian, then you must walk as Jesus did, and obey him. He is our ultimate example, but more than that, he is the one who actually takes us by the hand, and leads us every step of the way by his spirit.

In John's first letter, he says, this is how we know what love is. Jesus Christ laid down his life for us, and we ought to lay down our lives for our brothers.

If anyone has material possessions and sees his brother in need, but has no pity on him, how can the love of God be in him? Dear children, let us not love with words or tongue, but with actions and in truth.

We must be crucified with Christ. We've got to get a ladder, put it up against the cross, walk up the ladder, and get on the cross.

That's what Jesus is telling us to do. He wants to come into every part of our lives. He wants to have access to every faculty of our beings and every fiber of our beings.

[19:22] He wants to be Lord of Lord and King of Kings. We've got to get on the cross and stay on the cross. For we are no longer our own, but we belong to Christ.

If we believe in him and have any affection for him, then we are his. He's purchased us with his blood, and we are the reward of his suffering.

We've got to let Christ be magnified and glorified in our lives, and be willing to see him for who he really is.

The sun is massive. it's so big that it holds all of the planets in perfect orbit. And if we would allow Christ to be the center of our lives, then every other, all of our little planets and all of the little things in our lives would be held together in their perfect orbit.

All of our relationships, all of our finances, all of our feelings and our thinking, Jesus says that if anyone would come after me, let him deny himself, pick up the cross, and follow me.

[20:54] Lent begins in two weeks, and it's a time for us to remember what it is that Jesus has done for us on the cross. Let us be through once and for all with our self righteousness and our pride and our trying to justify ourselves before God and let's concentrate on the cross and fix our eyes on the cross.

The world is calling out for love. Canadians are calling out to be loved our communities.

All we have to do is walk down Rideau Street and see how much people are calling out to be loved. Our families and friends just want to be loved.

We just want to be loved. I'm sure we are hungry and thirsty for God's love.

We cannot give something that we don't have. let us submit to Christ and to the authority of his word and to do what it is that he's calling us to do.

[22:17] Let us die with him and be raised to new life in him that we might show the world what it means to love. Let us pray.

Lord we thank you for sending your son Jesus Christ to die on the cross.

We thank you that now he has poured out his spirit and just like Jill read from Acts the spirit of the sovereign Lord has been poured out upon us.

pray Lord that you would soften our hearts that we would be receptive to these two great commandments that you have given us.

Lord we pray that you would soften our hearts that we would be receptive to your spirit and to your word. Pray that you would humble us that you would be glorified and as George always says Lord we pray that you would fan into flame a desire for holiness within us and that you would draw us closer to you in and through your son and for his name sake Amen