

Neighbour Love

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[0 : 0 0] he as the lawyer desiring to justify himself said to Jesus who is my neighbor Jesus replied a man was going down from Jerusalem to Jericho and he fell among robbers who stripped him and beat him and departed leaving him half dead and by chance a priest was going down that road and when he saw him he passed by on the other side so likewise a Levite when he came to the place and saw him passed by on the other side that Samaritan as he journeyed came to where he was and when he saw him he had compassion he went to him and bound up his wounds pouring on oil and wine and he sent him on his own animal and brought him to an inn and took care of him and the next day he took out two denarii and gave them to the innkeeper saying take care of him and whatever you more you spend I will repay you when I come back which of these three do you think proved to be a neighbor to the man who fell among the robbers he said the one who showed him mercy and Jesus said to him you go and do likewise you go and do likewise last Lord's the evening those of you who were here in the service if you remember we looked at the way that Jesus answered an insincere question a question given to him by one of the religious leaders of the day the question remember about how a woman caught in adultery should be punished and of course it was an insincere question that was designed to trap Jesus into giving an answer that would discredit him in the face of those who were there to listen to him and to follow him well this evening we're going to look at another insincere question given by another religious leader of the day it's a question given by someone who refer to here as a lawyer not in the conventional sense that we think of as a lawyer but a man who studied the law of Moses a man who was well versed in the five books of the the old testament he was a man who who had head knowledge of scripture a head knowledge of the law and yet his heart wasn't right with God his heart wasn't right with the giver of the law and well we're going to consider this question that that man gave but the more consider of course the answer that Jesus gave the answer that Jesus gave to that man in the form of a parable as we said it may well be one of the most if not the most well known of all the parables that Jesus taught even today in 21st century secular Britain even the the words good Samaritan still have a kind of resonance today there is a sort of recognition about the the meaning of what it means to be a good Samaritan of course the original meaning tends to be lost in a kind of moralistic position but uh we're going to look at Jesus teaching here what Jesus says in this parable that impacts each one of us and as we do so yes give glory to God as we worship him as we're worshipping even now give glory to God for the the truth that we find in this parable and seek to be those who follow Jesus who listen to Jesus word and seek to apply his teaching when he calls us to go and do likewise likewise as in the example that Jesus gave what truly constitutes being a neighbor and so we seek to understand what does it mean what does it mean in practice to be that good

neighbor that good Samaritan to be a neighbor and to understand what it means for those of you who are in Christ to follow the Lord Jesus in this particular way now see we've read this parable many times we've heard it preached many times as I said right at the start I pray that you will find something that maybe you haven't fully realized before haven't truly grasped before Jesus teaching is we might say it's never a there's always something something to to draw us the more to the Lord Jesus something the more to direct us how we should live and glorify our God and Savior so I pray that will be the case this evening so let's turn to the parable three things that I want to consider with you consider with you this evening and the first we find in verses 25 to 29 where we read a searching question for Jesus searching question for Jesus and then verses 30 to 35 a searching answer from Jesus and then finally last verses 36 and 37 a searching question and command from Jesus very much questions questions and answers in relation what it means to be a neighbor in following the Lord Jesus in following the word of God the command of God so first of all a searching question for Jesus the question or the questions that this lawyer asked I mean this religious man

this this lawyer this man who's so well versed in the law of God he knows his Bible he's an expert he's that's been his study studying biblical law and yet as we find out his heart isn't directed first and foremost to to serving God his heart seems to be directed towards himself and he's coming to try and find a weakness in Jesus he's trying to expose a failing in Jesus

Jesus has already as it were exposed the weaknesses of the teachers of the law and their understanding of the law and now this man wants to turn the table as it were in Jesus to try and test him to try as it were to find him out and when we see the question that this man asked Jesus at first we might think well there's absolutely nothing wrong with the question there's not teacher what shall I do to inherit eternal life but it's not so much the the wording of the question as the motivation behind the question that that really we have to take into account because there's all the difference in the world between coming to Jesus with sincerity of heart coming to him genuinely seeking an answer to what really is the greatest question that anyone can ask there's all the difference between that and coming to Jesus with that question but with no real desire to hear Jesus answer when all the time you've formed your own answer you see so many people even today come to Jesus yes with real questions about faith about the bible about about life but when they ask the question they've already got the answer in their mind in their in a mind devoid of of faith in the one true God and devoid of ears open to the voice of Jesus just like this lawyer coming to Jesus he this lawyer thought he knew the answer he had his own question and he had his own answer of course yes he gave the answer direct from from God's word you shall love the Lord your God with all your heart and soul and with all your strength and with all your mind

Deuteronomy Deuteronomy 6 5 and then in Leviticus 19 18 you'll love your neighbor as yourself straight from scripture this is God's word this is if you like this man has head knowledge of God's law he could recite the words perfectly but even in that answer he wasn't prepared to apply God's word to his own life he knew the words he knew the correct words but he didn't apply these words these words of truth to himself he knew that God was a that loving God was a priority his heart wasn't directed towards sincere love for God he knew that neighbor love was absolutely integral to a person in relation to eternal life he actually didn't know who his neighbor truly was he certainly as we find out when Jesus gives the parable he didn't know what it meant by being a neighbor and you know there are so many like this today you know the answers you can repeat off by heart so much of God's word you may well have memorized them even from a young age consider yourself a good person a good religious person you know the Bible you go to church well even the form of church outwardly respectable someone who can utter truth and yet live a lie it's love for God and love for neighbor well it's just in word only and not in heart because there's that lack of faith that lack of faith and therefore lacking works that testify to the to saving saving grace saving faith well this expert in the law this lawyer he had no genuine desire to hear Jesus speak the truth this expert in the law he was more concerned to justify himself to justify his own stance his own religious stance when he felt he'd given the right answer and would apply according to what he considered was the right interpretation of God's word

I mean even his second question when he asked who's my neighbor he fully expects that that the answer well has to be the way that he gives not the way that Jesus gives because to him this lawyer his neighbor he'd already worked it out for himself his neighbor was a fellow Jew his neighbor would be someone that he could relate to and apply this God's word to Jesus answer Jesus gives an astounding answer in many ways a shocking answer an answer that challenges this lawyer to see that well eternal life is costly that eternal life is revealed not by the cheap grace of religious conformity minus Jesus but the person who shows that truly he has and she has eternal life he exercises she exercises that that costly grace of self-giving love love for God and love for one's neighbor through faith in the Lord Jesus so let's consider then the the searching question or should we say the searching answer that Jesus gives to this lawyer we see the answer of course in the form of a parable a parable that's commonly known as the parable of the Good Samaritan and notice first of all the way that

[12:10] Jesus answers the lawyer he doesn't scold the lawyer he doesn't rebuke him he doesn't rebuke him for his insincerity Jesus sees right through the insincerity but Jesus doesn't scold him for that but Jesus wants to show this man the true application of Old Testament law what it means what neighbor love truly means and so here we're seeing the grace of the Lord Jesus the gracious love of Jesus to this insincere man and so Jesus we might say in that to calm demeanor that the calm way that Jesus gives the path we see Jesus in his grace towards this man and seeing Jesus in the way that he teaches this particular individual Jesus isn't frustrated at this lawyer's insincerity

he's not annoyed at him you see here a loving response a response in love we might even say that Jesus is showing love to this man who's a neighbor to Jesus and so here in this story that Jesus tells he's bringing the lawyer to see well the weakness of that lawyer's own position and the true reality of neighbor love so Jesus is seeking to correct this lawyer and to reveal truly that the question the question shouldn't be who is my neighbor but the question truly should be how can I be a neighbor you see how Jesus is turning the question round to bring out what truly matters in relation to eternal life how can I be a neighbor but well before we look at even at that parable again I think we do have to ask ourselves what do we mean by neighbor you see to the lawyer being a neighbor meant loving your own loving your own people looking out for your own racial grouping your own fellow

Jews showing justice showing mercy to those within the Jewish community within the Jewish people but certainly not towards those outside the community certainly not to Samaritans certainly not to Gentiles so in Jewish practice a neighbor was a Jew or could be a convert to Judaism that was the way that Jewish people at that time interpreted God's law but Jesus is going to show that a neighbor was anyone anyone whom you come into contact with whether that person in that time of course even now was a Jew a Samaritan or a Gentile of course as we'll see there were implications for that for the early church when the early church went out in mission there were implications for that in the ministry of Paul and the apostles and of course there were implications for ourselves in the 21st century as we seek to follow the

Lord Jesus and be that neighbor that Jesus requires us to be so what about this parable then let's look at the story again Jesus sets the story in what was a very dangerous part of the land the road between Jerusalem and Jericho and he speaks of this man this Jewish man this man who goes down from Jericho to Jerusalem and just as happened in so many people that traveled on that road this man was attacked he was beaten up so badly by bandits in the road that he was left that were almost dead anyway and so there's this man lying on the side of the road he can't help himself he's alone he can't move just a beautiful sight altogether and who comes along first a priest a priest that's walking down the road it may well be that this priest had been at the temple in Jerusalem and going back to where so many priests lived at that time in Jericho you see this priest goes down the road he's obviously looking out for robbers himself there he sees in the distance a body body at the side of the road well he realizes he's a priest he's got a job to do in the temple if he touches this body and the body's dead he's going to be ceremonially unclean and he's not going to be able to do his work for a week and so best to stay on the safe side and ignore the plight of that individual at the side of the road he's not going to allow this man to interfere with his work in other words his religion this is God he thinks better to keep safe religiously than show love to this man even love to his neighbor so the priest's not going to act as a neighbor he's not showing any neighbor love to that man beaten at the side of the road and then a second man comes along a Levite someone again who works in the temple this man's an official in the temple his job is to ensure that the order of service goes correctly make sure that everything is done in order in the temple and if he touches this body and the body's dead he also is going to be unclean for ceremonially unclean for seven days what's going to happen to the services in the temple so he thinks best to cross over to the other side of the road and not run the risk of being defiled by this body and just with the priest we have to say that this man's religion was his

[18:17] God so the priest prefers to adhere to you might say the outer forms of religion he's not applying his heart to the command of God to love his neighbour as himself just as with the Levite he's not acting as a neighbour he's not showing that neighbour love and showing love to that individual at the side of the road what are we seeing so far in the parable well surely this we must never make the form the outward form of our religion our God see the priest and the Levite there as they walked on by as they crossed the other side of the road they had the appearance of godliness it was very obvious the priest and the Levite did the outward form of godliness but they denied the power of God they didn't show any of God's love to the weak to the poor to the needy pray that we never fall into that position we might say the ugliness of legalism that ugliness that destroys love in the church of the

Lord Jesus pray that we'll be those who truly follow the Lord Jesus and those who exercise that costly grace of self-giving love in following the saviour and to do that that we keep testing our hearts to see what truly matters in the work of the kingdom to see what truly counts in the service of our Lord and saviour yes we have these outward forms of religion they're important of course they are

but they're there to point us to the Lord Jesus we're to worship and follow the saviour and not worship the forms of religion so what then of true religion what of true neighbour love you know we can go back to the lawyer there in the story you know you can just imagine you can just hear the lawyer thinking in his mind well Jesus has dealt with this teacher has dealt with the priest and the Levite he's going to mention someone else who comes along and acts as neighbour to this poor man at the side of the road you can just hear his thinking surely Jesus is going to now tell of a lawyer like himself who comes along and shows love to this poor man this fellow Jew surely you know the lawyer's thinking Jesus is going to commend me for my being a neighbour to that man and that man being a neighbour to myself this lawyer's thinking well

I'm going to prove that I have eternal life this lawyer in the story surely is going to represent me I've loved my neighbour I've loved my fellow Jews I'm worthy I'm worthy of eternal life it's not what Jesus says and Jesus astounds the lawyer with this third person who comes along and this third person who isn't a fellow Jew or a Samaritan just picture the lawyer who said last week use your imagination here just picture this lawyer as he hears Jesus tell of a Samaritan one of the despised people to the north of the country those Samaritans these heretics these individuals whom the Jews despised for being racially different for having different views of scripture even differences in worship this individual whom certainly the lawyer wouldn't have called a neighbour he certainly would never have referred to that

Samaritan in the story that Jesus gives as someone to show neighbour love to or give neighbour love from so Jesus instantly shatters the lawyer's self-justification he shatters the lawyer's beliefs it's the Samaritan who doesn't cross over to the other side of the road it's the Samaritan who comes near that poor man on the road and tends that man's wounds it's the Samaritan who uses his own medicinal oil his own wine no doubt that oil and wine that were very precious and valuable to him it's the lawyer who uses these means to heal that man's wounds it's the Samaritan who gets that man onto his donkey and takes that man to the nearest inn and promises to look after that man through giving the financial cost to the innkeeper it's the Samaritan who makes sure that that man's safe and well it's the

Samaritan who shows neighbour love it's the Samaritan who shows that the cost of discipleship is in word and action self-giving love irrespective of who the neighbour in need is so what about our application remember the whole point of this parable the whole point of it is to examine the question who's a neighbour who's a neighbour in the context of eternal life who's my neighbour neighbour well of course the answer has to be surely every man even the person who might even consider my enemy in fact we might even say that the question that the lawyer gave that question really shouldn't be asked of any of us because as soon as you ask who's my neighbour you're actually discriminating but rather than asking is this person or that person another person my neighbour just show neighbour love irrespective of who that person is show the love of the Lord

[24 : 19] Jesus surely we're all neighbours one to another someone wrote this he said you should not ask who is my neighbour you should act and that really leads us to the searching question and command that Jesus gives in verse 36 and 37 we said earlier that Jesus corrects the lawyer there's the question in our hearts shouldn't be who is my neighbour how can I be a neighbour you see that in the searching question that Jesus gives this lawyer which of these three do you think prove to be a neighbour to the man who fell among the robbers see how Jesus turns that question onto the lawyer to get the lawyer to see what neighbour love truly means for anyone who's concerned about eternal life and there's only one answer to Jesus searching question which of these three do you think prove to be a neighbour to the man who fell among the robbers there's only one answer in this context of the story the answer of course is the

Samaritan and the lawyer realises this can't even bring himself to say the word Samaritan but at least he realises that it was the Samaritan who showed mercy it was the Samaritan who revealed neighbour love who proved to be that neighbour you see how Jesus turns the question onto the lawyer the lawyer who'd asked who is my neighbour but Jesus is putting the spotlight on the neighbour saying who and what is a neighbour what was it about the Samaritan that showed that he was a true neighbour and true neighbourliness what was it about the Samaritan that showed that he truly was fulfilling the law of God because he showed self-giving love he showed compassion to someone who yes for the Samaritan would be regarded as an enemy to the Samaritan's people and yet for that

Samaritan there could be no limits on his love and showing mercy of course that truth would be seen ultimately in the Lord Jesus and that truth as we said expressed in the work of the early church and that truth that we see as far-reaching implications for ourselves in the 21st century you see for Jesus a neighbour was anyone with whom you'd come into contact whether it's a Jew a Samaritan or a Gentile this is the same Jesus who said love your enemies do good to those who hate you and Jesus is saying if you're to follow him then there's to be no limits on your love for others whoever these others are you can't show exclusive love to one and not to another whoever they are so you're to be that neighbour who rejects the exclusive nature of love for one and not for another it's that teaching that inspired the mission of the early church to preach the gospel to Jew and Gentile

Paul was what Paul was doing he was planting churches in largely non-Jewish areas Gentile areas that's what Paul expressed when Paul spoke about the freedom that Christians have and the freedom that Christians have been given in Christ that freedom not to do as they please not to exploit neighbours not to show lack of love to neighbour but to show love to their neighbour to Jew and to Gentile you read for example in Galatians 5 verse 14 Paul emphasising that when he says the whole law is fulfilled in one word you shall love your neighbour as yourself or think of the apostle James when he emphasised neighbour love in his letter in chapter 2 the epistle of James chapter 2 James warned against discrimination James warned against showing favouritism to the rich and neglecting the needs of the poor and so each one of us has a responsibility in fulfilling the demands of the law with regard to neighbour love and listening to the words of Jesus and heeding them and putting them into practice just as Jesus said to the lawyer you go and do likewise you go and do likewise you show mercy befitting a follower of the

Lord Jesus show mercy in keeping with the saviour who's shown mercy to you you know when you were in life's roadside when I was in life's roadside when you were unable to heal yourself because of the assaults of sin and Satan when you needed the oil of Christ's healing grace you needed to be restored through the mercy of Christ he showed you love he showed you that he truly loves you with that infinite love the self-giving love for you he showed that ultimately on the cross when he gave his life for you and it's for you and for me to show mercy to show mercy to the lost to show mercy to the suffering show mercy to those who are in need even in this time of well still continued lockdown that even use the opportunity that this time gives to show that mercy the mercy of Christ to the lost the lonely to the fearful to those who are scarred to the vulnerable we pray that and yes pray even come before

[30 : 13] God even in the quiet of your prayer life even as you listen again to what we've been considering you come before God come to that throne of grace and pray that God will present before you even in your mind even in practice bring before you someone to whom you can truly and fully show that neighbour love someone who may well be torn and bruised and wounded and suffering through various circumstances in life pray that God will present to you a person that you can show the love of the Lord Jesus to in showing what true neighbour love is and of course that may well mean that we go out of our comfort zone may well mean that we apply the oil and wine of Christ's mercy to place in the wounds of a neighbour in need wouldn't you be that neighbour that neighbour that reveals the face of the Lord

Jesus to someone else irrespective of who that someone else is so we truly do seek to live as the Lord Jesus directs you to be like that good Samaritan go and do likewise that you won't pass by and cross to the other side as it were and you see someone in need but you'll show your faith in practice you'll show your faith to be true faith saving faith and show it in your love for God and your neighbour as yourself as you be that good neighbour as you do so through love that won't discriminate but love that will reveal saving grace in your life as you seek to love one another Amen our Lord our God our heavenly father as again we've considered the parable that Jesus taught that parable that we're commanded to respond to and to go and do likewise to show mercy to the lost to the suffering to show truly what a neighbour means in practice we pray

Lord that our hearts truly will know that the love that we are to exercise that love that we are to show to others to those who are in need we pray then Lord that you truly will open before us those who are suffering at this time those who are on life's roadside we pray Lord that you will open to us so that we might apply your word and seek to honour you and seek to glorify you even in the work that you give us to do so hear us Lord as we commit these things before you strengthen us we pray strengthen our resolve to serve you go before us we ask we pray these things in Jesus name Amen

we're going to sing now in Psalm 25 the first version of Psalm 25 in verses 12 to 15 what man is he that fears the

Lord and with himself him shall he teach the way that he shall choose and still observe his soul shall dwell at ease and his posterity shall flourish still and of the air inheritors that be Psalm 25 12 to 15 to God's praise what man is he that he is the Lord and not himself it shall he teach the way that he shall choose and still observe his soul shall dwell at ease and his what said indeed shall flourish still and all the earth imperish return shall be with whose that fear in his the secret of the Lord the knowledge of his covenant covenant he will to them afford my eyes upon the Lord on tinders there are set for he it is that shall bring forth my feet out of the net close close and pray now may grace mercy and peace from God

[36 : 08] Father Son and Holy Spirit rest upon and remain with you both now and forevermore
Amen