

The Heart Of God Luke

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Preacher: Harry Robinson

[0 : 00] Well, would you please turn to Luke chapter 10 in your pew Bibles.

That's page 68, I think. Is that right? Page 68, and search around if you can't get hold of a pew Bible so that you can follow it. It does help me if you can follow where I'm going.

Now, we're in the middle of a series, a mini-series on the heart of God. And remember, it's based around this word for compassion, which we heard last week.

Jesus had compassion on the sheep because they were like, sorry, he had compassion on the people because they were like sheep without a shepherd. And do you remember that wonderful Greek word, as I think I've pronounced correctly, I have about, splagnitsomai.

That's right. You've got it? Just let's make sure we've got it. Splagnitsomai. That's great. You're all Greek scholars now. You know as much as me, so that's fine. And you can astound your friends with this, you know, just drop it in.

[1 : 24] Well, you know, splagnitsomai's the answer. They just drop their jaws and etc. And this word compassion comes in this well-known parable, the parable of the good Samaritan.

Now, as I was reading this through, it struck me that this is actually a most dissatisfying parable. It's very dissatisfying. You see, if you were a salesperson, you would be trained in customer satisfaction.

Anybody who tries to sell anything will want to satisfy the customer. And I've had to buy things, and I've noticed that all the salesmen and sales, sorry, salespersons, both ladies and men, have this, they want to make me feel good about whatever it is I'm buying.

You know, this is a, I'll tell you a story about my car. I bought this car. I was very nervous about buying this car, because it looked very flashy, you see. So the sales pitch to begin with was, this is a terrific car, it looks really great.

And I was going, oh, I don't want to hear that. You know, I'm a Christian, and I want it to be really awful. So the guy said, well, actually, it's a very common car, actually. You know, it's incredible. He just switched it like that.

[2 : 41] And if you're a church, you see, you can follow the same line. You want to have satisfied customers. And so somebody described the churches in North America in general, and Canada, as wanting to satisfy people with a particular product.

Now, Jesus doesn't satisfy this customer. He doesn't satisfy him.

The chap asks him a question, and he says, what does the law say? So the chap bumbles about what the law says. And he says, that's right, do it and you'll live. The cousin's not satisfied with that.

So he said, well, what do you really mean? And, you know, what does it mean to love your neighbor? So Jesus goes through a whole explanation, and by the time we get to the end of the sermon, you'll realize that when he heard the explanation, he certainly wasn't satisfied.

Or rather, he was very dissatisfied. He said, he probably said in his heart of hearts, I thought it might have meant that. That's not the answer I really wanted to hear. Jesus, you're really not giving me what I want. So it's a funny kind of dissatisfying parable.

[3 : 55] Now, of course, you all know what this parable means, don't you? The parable of the Good Samaritan. We all use the phrase, the Good Samaritan. And, of course, what it's all about is, it's about being decent to your neighbor.

Samaritans are supposed to help people and be nice to them. And since most Canadians I read are nice, we're all Good Samaritans, and so this parable has nothing to say to us. No.

You're dissatisfied with that, aren't you? I hope you are. There has to be more to it than that. And as just a clue, the very title that we have given to this parable is really not a very good title.

It was certainly a shocking title in 2,000 years ago in Jesus' day. Although Jesus never used the phrase Good Samaritan, original Jewish listeners who would have heard this phrase.

Sorry, if they'd ever have said this phrase, Good Samaritan, they'd say, you can't say that in our language, say the Jews. Good and Samaritan don't go together. It's like saying an intelligent Irishman, if you come from England.

[5 : 09] Sorry. Now that was a wrong thing to say, wasn't it? It wasn't in the notes, it just came. It must have been in the notes.

What I thought of, and I wrote down, was frozen fire. You can't have that. But maybe that is a good description of church, that we're frozen fire. But you know, you can't really have that, can you?

Frozen and fire. Or if you're a T.S. Eliot fan, midwinter, spring, in its own season, some paternal, this on. Midwinter, spring, then we'll just don't go together. It's the only bit of T.S. Eliot I know.

Not showing off. So you see, there's something more to this parable. Now I think this parable is addressed to people who have a nagging feeling, unexpressed perhaps, that there is something more to religion.

Although they haven't really reached the bottom of it yet, and they sort of feel that there's something more to it. But like, and like the lawyer in the story, I think, he got the right answer, you know, but he knew the right answers, but it wasn't enough.

[6 : 23] The other trouble is, though, with this nagging feeling, is that perhaps we'd rather not know the right answer. So let's have a look at the story and see what it has to say to us.

It all begins in verse 25 with a good question. Behold, a lawyer stood up and put him to the test, saying, Teacher, what shall I do to inherit eternal life?

Jesus would have been teaching, probably seated, and the questioner would have stood to ask his question. It was quite fair. It was a kind of, where do you stand theologically on this one kind of question.

If you are from Regent, it's the sort of question you will ask your lecturer to try and pull out, where do they stand? Where do you stand on this question? What shall I do to inherit eternal life? I love the way that Jesus responds to that question.

He responds in the language to which the lawyer is used. Lawyer, of course, not being a secular lawyer, but a religious lawyer who knows the law.

[7 : 27] So Jesus responds in the same kind of way. Well, what's written in the law? How do you read? So he's into this bantering with the questioner, bantering to and for. What does it say then? What does it say in the law?

And the lawyer, being a good member of the Anglican Church, comes out with something you'll find on page 27 in the prayer book. You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, with all your soul and with all your strength and with all your mind and your neighbor as yourself.

And maddeningly, because that's the right answer, Jesus says, yeah, that's fine. Do this and live. And there comes the first source of dissatisfaction. Yeah, well, I know that.

I know that. The lawyer says, I thought that was right, but it's not enough.

Now, like any good lawyer, secular or religious, he wants to clarify the terms. He wants to dot the I's and cross the T's. He wants to tie it down exactly. Look at this business of neighbor, he says, being as that's slightly easier than the loving the Lord your God bit.

[8 : 35] This business of the neighbor. What do you mean exactly by that? Who's my neighbor? And I think that demonstrates the way this lawyer sees the issue, sees the question.

He thinks that the law of God must be achievable. It must be doable. You see, if we're going to inherit eternal life, we must be able to do it.

So he wants to limit it. And so he asks the question, where do I draw the line? I mean, you can't mean love everybody.

All sorts of people. I mean, is it the people in my street? Is it the people in my church? Is it perhaps most Jewish people?

I mean, it couldn't be all Jewish people, could it? Now, I think there's a bit of the law in each one of us because we want to limit the demands of Christianity upon us because, you know, if we don't limit it, it becomes very difficult.

[9 : 47] It becomes, it makes us feel uncomfortable. We can't have that because we're supposed to be enjoying our religion. Everything, I think, in our society, as much in Britain as here, is designed for our comfort.

You know, dishwashers, color tellies with remote things, you'd have to get out of the seat. Incredible. And we want our religion to be a little bit like that too, you see.

We want it to be comfortable. We don't want it to just go too far. So we've got to draw the line. Well, of course, once a day to church is a naturally. And I give, I do my bit, I give, you know, this amount of money.

We want to limit it. As soon as we begin to feel uncomfortable, ah! Well, Jesus, it seems, has no limits and that's why he tells this parable.

And so there he is and he has the crowd and they're all listening and I want you to imagine the crowd as we go through the parable, their reactions to the parable.

[11 : 00] Jesus tells the story. There was a man going down from Jerusalem to Jericho and I think the man was probably an ordinary Jew. It's just an ordinary word for a man.

So I would have thought an ordinary Jew on the road from Jerusalem to Jericho and he fell among robbers who stripped him and beat him and departed leaving him half dead.

And the crowd say, I'm not surprised, you know. It's a terrible road down from Jerusalem to Jericho. When are they going to put street lighting in there? You know, it's about time they did something about that road, isn't it?

The crowd, and Jesus carries on. You see, by chance, a priest was going down the road. Oh, say the crowd. Oh, that's lucky, isn't it? You'll be okay now.

Great lucky lad. Passed by on the other side. Oh, said the crowd. Well, perhaps he had to take a service.

[11 : 57] He was probably late for even some. So, that's a bit unlucky, but a Levite. Oh, Levite. Ah, that's great.

And the lawyer, you know, of course, this is a great story. It's the Levite who does it, isn't it? Passed by on the other side. And the crowd said, it's a bit funny.

What kind of story is this? And they begin thinking and they think, well, maybe, maybe it's one of those stories.

Now, we have them in England. I don't know if you have them here. They're called the Englishman, Irishman, and Scotsman stories. And, you know, where there are three, you know, this one does this and this one does this and then it's that one, you know.

And I think if you're in America, it's Poles or something, whatever it is. And you have your own versions of these, whatever the Canadian equivalent is. And of course, they probably have their own equivalent.

[12 : 55] It's a priest, a Levite, and an ordinary Jew. And I know what kind of story this is. An ordinary Jew. He's the one, the religious ones, they don't get it right. But the ordinary Jew, he comes along and he does what he should for his mate.

Isn't that great? What a great story, Jesus. So who was it? Who's the third one? Verse 33, it says, a Samaritan. I think when Jesus said that, probably half of them spat.

He's a Samaritan. You see, the Samaritans are the baddies. They had mixed the blood back, what, six, seven, eight centuries ago. And when Nehemiah was building his, building the walls, he wouldn't have anything to do with the Samaritans, you know, because they weren't right.

They weren't theologically right. They were disloyal. I mean, kind of then, they'd contaminated the faith. A Samaritan. And the crowd think, well, this is going to be a sad story.

Because a Samaritan will kick him till he is dead. That's sad. And it goes on.

[14 : 09] When he saw him, he had splagnits, am I? And he went to him. That actually is, that's risky, you know, because one of the tricks of the robbers was to pretend that they were lying dead and you'd go over to them and you'd say, are you all right?

And then they'd pick you by the collar, throw you down, the other guys would jump on you, then they'd take your money. That was one of the ways of doing things. So he went to him, that was a risk already. He bound up his wounds, he put him on his beast, he took him to the inn, he said, here's the money to the innkeeper, and look after him and I'll give you more money when I come back.

And the crowd are listening to the story and they're all in a state of shock. A Samaritan, a state of shock.

What's going on here? So when Jesus, you see, asks the question in verse 36, which of these three do you think, lawyer, proved neighbor to the man who fell among the robbers?

The answer is very interesting. He can't even bring himself to say Samaritan, he just simply says, the one who showed mercy on him. He can't even say the word. You see, that guy's on the wrong side.

[15 : 29] The Samaritan. He's unsound. He's not theologically correct. He is, as we used to say in London, NQWWW.

Not quite what we want. You know what I mean, don't you? And yet, you see, he was the one who had compassion. And he, that compassion is something that drives you to action, you see.

And it forced him to cross the six or seven centuries of barriers, the theological barriers, the psychological barriers, the sociological barriers, and go and help this beaten up Jew.

And then the worst bit of this whole story, the most uncomfortable and the most dissatisfying thing about the whole story are the last four words. Go and do likewise.

Did you have to put that bit in, Lord? We're not here to make you feel guilty or dreadful, but I just want to ask you, do you remember the last time that the love of Christ compelled you to cross a barrier?

[16:39] You actually had to do something. It's very hard, isn't it, to do that kind of thing, to cross the barrier. Tom Cooper was telling me of a story where they set up some theological students in a seminary in the East.

The lecturer said, I want you to prepare for a television, for a three-minute television slot, something on the Good Samaritan. Go away and come back and come and do it.

And there were 30 people and 80 people in the class and they all had to come at sort of quarter-an-hour intervals. They had to walk to the TV place. And what another lecturer had done was to arrange for a student to be lying quite near the television studio so that as the theological students that were walking by to give their little talk on the Good Samaritan, there's a student would be lying there groaning, you know, going, oh, and all the rest of it.

And the staggering statistic is that only three out of 80 stopped because they all had to give, I'm sorry, I can't stop. I've got to be there on time. I've got to be there to give this thing to be filmed for TV.

Now, you might say, hang on, Stephen, you're missing the point of the story. The point of the story is that it's impossible. Isn't it? It's impossible. You're talking about a Samaritan reaching, it's impossible.

[18:07] So, of course, we can't keep the law and that's why we need to come to Christ for forgiveness. forgiveness. And I want to say that is true in part.

It is true in part. If I could sort of draw this, you have to imagine that I'm drawing this. Here's a person, he wants to keep the law, he finds that he can't do it.

He comes across something like the Good Samaritan or the Beatitudes in Matthew 5 and he says, I can't do this and it compels him to go to Christ.

He goes to Christ to the cross up here. He says he can't take this route to heaven. He has to go up here to the cross and say, Lord, I can't live this Christian life. I'm not a decent person. I cannot hope to keep your law and Christ says, I forgive you.

That is not the way to life. But then you ask the question, as a Christian, forgiven and saved by grace, Lord, I know the way to life, it's through you, but what is the way of life I should live?

[19:16] And he sends you back down to the law, to this law here. Love the Lord your God and love your neighbor as yourself. He sends you back to it. That's why it's still in our prayer books, you see. It hasn't been put away.

That's how he wants us to live. And I want to finish with an encouragement and a warning.

This is the encouragement. The Lord Jesus Christ understands that there is in all of us, especially even, well, even as Christians, a kind of hardening of the arteries.

You see, you become a Christian, you're really enthusiastic and you start to serve the Lord, and then after a while you get a bit tired and you take a break and you just sort of say, well, I just want to just take a rest now and then we take a rest perhaps for too long or whatever and it's hard to get back and it's hard to start to serve and give again and our hearts become hard.

I know this is true. It's true of me. And the Lord knows that and he is constantly trying to make our hearts supple and soft.

[20 : 33] Now, soften my heart, Lord, soften my heart. And that is why we get our awkward flatmate or the office bore that suddenly latches onto us or the difficult person in our home or whatever it is or the drunk that we've just unfortunately got to meet or who's come into our church or whatever.

And the Lord uses those situations to break down that crusty old heart. In one particular way he did that with Rachel and myself.

I don't like to use personal illustrations too many times but this is helpful, I think. In that after we'd become Christians we had we'd done quite well and then we sort of fell asleep a bit.

And then somebody came along and said, Steve, you can play the guitar. I said, yep. What do you want me to do? Concert? Something like that. Well actually I run a thing in a borsal which is a young offenders prison and I want you to come and I want you to go on this borsal this young offenders prison it's an open one without supervision for about three hours and I want you just to be with the troops you know, be with all these young lads.

And I thought you've got to be joking I don't want to do that. Fortunately this person had a marvellous way of persuading me I had to do it. And so Rachel and I oh gosh our prayer life changed drastically you know when you've got to go on to an open prison like that you know you really start to pray and God begins to give you a love for these people because you're doing it and you're kind of pushed into it and the person who ran that was a wonderful person you know I was worried about whether I would be patronising in this love and this person I thought would have been awfully patronising he had a plum English accent he was something out of the Raj in India really but he loved the troops he loved these lads and they loved him in the 18th century there was a preacher called George Whitefield and he used to say some terrible things to the people who listened to him but they said this about him that they couldn't hate a man who wept over their souls and of course if you need another example

[22 : 50] Christ is the good Samaritan he's the only one who's qualified to tell this story anyway he crossed the barrier between heaven and earth he saw we were wounded mortally and it did cost him his life and he wants you to be like that too he wants to give you the same heart but here's my warning just simply remember this the intention to do something is not equivalent to the action thinking about doing it is not the same as actually doing something psychologists have discovered that we're very good at saying alright especially at the end of a service like this Lord I'm going to do something about it but it never actually happens the Lord wants us to do something so I'm going to suggest that we start small one action this week that is crossing some kind of barrier for you and as you do that as you obey him in that

I believe his love will actually come to you that spagnance will come as you do that I talked about this being a most dissatisfying parable and my final very final sentence is this if you have a sense of dissatisfaction with your Christian life that you really are not loving as you ought to may I encourage you because that's a right feeling to have if you read Romans 8 23 sometime it'll tell you that we groan as we wait for the adoption of our bodies and that simply means that we know we aren't what we should be and so if you want to love more but you say Lord I'm dissatisfied I wish I could that's a sign that God's spirit is already at work in you and as you obey his word he will bring that through that obedience through so that spagnance will begin to flow and you'll cross the road and reach out and cross a barrier that you didn't dream you could do before

I think it would be nice to sing that chorus again that we had soften my heart and then David Knox is going to lead us in prayer we'll just sing it through once it's on the sheet number eight number eight we'll sing it through and then David will lead us in our prayers soften my heart Lord soften my heart from all indifference set me apart to feel your compassion to weep with your tears come soften my heart oh Lord soften my heart let us sit or kneel to pray remembering the sermon we ask that God would spare us whom he has redeemed by the shedding of the blood of Jesus for us so we pray

Lord we pray that you would deliver us from all sin and evil and from your wrath which is coming because of them and deliver us from everlasting damnation deliver us we pray from all spiritual blindness from pride, hypocrisy, envy, hatred, malice and uncharitable attitudes deliver us from all the deceit of the world from false doctrine, heresy from hardness of heart and contempt for others and for your word and commandment deliver us from dying unprepared deliver us Lord in times of trouble and also in times of prosperity and on the day of judgment bless and keep your people that we may all find our true vocation and ministry which is serving you and putting you first and seeking to do your will in everything give us grace we pray to listen to your word and to receive it gladly and to show forth the fruit of it in our lives increase our knowledge of scriptures Lord we pray give us a strong desire to read, mark, learn and inwardly digest the Bible enable us to discipline ourselves to set time aside to read it and to pray and increase and deepen our relationship with you through that and enable us to use the strength that the Holy Spirit gives to be effective witnesses in our community and we pray for our community for those in authority over us

Almighty God we humbly pray for all who hold public office in this land both federally and provincially that in all things they may be ordered in wisdom, righteousness and peace to the honour of your holy name and for the good of your church and people through Jesus Christ our Lord Amen Almighty God you alone work great marvels send down your spirit of saving grace on all Christians and especially we pray for our leaders especially in this church that they may truly please you pour upon them the continual dew of your blessing we ask this in Jesus name Amen

[30 : 12] Father we know that whatever we do without love is worth nothing so send your Holy Spirit and pour into our hearts your love the very bond of peace and virtue without which we are counted as dead in your sight and we pray that you would teach us the value of prayer Jesus prayed often and long and we know you like to bring about your purposes for this world through the prayers of us your faithful people our spirit is willing but our flesh is weak so we ask that you would strengthen us in this essential aspect of our Christian lives grant us a repentant attitude and release us from the slavery that we have to our sinful nature so that we might pray to you continually and we pray for those known to us and for those whom we met this evening we humbly pray for all sorts of people that you would be pleased to make your way known to them your saving power among all nations especially we pray for the welfare of your Christian church guide and govern it by your good spirit so that all who call themselves Christians may be led into the way of truth and hold the faith in unity of spirit in the bond of peace and righteousness of life and we ask you in your fatherly goodness to comfort all who are afflicted and distressed and relieve them according to their various needs giving them a patience in their sufferings and a happy result of all their afflictions and we ask this through Jesus Christ our Lord

Amen Almighty God you have promised to hear the petitions of those who ask in your son's name mercifully accept us who have now made our prayers to you and grant us those things which we have asked in faith according to your will through Jesus Christ our Lord Amen Shall we say the grace together?

The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ and the love of God and the fellowship of the Holy Spirit be with us all evermore Amen Amen Well do take your white sheets home and read the notes as they are there just one thing I'd like to emphasize again final call really we need singers especially male but not totally male if you know what I mean that's not quite the right thing to say is it?

Oh dear for the Palm Sunday music somebody help me out anyway Palm Sunday we're going to put on five or six pieces of music and there's no age limit to this so rehearsals begin on Monday February the 20th I feel a presence on my right rehearsals begin on Monday the 20th so if you can come to that please see Al Gillespie Al we just had to stand up there you are that's Al there if you'd like to come and sing this is the last call if you think that the rehearsal time is difficult then tell him now the presence the second paragraph says that points out that next Sunday night at this service the Archdeacon

Bill Stevens the rector of St. Mary's Keresdale will be here to duly induct Stephen James into the cure of souls in this parish so if you're a soul the weight of responsibility so no but it's it's Stephen's Stephen's institution into this new job here at St. John's and and it's just very important that we pray for Stephen and take our responsibility with him in the work of the ministry so it's important that you should be praying through the week for for that for the service next Sunday night and it's important that you all should be here special problem of course is that everybody here is going to Parksville probably next week and so you're going to have trouble getting back here on time so do remember that

[35 : 34] Parksville isn't over until you've got back here and seen Stephen James duly instituted into the parish so keep that in mind for next Sunday night thank you Rector now that's a look of love we will now close with a hymn that is a bit special to me because 388 the day thou gave us Lord is ended I hope you know this the special bit in it that I like very much is that every time our congregation in Norwich sang this just before we left they smiled at the beginning of verse 4 because it is true that as we begin our morning service so they began their evening service and so it as it were unites

Christians around the world that we're not alone we are all worshipping the Lord at different times but nevertheless the voice of praise is never silent we stand and sing 388 the day you gave us the Lord is ended the darkness paradise for you what fear has been in you craziest lap 20 in Father you prenyou

Scorpio acknowledge your payments our church and screaming, Father, O come, the interlight, the Lord who brought the marches gleaming and left the flower by day or night.

A cross be trod in heaven and night, a cross be come to another day, the voice of prayer is there and is silent, the tide does pray of great a pain.

Thus come the great of flesh is waking up and beneath the west's sky, and now thy heart precious thy name, your God must do it, blood of high.

[39 : 04] So be it, Lord, your throne shall never die, the death that passed away, to kingdom's hands that flow forever, fill all your creatures from your strength.

Amen. Amen. Amen. We remain standing for a final prayer.

We thank God for all the good things that he's given us, and pray that we might use this money to his glory.

And now may the God of peace, who brought again from the dead our Lord Jesus, the great shepherd of the sheep, by the blood of the eternal covenant, equip you with everything good, that you may do his will, working in you that which is pleasing in his sight, through Jesus Christ, to whom be glory forever and ever.

Amen. Amen. Amen. I know that David Knox would, in a spirit of love and compassion, urge you to go over to the Trendle Lounge for coffee.

[41 : 58] to his seat. To them perhaps to guide you up and achieve the yet, so the knight's son won trains in his recommendation to read, and he Intei, to return in their own way.

So as an angel Reichlles, he shallim great his diyor guys to run the party. Ask him in his specific He, the saying, Thank you.

Thank you.

Thank you.

Thank you.

[44 : 27] Thank you.

Thank you.