

The Good Samaritan

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Preacher: David Moser

[0 : 00] If you have a Bible with you today, I invite you to open it to Luke chapter 10. If you don't have a Bible, there are some over there we would love to give it to you.

It would be a privilege. We're going to be Luke chapter 10, starting in verse 25. This is the parable of the Good Samaritan.

You pray with me. Lord in heaven, I pray that as we come to what is likely a familiar passage to many of us, that we would treat it with fresh eyes.

So Lord, in these next moments, may the words of my mouth and the meditation of our hearts be acceptable in your sight. Oh Lord, our rock and our redeemer.

Amen. May day. May day. May day. The words that crackled over the radio in the Coast Guard Command Center.

[1 : 18] A family on Long Island Sound was out boating and they were sinking.

Their boat was taking on water. The team in the command center immediately scrambled to start getting some rescue boats to them.

Before they could even make the call to the small boat station, another voice came over the radio and said, I've got them.

They're safe. Another boater in the area had noticed their distress, had heard their radio call, and motored over to them. Got everybody off before their boat sunk beneath the waves.

When the command center staff was writing up their report, what did they call that boater? A Good Samaritan.

[2 : 17] In fact, it's become something of a technical term in the Coast Guard. Even if you're not a Christian, if you've never been to church before, you probably know the story of the Good Samaritan.

Alongside the prodigal son, the Good Samaritan is probably the most famous parable Jesus ever told. But even if you are a Christian, even if you've grown up in church your whole life, you might not know why he told the parable.

And that's what we're going to look at today. Earlier in Luke chapter 10, Jesus pronounced a number of woes to the unrepentant cities in Israel who didn't receive him.

And, you know, that probably irked the current religious leaders. I mean, they liked their own message, not his, thank you very much. And so, in the midst of that, we come to Luke chapter 10, verse 25.

And Luke calls lawyers, these are the scribes. And what they did, they were the officials who copied and preserved the scriptures and the writings of the rabbis.

[3 : 35] And so they mostly worked with the priests. And so these were the religious establishment. In fact, some of the lawyers, and probably this one, were often teachers themselves in the land of Israel.

And so he is one of the people who Jesus is criticizing in Luke 10. And so, behold, a lawyer stood up to put him to the test, saying, Teacher, what shall I do to inherit eternal life?

You know, even though the question wasn't an honest one, we see, you know, he was here asking the question to put him to the test, it's still an important question, isn't it? The most famous and widespread evangelism training in North America in the last 50 years is probably evangelism explosion.

And what it boils down to is really one question. The question is this, have you come to the place in your spiritual life where you can say, you know for certain that if you were to die today, you would go to heaven?

And that's really what the lawyer is asking, isn't it? Jesus, I know all about the scriptures. I'm a scribe after all, but there's kind of a lot riding on the question, isn't there?

[4 : 52] Eternal life and all. How can I know that I will inherit, as he says, eternal life? But Jesus knows this is a test. We're trying to get him to slip up somehow.

So, how does he respond? Verse 26. He said to him, what is written in the law? How do you read it? You may have heard the story of a Jewish man who went to his rabbi and asked, why does a rabbi always answer a question with a question?

Rabbi paused, stroked his beard, and replied, why shouldn't a rabbi answer a question with a question? Jesus has seen that the lawyer wasn't asking an honest question, so he turns it on himself, right?

And actually, this is great because the Bible is where we should go for these answers. It is the first place to look, and it is the last authority in matters of faith and practice because it is God's living word to us.

What is interesting is that the lawyer has done his homework. See, he has known about Jesus' teaching, and we see that in his answer in verse 27.

[6 : 14] And he answered, you shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, with all your soul, with all your strength and all your mind, and your neighbor as yourself. This teaching, combining love for God and love for others as the central thrust of God's law, it has been a theme in Jesus' teaching.

It's been all over it in many ways and very explicitly sometimes. And so, like places in Matthew 22, we see that Jesus sums up the whole law in exactly that same way. And so this is a feature of Jesus' teaching all throughout his ministry.

The scribe's done his homework, he knows it. So, if he gives Jesus' teaching right back to him, how does Jesus reply? Verse 28. And he said to him, you have answered correctly.

Do this, and you will live. In a way, he's saying, what are you waiting for? Practice what you preach. It's not just what you must do. It's also whether you do it. But, love God with everything you've got.

[7 : 35] And, love your neighbor as yourself. Yikes. That's huge, right? It's not easy. In fact, it's not possible if we're honest.

And Laurie recognizes that. So, so immediately, he wants to make back some of the ground that he's lost. Verse 29.

But he, the lawyer, desiring to justify himself, said to Jesus, who is my neighbor? Now, if you've been in church for any length of time, you probably know that Christians, and the Bible too, use the word justify in a couple different senses.

You know, it's kind of a technical term, meaning on the basis of the atoning work of Jesus Christ, God the Father definitively declares us righteous in his sight.

That's one way it's used. That's not how the lawyer's using it, though, right? When he's desiring to justify himself, he's using the more general term. We even have it today. You know, how can you justify those actions?

[8 : 41] Basically, you know, giving an account for something. He wants to vindicate himself. So he asks, who is my neighbor? Because loving your neighbor as yourself is a huge task.

And it's really challenging unless we narrow that window really, really small. And so the lawyer probably is asking Jesus, you know, how far does my neighborhood extend?

He probably thinks that, you know, the people who deserve it, the people who are good, the people who are in God's good graces, the people who are in the in crowd. You know, maybe they deserve to get the neighborly treatment.

But what does that mean? That means that the lawyer thinks that there are people that he can safely deny his love to. one writer put it this way.

The lawyer is looking for the minimum obedience required. But Jesus requires total obedience. The lawyer wants to know what's reasonable.

[9 : 50] Jesus wants to know what's loving. And what's missing in the lawyer's response? What does he not ask?

Remember, there are two parts to the answer. Part of it's love for your neighbor as yourself, but what's the other part? It's love the Lord, your God, with your whole person.

Now, he asks about loving his neighbor, but he doesn't even touch love God with all your heart, soul, mind. He doesn't want to touch it.

Not with Jesus. Because Jesus is going to demand way too much, isn't he? And what's really surprising is Jesus lets that fly. He just lets it go right under the radar. And I think there might be a couple reasons for that. At least two. There's probably already enough to bite off with the love your neighbor bit. But also, they're connected.

[10:54] Right? As we'll see, loving our neighbor is related to loving the God who made the neighbor in his own image. As a reflection of his own glory.

So if you don't love your neighbor the way that Jesus commanded, it's because you don't love God right to begin with. And so, last time, Jesus answered the lawyer's question with a question. This time, he answers the next question with a 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.

A man is alone, beaten, naked, penniless, near death. Will anyone come to his rescue or will he be left to die?

Verse 31, now by chance a priest was going down the road, a hero, a religious leader, a good guy. And we saw him, he passed by on the other side, a hero who will do nothing.

[12:12] Verse 32, so likewise, a Levite, when he came to the place and saw him, Levites managed the temple for the priests. They were the worker bees, so to speak.

Maybe the priest didn't help, but the Levite got his hands dirty for a living, right? So surely he'll help. When he came to the place and saw him pass by on the other side.

Two of the good guys pass by and don't help. Now, Jesus doesn't tell us why they don't help.

People speculate. There are probably plenty of reasons that they could justify their actions.

But the point is, these are the people you'd expect to help and they don't. And just how cold is it? It's not just that they pass by.

They pass by on the other side. They don't even want to get near it, do they? One pastor put it this way.

[13:11] Performing religious functions is one thing, but practicing religion is another. So we get a surprise in verse 33.

What a Samaritan. Now, let's just pause right there. The Samaritans lived to the north of Israel hundreds of years before Jesus did his ministry in Israel.

The Assyrians took over that region. And what they did was they brought in lots of people from other cultures that they had conquered and resettled them there in order to disrupt and dismantle the culture that was there in that area.

And so, there are mixed bloodlines and so there are racial issues between the two. There are mixed religions. They have a corrupted worship.

They don't worship in Jerusalem like God commands. They worship somewhere else. They've denied much of the Old Testament scriptures. They have their own version of the first five books of the Bible and that's it. And so, there's a lot of tension between Jews and Samaritans.

[14:28] In John chapter 8, one of the biggest insults ever hurled at Jesus in his ministry was to call him a Samaritan. And if we look at the end of this passage, verse 37, the lawyer can't even begin to bring the word out of his own mouth when Jesus asks, who's the hero of the story?

He won't say Samaritan. He'll say the man who shared mercy. That's how awful it is in his own mouth. But, if this lawyer really had been paying attention to the scriptures, he would have known that God's heart is for the exile, for the foreigner.

Leviticus 19 says, when a stranger sojourns with you in your land, you shall not do him wrong. You shall treat the stranger who sojourns with you as the native among you, and you shall love him as yourself.

For you were strangers in the land of Egypt. I am the Lord your God. And so it is the Samaritan, as we're about to see, who proves to be more faithful to Israel's God than the religious leaders in Israel.

Verse 33, but a 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.

[15:55] That's to say that he soothed them and disinfected them. Then he set him on his own animal, which means he walked the rest of the way, and brought him to an inn and took care of him.

And the next day he took out two denarii, that's roughly two days' wages, and gave them to the innkeeper, saying, take care of him, and whatever more you spend, I will repay you when I come

back.

So the Samaritan pays for the man's care, does much of the care himself, and he opens himself up for more liability in the future, doesn't he?

So, loving this man, when no one thought he was his neighbor, was costly, wasn't it? How does Jesus conclude?

Well, with his own question now. Verse 36, 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 mercy.

[17 : 05] And Jesus said to him, you go, and do likewise. And so Jesus has turned the lawyer's question around entirely, hasn't he? Who is my neighbor has become who proved to be a neighbor.

The focus isn't on the other people, like who gets to qualify for my love. The question is now on you and on me. do you prove to be a neighbor?

And Jesus is concerned with action. He says, you go, do likewise. And so what are we to do? Well, why do we call him the good Samaritan?

He does good things for the beaten and battered man. And where do those good deeds start? where do they originate? Verse 33, but a Samaritan, as he journeyed, came to where he was, and when he saw him, he had compassion.

We need to see. We need to have compassion. The actions flow out of those things. You can't do the good that the Samaritan did, serving the need, until you've seen the need, and had the compassion over it.

[18 : 32] So we need to see. Do we see people in our lives well enough to know their needs? Well enough to have compassion for them?

And it doesn't have to always be strangers. This is a stranger example, but it doesn't have to always be strangers. It could be family and friends, neighbors and co-workers. What are their needs?

Do you know? What are the obvious needs? And what might be going on beneath the surface?

How would you find that out?

What would that look like? Not only do we need to see them, we also have to have compassion.

When we see a need, what is our heart like? How does it respond? And now this doesn't always have to be a solo mission.

The Good Samaritan seems to have been traveling on the road alone, but we don't, right? We are God's people. We are his church. We walk the road of life together.

[19 : 43] And we just saw earlier, Becky and Josh just shared stories of how the church shares its burdens together. And if you're not involved in fellowship of some kind, whether that's Shoreline's community groups or some other kind of small group, you're missing out on opportunities for other people to be good Samaritans to you and for you to exercise that same thing and grow in Christ.

And also, we act as one body, largely. Just a few weeks ago, our church saw a need for our community. We were made aware of a need that New London high schoolers didn't have enough hats and gloves.

We were compassionate, we acted, just like the Good Samaritan. We collected hats and gloves and sent them there. So we do it as a community, but how are you doing yourself?

How are you doing with loving your neighbor as yourself? how do we see and have compassion enough that as yourself fit?

John Piper put it this way, Jesus doesn't answer the question, who is my neighbor? Instead, he says, go, become a new kind of person.

[21 : 13] go get a compassionate heart. Well, how do you do that? Well, the lawyer should have remembered that Israel was looking forward to a new covenant with their God.

Hundreds of years before Jesus was doing his ministry, God spoke through the prophet Ezekiel saying, I will give them one heart and a new spirit I will put within them.

I will remove the heart of stone from their flesh and give them a heart of flesh that they may walk in my statutes and keep my rules and obey them and they shall be my people and I will be their God.

That new covenant complete with new hearts is what Jesus instituted at the last supper and it's what he paid for at the cross.

So Piper will conclude those who follow Jesus all the way to the cross will see him there paying for their new heart.

[22 : 29] That's the key, isn't it? Compassion comes out of the heart and we need hearts of compassion. So let's focus on that, Jesus paying for our new hearts just a little bit more.

See, where this parable is about a good Samaritan, Jesus is the great Samaritan, if I could put it that way. In nearly every detail of this parable, Jesus takes it, brings it into real life, and raises the stakes.

See, Jesus didn't just see us by chance, right? The good Samaritan was just, verse 33, as he journeyed. He wasn't looking for someone to save.

He just happened by, but as we saw in the parable of the lost sheep, Jesus knew that we were lost, and he came looking for us, and we saw the heart of desperation behind it last week.

he knew we needed rescue, and so he came with a purpose for us. Not only that, but our state was worse. The man on the road is near death, but our fate is actually worse than that.

[23 : 47] When we are separated from Christ, we weren't near death, we were dead. What does scripture say? This past fall, we walked through the book of Ephesians. Chapter 2, Paul said, you were nearly dead, almost dead, not in a good spot, no, he said, you were dead in the trespasses and sins in which you once walked, following the course of the world, following the prince of the power of the air, the spirit that is now at work in the sons of disobedience, among whom we all once lived in the passions of our flesh, carrying out the desires of the body and the mind, and were by nature children of wrath like the rest of mankind.

You and I before Christ rescued us, were dead. No life, no vigor spiritually, no vitality, no strength, no hope.

And the price he paid was so much higher. The good Samaritan gave two days wages and said, do what it takes. What did it take for us?

Jesus shows us what it takes. It cost, the cost of our death, the cost of new hearts for us, was his life.

The death of the Son of God on a Roman cross. What's more, the outcome was greater. The good Samaritan gave his time, his money, his comfort, his respectability, so that the man could be restored to his original state.

[25 : 25] Jesus, though, the King of Kings, he died exhausted, in pain, naked, and alone, under the curse of the Father, not so that you can go on living a normal life.

That's not the point. He did it so he could walk out of the tomb on the third day on your behalf. And that's why Paul can continue in Ephesians chapter 2.

You were dead, but God, being rich in mercy because of the great love with which he loved us, even when we were dead in our trespasses, made us alive together with Christ.

By grace you have been saved, and raised us up with him, and seated us with him in the heavenly places in Christ Jesus, so that in the coming ages he might show the immeasurable riches of his grace in kindness towards us, Christ Jesus.

And so that is how he has purchased us new hearts. Like the good Samaritan, we need to see, and we need to have compassion.

[26 : 45] Look at verse 35. Samaritan's love was really big.

It was really costly. But Jesus' love is far, far bigger. Jesus paid a price to save you, and it was more than two coins in an IOU.

That, that is love, vast as an ocean. And that's how we answer the question, how do I love my labor?

Because it answers the question the lawyer was too scared to ask. How do I love God with my whole being? It's that message, the message of the great Samaritan and his radical love on the cross that opens our eyes so we can see.

His giant love is what tears our hearts, that tears the eyes of our hearts away from ourselves and points them somewhere else, towards him.

[28 : 04] It's this message that will help us love the Lord our God with all our heart, with all our soul, with all our strength, with all our mind. And will that, having our eyes turned away from ourselves, will that help us see like the Good Samaritan?

Yes. Then we can ask questions like how can I be a neighbor? Who could I be a neighbor to? How might I be prejudiced against my neighbor? Who he is, his status, the situation he finds himself in? How would I feel if I were there? How would I feel if my family member were there? How might I have ended up in the exact same spot if situations had been a little different? And we need to have compassion. And it's this message, the message of the Great Samaritan in his completely empty tomb that releases the bonds of our heart.

No longer do we have to look out for number one. He has seen to our interests better than we could ever hope to do ourselves.

[29 : 20] And so there's nothing in this world we can't sacrifice. We're sons and daughters of the king. We are infinitely loved. We are infinitely wealthy. We are infinitely blessed.

One writer said, Jesus did more than pay my debt. He has filled my bank account full to overflowing. And he's talking about that in a spiritual sense obviously. But I can give my time. I can give my energies. I can give my possessions because I'm a citizen of heaven and will be forever. Will that help me love God?

You bet. Will that help me have compassion just like the Good Samaritan? You bet. And now we can take actions like how can I treat my neighbor with gentleness and respect?

How can I shield my neighbor from further harm? How can I help restore my neighbor? How can I encourage my neighbor? As a parable of the Good Samaritan inspires you?

[30 : 34] I hope it does. Does it make you wish that the world was full of more Good Samaritans? I hope it does. Does it give you an ideal to shoot for?

Yeah. Well, the parable of the Good Samaritan is told by the Great Samaritan God who has done all these things and more for you.

So fix your eyes on his costly love for you. And your new heart aching on Christ the Great Samaritan is renewed into a heart that looks like the Good Samaritan.

God and if you do not today belong to him, if this is inspiring but it's not your story, scripture tells us that to all who received him, who believed in his name, he gave the right to become children of God who were born not of blood, nor of the will of the flesh, nor of the will of man but of God.

He came to seek and save the lost. And that is available to you. Come. Let's pray. Lord, we are grateful that you loved us without reservation.

[32 : 13] Lord, forgive us for not turning that love to others. Help us, Lord, to see like you do, to have compassion like you do.

Fix our eyes on Christ, the great Samaritan, and fill our hearts with your love and compassion. Lord, help us who want to be ambassadors of that love.

some more may come to know the great Samaritan and become good Samaritans themselves.

Lord, we simply thank you that you have chosen us to love others.

Pray that in the mighty name of Christ our King. Amen. Amen. Amen.