

Sermon: The Uncommon Sense of Good Works

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[0 : 00] ! Hey, Faith Family, if you've got a Bible, turn to Luke chapter 10.

Luke chapter 10 is where our passage will be today as we continue in our series Uncommon Sense. While you're turning there, let me say a very special Happy Mother's Day to all of our moms out there.

I hope that this is a day where you will feel celebrated and appreciated. And I certainly know that we are grateful for the influence that moms have in our life.

And I'll give a very special shout out to my mom. And I love you, thankful for you, and just want to give a very special welcome to our moms today.

Hope it's a special day for you. Well, we're in part four of our Uncommon Sense series. We're looking at some of the teachings of Jesus and how they go contrary to the common sense of the world.

[1 : 30] And when we think about the kingdom, it's very different than the way a lot of people approach life in this world. So let's look at Luke chapter 10. Luke chapter 10 and verse 25.

Luke 10 and verse 25 says, And he said to him, Let's pray together.

Father, thank you for this time to be in your word today. Pray that you, by your Spirit, would teach us more of the Uncommon Sense about your kingdom. Thank you for what you've been teaching us each and every week.

And once again, we ask your Spirit to guide us into truth. Expose those things in our life that we need to think differently about.

That we're too influenced by the world. So Holy Spirit, come and be our teacher. We pray in Jesus' name. Amen. I'm going to do a terrific show today.

[3 : 00] I'm going to help people because I'm good enough. I'm smart enough. And doggone it, people like me. Now, there are many of you listening today that remember those words from the old Saturday Night Live skit entitled Daily Affirmations with Stuart Smalley.

If you've never seen the skit, it was about a man, an actual former senator in Minnesota, who would sit around in a very goofy looking sweater.

He would stare into a mirror trying to build up his self-esteem. And he would just say to himself over and over again, I'm good enough. I'm smart enough.

People like me. I'm good enough. I'm smart enough. People like me. He would just keep saying that over and over again because he needed that daily affirmation that he was good.

Now, even though that was a comedy sketch, there was a reason why it resonated in American culture. There's a reason why it had a popular draw to it in this particular culture.

[4 : 17] And that's because of the self-esteem movement that was taking place certainly during that time. Now, most people wouldn't sit around in a goofy looking sweater and stare in a mirror saying, I'm good enough.

I'm good enough. But yet, so many people at that time and even today are still looking for daily ways to affirm themselves that at the end of the day they're good.

Everybody does that. Everybody resonates with that. It reminds me of that final scene in the movie Saving Private Ryan. When he kneels down at the graveside of the man that risked his life to save him.

And this is what he says, quote, Every day I thought about those words you said to me on the bridge. And every day I've tried to live my life the best I could.

I hope it was enough. I hope that in your eyes I earned all that you've done for me. And then, do you remember in this scene, he turns to his wife who's standing there next to him and he says, Tell me I'm a good man.

[5 : 41] Tell me I'm a good man. He's not looking into a mirror saying I'm good enough, I'm smart enough, people like me. But he's looking to someone to affirm that he is, when it's all said and done, good enough.

Every single one of us, every single one of us does that in one way or another. We look to something or we look to someone to affirm us that we're good.

It's the common sense approach to life. Namely, that we tend to think that life is about how good you are. Are you good enough? Are you not as bad as that person?

That is the default position of our mindset. And examples of it are everywhere around us. For instance, if you want to get a present at Christmas, it depends on what?

Whether you are naughty or nice. You may say no to sweets because you want to be able to say, I'm being good.

[6 : 52] Or maybe in the movies, you find yourself always wanting the good guy to come out on top. We are all like Stuart Smalley.

We're all like the guy in Save It, Private Ryan. We're wanting to be good enough. We're wanting and pursuing goodness.

Now, on one hand, that's understandable. It's better than the alternative. It's better to be good than bad. I'll give you that. But yet, we must be careful, faith family, in thinking this way.

And the reason why I say that is because notice this on the screen. Being good may gain you status in the world, but not in the kingdom of God.

And that is what Jesus exposes. I mean, He just turns it on its head in this passage. It's a passage that we know as the Good Samaritan.

[7 : 59] The Good Samaritan. Now, we know the story. As soon as I say that, some of you are like, I've heard it a thousand times. But I would submit to you that our familiarity with the story has actually caused us to miss the point of the story.

Because most people, listen here, faith family. Most people, when they approach this story to teach it, or approach this story to apply it, they assume this story is to motivate you to go be good.

Be a good Samaritan. Go do things that will affirm that you're a good person. And yet, that is not the point at all.

Look at what Jesus teaches here in verse 25. We've got to get, as always, the context down before then we can understand the story. And behold, a lawyer stood up to put Jesus to the test, saying, Teacher, what shall I do to inherit eternal life?

So the context here is simple. There is a lawyer that is an expert in the Mosaic law. Not like Perry Mason or Matlock or Law and Order. This is somebody who's a religious figure.

[9 : 13] He's an expert in the Old Testament commandments. And he's coming to Jesus with a question. What can I do to inherit eternal life?

Now, on one hand, that's a great question. It's a question that you ought to be asking. How can I be right with God? How can I be assured that I have a relationship with God?

I get the question, and it's a good question. But there are two problems here in the text with what this lawyer is after. Number one is he's got the wrong motivation.

The text tells us here that he wants to trick Jesus. Jesus, after all, in his eyes is an up-and-coming rabbi. Somebody to kind of square off against.

Maybe debate some theology. Maybe trick him in front of everybody so that I can expose him for not being a faithful teacher. That's the motive. He views Jesus as his enemy.

[10 : 16] Somebody he's trying to trick. And he comes with the wrong mindset. He asks, what must I do to inherit eternal life?

That's the problem. And we know that's the problem because look at Romans 3.10. Romans 3.10 says, By the works of the law, no one will be justified in his sight, since through the law comes the knowledge of sin.

Hello? Hello? You're an expert of the law and yet you've missed the whole point of the law? The law wasn't intended for you to be a ladder or for you to earn something, for you to do something.

The law was intended to show how you're not good. It was to expose sin, to bring forth the knowledge of sin.

And so here you have an expert of the law who's missed the point of the law, which was to reveal you're not good. You're not good.

[11 : 24] And now Jesus then in this setting turns it back on him, verse 26. And he said to him, Well, what's written in the law, big boy? You're the expert. How do you read it?

Verse 27. And he said, You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, with all your soul, with all your strength, with all your mind, and your neighbor as yourself. So Jesus here turns it back and says, Okay, you're an expert of the law.

What does it say? Smarty pants. And he quotes Deuteronomy. A plus on your theology exam. He gives exactly the right answer, but he doesn't realize that he's walking into a trap because Jesus turns around and says, Okay, do that.

You wanted your answer. There's your answer. Love the Lord your God with all your heart and your neighbor as yourself. In other words, if you want to earn it, if you want to do it, if you want to be good enough, go ahead.

Because the standard is simply perfection. Loving God with all your heart and strength and soul and your neighbor as yourself.

[12 : 38] And at this point, the lawyer should have been, Game over. White flag. I repent. But look at verse 29. But he, desiring to justify himself, said to Jesus, And who is my neighbor?

He just doesn't get it, does he? He's got to have a checklist. And that's what law people do. They've got to have a law. They've got to have a checklist. Well, okay, you're going to say I've got to love my neighbor. Well, then who's my neighbor? Remember, he's still trying to trick Jesus.

Give me some kind of checklist. Why? Because the checklist, faith family, listen, the checklist becomes the mirror of which I can look at and say, Aha!

I'm good enough. I'm smart enough. I've done enough for God to like me. That's what he's trying to do. Give me that checklist.

Now, faith family, do not, oh please, please, please, do not forget that context. Because if you don't understand that context, you do not understand the parable. The context is this.

[13 : 43] An expert of the law, one, comes to Jesus with a question about earning eternal life with God. Two, and he all along is doing so to try to trick Jesus.

He views him as his enemy. Number three. And it's from that, that Jesus tells this story. Verse 30. 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.

Now by chance a priest was going down that road, and when he saw him, he passed by on the other side. And likewise, a Levite, when he came to the place and saw him, he passed by on the other side.

But a Samaritan, as he journeyed, came to where he was, and when he saw him, had compassion. He went to him and bound up his wounds, pouring oil and wine, and then he set him on his own animal and brought him to an end and took care of him.

And the next day, he took out two denarii, gave them to the innkeeper, saying, Take care of him, and whatever more you spend, I will repay when I come back.

[14 : 54] That's the story. You've probably heard it a thousand times. Let's break it down. There's a Jewish man who's going from Jerusalem to Jericho. It's about a 17-mile journey, a drop in about 3,200 feet in elevation.

It's a very rocky journey, a pathway. It was a very common place for thieves to hang out and rob people. And so here you've got a Jewish man who's walking along the road, and thieves jump out, robbers jump out, and they beat him practically to death.

Okay? Then you have some people that come by. A priest. A Levite. Individuals who represent the law.

And surely they will stop. I mean, they're a priest. They're religious people. Surely they're not going to leave this guy stranded on the side of the road. I mean, Faith Family, think about it this way.

If you were stranded at 1 a.m. in a very bad part of town, who would you rather see walking your way? This guy? Or this guy?

[16 : 07] Okay, maybe that's a hard one. But you get the point. Most of us are picking the pastor. We're going with, huh, thank goodness a priest is coming my way.

And yet the priests do not stop. And there's all kinds of debate as to why they don't stop. Maybe they're scared because it's a bad part of town. Maybe they're in a hurry.

You know, they've got to hurry up before Starbucks closes. There's all this debate on to why they're in such a hurry. The reason why they don't stop is because they can't. The religious law won't let

them.

According to Leviticus, they're not allowed to have any contact with a dead body. So if they do, they're going to become unclean and they're going to have to go back and do all the ritualistic cleansing again.

It's going to be about a seven-day turnaround. They're going to have to tell the other priest. It's going to be a hassle. So if even for a moment they think this guy is dead, they're going to pass by on the other side.

[17:07] The law demanded it. And that's so critically important to this passage. The point here is not why they didn't stop. It's that they represent the law.

That's what these men represent. Then Jesus, in verse 33, drops a three-word bomb.

But a Samaritan. What did he just say? Did he say Samaritan?

You mean those half-breeds? The enemies of ours? The people that intermarried with foreign women and reject the Torah and broke away from Judaism to establish their own religion.

Those Samaritans? In fact, here's what the Mishnah, Jewish oral tradition, teaches about Samaritans. He that eats the bread of the Samaritans is like one that eats the flesh of swine.

[18:09] Now if you're like me and those of us from Tennessee, eating the flesh of swine sounds delicious. But according to Jewish law, they were not allowed to do that whatsoever.

In fact, John 4, verse 9, in the exchange with the Samaritan woman, she says, How is it that you, a Jew, ask me for a drink since I am a Samaritan woman?

For Jews have no dealings with Samaritans. Good Samaritan is an oxymoron.

At least in a Jewish mindset. It's like saying passive aggressive or pretty ugly or jumbo shrimp or Microsoft works.

Alright, you'll get that later. Call the Samaritan whatever you want, but you can't call him good. It's like the best example I could give of this is imagine me telling you a story.

[19:09] There once was an American soldier that was walking down a path and was beaten to death by a group of robbers and along came an Islamic terrorist and he stopped and he cared for him and made sure that you would be like an Islamic terrorist being kind to an American that doesn't seem to make sense.

We don't have a place in our mind to be able to comprehend that. There's not a category of that in our brain. Well, now you're starting to realize how those, particularly this man, would have responded in hearing this story.

But notice what's different. You with me, faith family? Notice what's different. The religious people didn't stop because they couldn't. This Samaritan stopped because he had compassion.

Think about that. They didn't stop because they couldn't. He stops because he's moved with compassion. Meaning he wasn't acting out of law. He wasn't acting out of duty.

He wasn't trying to be good. He wasn't trying to increase his moral status. His heart was just motivated to love and serve. Totally different motivation than the priest.

[20:29] He puts his life on the line. He gets bloody. He tears his clothes. He pours wine for medicine. And he pays the full price for this man's healing. A man who, remember, was his enemy.

That doesn't make any sense at all. That goes totally against the common sense of the world. You don't do this. Love your enemy?

No. That doesn't make sense at all. What is Jesus trying to teach here? And this is where we tend to stop and miss the whole point.

We do a good job of walking through and faithfully understanding the passage, but we go off course here because here's what almost everybody does. They turn this story into now go be a good Samaritan.

Go do things, like you see in this story, that can become that mirror of which you're able to say, oh, I'm good enough. I stopped and helped somebody today.

[21:33] I bought some old ladies groceries. I did good. I'm good enough. And if that's the way you approach this story, you're just like the lawyer. And it's the very thing that Jesus is trying to teach against.

So what is He doing? Look at verse 36. Verse 36. Jesus said, Which of these three do you think proved to be a neighbor to the man who fell among the robbers?

The question isn't who is your neighbor? The question is who has been a neighbor to someone? Jesus is turning the whole thing on the lawyer.

Let me illustrate. Do you remember the movie? It's a good movie. Time to Kill. Matthew McConaughey, Sandra Bullock, Samuel L. Jackson. It's several years old now, but it was a movie about a young African-American girl, a young girl that gets raped by a couple of white men. And when it looks like they're going to get off free and not stand trial, the father of that African-American girl, played by Samuel L. Jackson, kills those two white men.

[22 : 53] And now Samuel L. Jackson is standing trial for murder. And if you remember towards the end of the movie, the famous scene where the lawyer of the father, played by Matthew McConaughey, where he gives his closing argument.

And he begins to detail what kind of happened to the girl and the situation that was taking place to this all-white jury.

And he does so because he wants to do something very important. Take a look. Pick her up. Throw in the back of the truck.

Drive out to Foggy Creek Bridge. Pitch her over the edge. She drops some 30 feet down to the creek bottom below.

Can you see her? Her rape, beaten, broken body, left to die.

[24 : 16] Can you see her? Can you see her? I want you to picture a little girl.

Now imagine she's white.

It's a powerful scene. What is he trying to do? What is that lawyer trying to do? He's trying to get them, the jury, to see reality through different eyes.

What does that have to do with this parable? What is it that Jesus is trying to do to this lawyer?

Faith family, come in. Listen to me. Listen to me. Who came to Jesus?

A Jewish man. Who was dead on the side of the road practically? A Jewish man. What was the lawyer asking Jesus about?

[25 : 32] The law. What kept the two travelers, the priest and the Levi, from stopping? The law. How did the lawyer view Jesus as His enemy?

Who healed the man on the road? His enemy. Jesus is saying to the lawyer this, I want you to close your eyes for a moment and imagine a man in such a condition that he cannot save himself.

And all the religious rules he hopes will save him walk right on by. And then the only one that is his enemy that can save him comes by.

Do you see that man? Do you see the man on the road? Do you see him helpless to save himself?

Now imagine he's Jewish. In other words, faith family, the lawyer is the man in the road.

God. The passage is about a man who wants to inherit eternal life on his own so he can feel good enough.

[26 : 46] But that man cannot save himself any more than the man in the parable could save himself. And this lawyer has to begin to understand it's not about you being good.

It's about the gracious salvation and love of your enemy, namely Jesus who has come to heal you. that's what Jesus is doing in this story. He's wanting us to see and wanting that lawyer to see you can't do it.

You can't do it. Only Jesus can do it for you. Now, what are some applications from this story?

What are some things that we need to walk away with? First of all is we need to understand that the gospel is our message. The gospel is our message. How can I inherit eternal life?

[27 : 56] The answer is you can't. The message of the gospel is the free grace of Jesus Christ. And the Bible says that we were enemies of God.

While we were enemies of God, Christ died. He came to us. He paid everything that was required to be paid that we could be healed.

Faith family, you're not a Christian until you see yourself as the man in the road. It's not about your goodness. It's not about you feeling as though you are good enough or not good enough.

It's have you been rescued and saved by the love and grace of Jesus Christ. That's the gospel.

That's the gospel. Secondly, the gospel is our message, but secondly, the gospel is our motivation.

Oh my goodness, there's a whole sermon here. The gospel is our motivation. What I mean here is this, you'll never be the good Samaritan, a truly a good Samaritan until you're the man on the road.

[29 : 01] See, as long as you approach life from a moralistic standpoint, I do good so that I can feel good. I bake cookies, I give away money, all you're going to end up is a moralistic man, just like that lawyer.

But if you see yourself as the man on the road, you're dead in sins, you can't get up, and it's only because Jesus was moved by compassion that he pays the price for your healing, you won't debate who my neighbor is, you will just go and do likewise.

Do you see? It's not about me serving because I feel guilty if I don't. It's me serving because I was the man in the road left for dead until Jesus came along.

That is my motivation. And that will motivate you a whole lot more than the law. I talk about, for instance, this in giving a lot. Some people are like, well, what should I give?

Or does the New Testament still teach tithing? Or whatever. And my response is always, if you're asking that, you're asking the wrong question. The New Testament is not asking, in light of the Old Testament, how much should I give?

[30 : 14] The New Testament is asking, in light of the cross, how much should you be surrendered? Your motivation is not duty and law and let's be good.

Your motivation is grace. I don't have a problem serving my neighbor because I was the guy on the road. Left for dead till Jesus came and saved me.

I have all the motivation I need to serve. That's a true good Samaritan. Not one that's approaching this out of responsibility or duty or command, but out of compassion because of the grace that has been shown to them.

The last thing we need, family, in this world is good Samaritans. What we need is gospel Samaritans. We don't need good Samaritans.

People out there doing stuff just so they can feel good about themselves. We need gospel Samaritans. People that are out there serving because they know what it's like to be the man in the road. It changes everything.

[31 : 19] The gospel is our message. The gospel is our motivation. And lastly, the gospel goes the extra mile. The gospel goes the extra mile. A good Samaritan, one who really understands the grace of God, crosses enemy lines, just like the Samaritan in this story did.

You see, okay, this might get me an email or two. It's one thing to rally around the unborn. Totally support that. We should do that.

It's one thing to rally behind the elderly when they're taking advantage of. Absolutely, we should do that. But what about the homosexual community?

not in compromising what we believe is sin or anything like that. I'm not suggesting that at all. But I am saying, are we willing to cross that line to serve someone else who is different than us?

Or what about a co-worker that has hurt you deeply? Or what about unreached people groups in political countries that we don't agree with?

[32 : 28] do you see what I'm saying? Gospel Samaritans cross enemy lines. Good Samaritans usually stay within their own.

Oh, he's Jewish, I'm Jewish, okay, I'll serve him. How does that declare the fragrance of Christ who while we were enemies died in our place?

You see, the gospel is not only our message, the gospel is not only our motivation, but it's the gospel that makes us cross enemy lines and go the extra mile to do what you would have no motivation otherwise to do if it were not for the grace of God in your life.

Put it this way, notice it on the screen, moralism, what we might call good Samaritans, might take you across the street, but the gospel will take you to the ends of the earth.

Moralism might take you across the street, I want to be good to my neighbor, but the gospel will take you to the ends of the earth. For Paul says in Romans chapter 5 verse 7, for one will scarcely die for a righteous person, though perhaps for a good person one would dare even to die, but God showed his love in this, that while we were still sinners, Christ died for us.

[33 : 58] That is a gospel Samaritan. The one who goes far and beyond to serve and love his enemy.

You say that doesn't make any sense at all. I know, because that's the kingdom of God. It's the uncommon sense of the kingdom. So faith family, please don't, please don't follow the common sense of the world by trying to be good enough.

Don't. Follow the uncommon sense instead of the kingdom by realizing that it is grace that has brought you safe thus far and it's grace that will lead you home.

Because at the end of the day, you're not going to find peace by staring in the mirror saying, I'm good enough, I'm good enough, I'm good enough. You will only find peace when you stare at the

cross and say, I wasn't good enough.
but in God's mercy, He saved me. And that really is all the daily affirmation you need.
[35 : 18] Let's pray together. If