

DIY Religion

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[0 : 00] It's great to see so many familiar faces and a number of new faces as well. We do want to thank you for your partnership in the gospel across the Tasman.

Kiwis need your prayer. Sad Australians. But we do very much value keeping updated. We get the newsletters sent over every month or two. And we do hear of news that's going on in Chatswood. And occasionally people write letters and keep us in touch as well. So it's lovely to keep in touch and hear all those things. We do want to thank you for your prayers and partnership in the work of the gospel in Christ Church as well.

The work there is growing and developing. And next year someone who's been working with us is coming over to Sydney to study at Moore College. So the work really is progressing and we're starting to see ministry-minded people growing and being trained.

And God willing to return and further the work in New Zealand. So thank you for your prayers. Let's spend a moment praying as we look at God's word together now.

[1 : 07] Heavenly Father we do thank you for your word to us. We thank you that you are committed to us. That you're committed to continue to speak to us through your word.

Lord that you've given us your spirit so that we may understand your word rightly. We pray that you'd open our hearts and our minds. That you would challenge and convict us. Particularly what it means for us to follow Jesus.

And we pray that this might give honour and glory to your name. In Jesus' name we pray. Amen.

Not sure if there's a video call. What are you doing this weekend?

I'm putting up a retaining wall. Doing it yourself? No, I'm going to get some bloke in. Oh come on mate, do it yourself. She's pretty big job.

You'll be right. You reckon? We can knock it over in half a day. Yeah. Get a couple mates around. Hey Josie!

[2 : 08] Huh? Give us a hand over for job Saturday. Mate, you're dreaming! Aussies. No surprises there.

DIY. It's in our DNA. Well one thing about Aussies and Kiwis is they do like to have a bit of a go at each other.

And you can see there that it's not just sport. You get maligned on New Zealand TV as well. But one of the other similarities between Australians and Kiwis is their kind of DIY mentality.

You know, you can do it yourself. We like to think that we can do it ourselves. Not so long ago in New Zealand there were endless DIY reality TV shows. I take it there was probably a similar kind of surge of them here.

Where there'd be TV shows about home makeovers and renovations and you couldn't escape them. It seemed to be whatever channel you would turn to, these shows would be on.

[3 : 12] And it was quite painful really. I'm glad they've kind of got past that phase. But all of us seem to have this DIY attitude built into our DNA.

And I don't think it's just blokes with their kind of handyman jobs. You know, they like to build their own deck or put out their own fence or renovate their own bathroom. Which takes months usually. But I think it's more that we simply want our own independence. We want our own block of land. We want our own home. We want our own financial security.

We want our own career. And we may even think about working for ourselves so that we don't have to answer to anyone. Or perhaps for some of us it may be that we want to create our own image and manufacture ourselves.

And so we create our own identity on our Facebook page. Where we can present the way we would like people to see us to the world around us. Well this way of thinking easily creeps into our thinking

about God as well.

[4 : 16] We want to choose how we relate to God. You know, I want to do it on my terms. And we can easily see it in our friends.

It's easier to see the faults in our friends, isn't it, than in ourselves. When they say things like, Well, I like to think about God as... Or, I think God would let me into his heaven because, well, I'm a pretty good bloke.

Not like so-and-so down the road. But do we actually notice it in ourselves? It's easy to see the faults in others. But do we take a good look at ourselves?

Those times when we start to compare ourselves to other people. Thinking that we're better in some way. Or when we look down on someone. Wondering how they could possibly call themselves a Christian and talk like that.

Or act like that. And it's usually... We usually do that to make ourselves look better. You know, I don't talk like that.

[5 : 19] I don't act like that. Aren't I good? Well, here in this passage, in Luke's Gospel, we meet someone who has this kind of DIY thinking about God.

And here Jesus is confronted by DIY religion. Jesus is on his way to Jerusalem and he's teaching his disciples along the way about what it means to follow him.

When a religious lawyer, an expert in the law, he comes up to Jesus with a question. It's helpful if you've got your Bibles open in front of you. Look at verse 25 in this passage.

Luke chapter 10, verse 25. On one occasion, an expert in the law stood up to test Jesus. Teacher, he asked, what must I do to inherit eternal life?

And initially, it looks like a pretty good question, doesn't it? What must I do to inherit eternal life? It seems to be a good question because it picks up what Jesus has just been saying in the previous chapter of Luke's Gospel.

[6 : 28] I mean, this man has come to Jesus and he's asking Jesus how he should follow Jesus.

And we saw last week that the disciples, well, they haven't really understood what it means to follow Jesus.

They understand that Jesus is the Christ, that he's God's anointed king. But they've not understood Jesus' call to follow him by denying themselves, by taking up their cross and following him.

And so when this teacher of the law comes up to Jesus, we should find ourselves on the edge of our seats in anticipation when he asks, what must I do to inherit eternal life?

I mean, it's a pretty good question, isn't it? We want to know too, what's the secret? What's the secret to following Jesus? Can't you just imagine yourself asking the same question?

You see, we like things to be simple. We like shortcuts. You know, we all learn the back roads to miss the traffic, to miss those busy traffic lights or intersections. We always look for the shortest queue at the supermarket checkout.

[7 : 35] But have you noticed that the shortest queue always takes the longest? Whenever you get there, the other queues are always faster. Well, this guy is no different. He cuts to the chase and he says to Jesus, okay, Jesus, give it to me straight.

What do I have to do to get to heaven? Well, maybe it's just a bloke thing. You know, don't give me all the details. Don't bore me with the details. Just give me the bottom line.

What do I have to do? And Jesus knows this man is an expert in the law and so he throws the question straight back at him. Well, what do you think? Says Jesus.

So it's a great technique, isn't it? When you're having conversations with people, it's hard to get to know someone if you're conducting a monologue. It's good to ask questions and that's how you get to know someone. And so Jesus asks him a question back.

Well, you know your Bible, or the Old Testament at least at this point. And so Jesus asks him, so what do you think? Well, look at verses 26 to 28.

[8 : 37] What is written in the law, he replied. How do you read it? That's what Jesus says. And the guy answers, See, he seems to be spot on with his answer, doesn't he?

I mean, even Jesus confirms his answer and says, Well, do this and you will live. What must I do to inherit eternal life? Well, the answer is simple.

Love God and love your neighbor. But it does make you wonder, Well, if he knew the answer, why did he ask the question in the first place? Love God and love your neighbor.

That's the secret to life. That's the secret to life with God, eternal life. And the expert in the law seems to have it nailed in one. But then we're given a glimpse into the real reason why this guy is asking the question.

And Jesus opens up the religious expert's heart. He opens up his heart and exposes what's really there. You see, look at verse 29.

[9 : 51] But he wanted to justify himself. And so he asked Jesus, And who is my neighbor? He wanted to justify himself.

See, at this point, it seems that all that's come before, all that's already happened in this dialogue between Jesus and this expert in the law, it seems that it's all just a facade.

It seems that he was just trying to test Jesus to somehow catch Jesus out. That he wasn't really interested in Jesus' answer at all. In fact, if we were reading carefully, we would have noticed that back in verse 25.

Where he says, Luke tells us, On one occasion, an expert in the law stood up to test Jesus. To test Jesus.

He didn't really want to know the answer. He was trying to catch Jesus out. To show him up. Perhaps even to promote himself as someone who knows the law pretty well. And to do that at Jesus' expense.

[10 : 51] To make Jesus look silly and promote himself. Showing himself to be more knowledgeable. But Jesus calls his bluff and he turns the tables around on him and exposes his heart.

And so the expert in the law pushes further to justify himself. And perhaps even to get a second chance to test Jesus. And so he asks, Well, who is my neighbor then?

And Jesus replies with a story. It's a parable. It's a fairly familiar parable to many of us, isn't it? But as we read this parable, it's crucial that we understand who it is who is asking Jesus this question. For Jesus knows this man's heart. And so he tailor-makes this parable to challenge him, to hit him where he needs to be hit.

Now here this man is an expert in the law. And so as the story unfolds, we read of a man or hear of a man heading down from Jerusalem to Jericho and he's robbed and he's beaten and he's left half dead.

[11 : 57] And the first two characters we meet is a priest and a Levite. And what should we know about them? Well, they're both religious experts. They're both experts in the law.

Just like the man speaking to Jesus, these two men both know the law. But it appears they know the letter of the law but not the essence of the law. They've got knowledge but they don't have understanding.

They don't understand God's character. They don't have any mercy or compassion for those around them. You see, we're not told the exact reason why the priest and the Levite walk past this man just that they don't stop to help.

Although we are given a few hints in the direction. And so we are told that this man falls into the hands of robbers who strip him and beat him and leave him half dead.

And since the first two men knew the law of Moses, they knew what the consequences would be if they stopped and touched this man if he was dead. He's lying there half dead.

[13 : 02] They didn't perhaps know whether he was dead or alive and so they erred on the side of caution and decided not to get involved. If they had have touched an unclean body, a dead body, well, they would have to go through certain ceremonial rites and they would be unclean for seven days and it would be a lot of effort on the third and seventh day to go through cleansing kind of ceremonies.

And so it would have put them out to do that. And it doesn't seem the reason these men didn't stop to help was because they were on their way up to Jerusalem and they didn't want to be unclean and so not go to the temple.

That doesn't seem to be the reason because it appears that these men are actually coming from Jerusalem. I haven't been to Jerusalem but as my understanding is, Jerusalem's on a mountain. Jerusalem, hence Mount Zion and the road from Jerusalem winds its way down to Jericho and so you would head down from Jerusalem to Jericho. And that's the way Jesus describes this story. And so in verse 30, Jesus says, a man was going down from Jerusalem to Jericho. And we also read that the priest and the Levite do the same.

[14:20] In verse 31, a priest happened to be going down the same road. It seems that they're leaving Jerusalem and going on the road to Jericho. And so it's not that they've got the excuse of going to the temple that they don't want to be defiled.

It just seems an inconvenience. It's, and so they're not, it's not that they're worried that they won't be able to worship at the temple, but they still don't want to defile themselves by helping this man. See, these two religious people are proficient in the law, but they don't want to put themselves out to help someone in great need. And so you can imagine them even perhaps using God as an excuse not to help this man.

I need to say pure so I can serve God better. Perhaps it's piety that's got in the way. And so they fail to love their neighbor who is in desperate need.

But in doing so, they're failing to love God as well. See, it's not those two commands kind of a mutually exclusive that we love God or we love our neighbor and we can take either route.

[15:27] No, as we love God, we will act as God does to those around us. With mercy and compassion, we will love our neighbor. How can we experience God's love and fail to love those around us?

And so we're challenged as these people refuse to get involved. And then Jesus, well, he throws in a bit of a googly. Or if you're not into cricket, it's called a rongan, I think nowadays.

He brings in an unexpected character. And so enter stage left comes a Samaritan. Now there's no love lost in Jesus' day between the Jewish people and the Samaritans.

And so if you remember in John's Gospel as Jesus meets the woman at the well, the Samaritan woman at the well, John gives us a little editor's note to say that it was surprising because Jews don't associate with Samaritans.

And so the disciples probably wouldn't have thought twice about calling down fire from heaven on the village in chapter 9 that you looked at last week. You know, might have been doing God a bit of a favor to smite a Samaritan village.

[16:38] What would one village less be? And so it would have shocked Jesus' hearers that a Samaritan would be a hero of a story. It would be like, you know, a drug dealer being the hero of a story or a pimp or insert, someone that would kind of add shocking value.

It would be a surprise that a Samaritan would be the hero here in this story. And even the expert of the law who's stood up to test Jesus, he himself acknowledges that it's the Samaritan in the parable who is the one who acts rightly, who acts mercifully towards the half-dead man.

The Samaritan who is considered to be defiled by Jews, who's considered to be a half-caste Jew, he is the one who acts in a manner worthy of one who would inherit eternal life.

He acts in a manner of one who would inherit eternal life. And yet the religious experts in the law, the ones we think would be on the inside, they fail to act as one who would inherit eternal life.

See, the story seems to be upside down. Who is in and who is out, it's all back to front. Surely the religious guys, they should be in. But no, it's the Samaritan. How could the Samaritan get in and the Levite and the priest not?

[18:03] Jesus is clearly showing that it's not about position or status. It's not about titles or roles. Something else is going on here. This is no sentimental story that Jesus is telling us about, you know, about how we should be nice to our sister or be good to your mother.

Nor is it about being nice to those who are nice to you. You know, I'll only lend my lawnmower to the neighbour I like, not to the neighbour that I don't like. You see, Jesus is challenging the very way we view people and the way we judge people around us.

Who are the needy? Who can we act mercifully towards? Do we kind of judge people we look at and decide who we're going to get involved with and who not?

Who's going to be less effort? Who's more like us? See, it's interesting as I came up to St Paul's here on Friday afternoon, I caught the train here with the kids to pick up a car that someone from St Paul's was lending to us.

And I was walking up from Chatswood Station with my four children around me and there was a group of about seven or eight fifteen year olds they looked and they had bottles of beer and a cask of wine and they were drinking and carrying on filling in their school holidays no doubt.

[19:27] But I started to get a bit concerned about my children and I didn't really want them to be near this group of kids that looked like they were looking for some mischief to get up to and smashed a bottle and so I was quite concerned.

I kind of didn't really want anything to do with them particularly because I had my children with me. And I was saddened as I thought back on it and I thought isn't it interesting that I'm quite concerned about my kids whom I love and yet here are some needy teenagers here in Chatswood turning to alcohol to fulfil their felt needs kids and not even realising what their greater needs were. Kids who needed mercy and yet didn't even realise it and here I was stepping around them to go on my way. You see there's plenty of needy people throughout our community not just teenagers but people of all ages and stages people who are half dead people who are broken people who are without hope in this world yearning for something better. And that's what Jesus is challenging this expert in the law about where is his heart really at? How does he view people? Does he view people the way God does? With compassion with mercy? Or are we so busy we just go on our way? But Jesus isn't teaching Christian moralism here either as if the way to get to heaven is by being good enough. [21 : 08] You know you've got to be a good Samaritan to enough people to somehow earn God's favour. If you help enough people then surely God will let you into his heaven. You see that's confusing the two questions that the expert in the law is asking here.

You see the parable that Jesus tells here is in response to the question who is my neighbour? It's not the complete answer to what I must do to inherit eternal life. See we've already been told the answer to that question we're to love God and love our neighbour. We're to love God and love our neighbour and Jesus is just illustrating this point over here. We're to love God and love our neighbour. And so Jesus he turns the table on the expert in the law because the religious lawyer he's come up to test but instead it's Jesus who puts him to the test and tests his heart and his heart is exposed by Jesus and it's found to be rock hard lacking compassion.

This man probably did well at Sunday school as a boy but he's failed to understand the purpose of the law. I mean he probably would have considered himself as someone who loves God but Jesus is showing him that if he can't do the easier thing of loving his neighbour then how is he possibly going to succeed in the more difficult thing of loving God with all his heart with all his soul with all his strength with all his mind surely it would be easier to help a half dead man than to love God in that way and if he's missed the mark by so much when it comes to loving his neighbour how has he gone when it comes to loving God surely it's impossible to meet such a requirement and I think the challenge is there for us if we are struggling to love our neighbour how are we going in our commitment to

[23 : 17] God to love God to that extent with all our heart with all our soul with all our strength with all our mind it's a pretty big ask isn't it and if we're honest with ourselves we feel the same burden you know I know that I don't love my neighbour to the extent that Jesus is challenging me here and it doesn't take too long to look at myself to realize well I fall way short in my love of God with all my heart soul strength mind and it's not just a matter of coming along to church here on Sundays to get a bit of a pep talk to keep us going for the coming week so that we can try and do better we can be nicer to more people we can be more committed to God this week perhaps and ironically the answer lies on the lips of the one who initially came to test Jesus you see Luke's very clever in the way he presents this account the initial question that the expert in the law asks

Jesus was what must I do to inherit eternal life it's a strange question really isn't it I mean what can you do to inherit something well nothing in fact it's what the other person does that entitles us comes through the death of the person from whom you inherit and so what must I do to inherit eternal life it's a strange question what are we to do we're to follow the one who has his face resolutely set towards Jerusalem we're to trust in the one who has his sights firmly fixed on the cross that lies ahead of him we're to follow the one who is going to lay down his life so that those who trust in him can inherit eternal life see it's not what we do that allows us to inherit eternal life it is the one we follow who earns life for us through his death and resurrection and so Jesus challenges the religious expert to act mercifully to those around him and he exposes his own heart when it comes to his neighbor but also I think when it comes to God but Jesus isn't asking this guy to do something that Jesus himself is not doing so here in these chapters of Luke we started last week looking at Jesus journey to Jerusalem he's heading to Jerusalem to suffer to be rejected he's heading to the cross where Jesus will act mercifully towards us by taking God's wrath upon himself the wrath that we rightly deserve and as we follow Jesus we act towards those around us towards our neighbors in the same way that God acts towards us in his son Jesus with mercy it's

interesting that this parable has become known as the parable of the good Samaritan because as you read through the passage doesn't even mention the word good in the whole passage I don't know if you've noticed that it's unhelpful having headings in your Bible isn't it he should have been called the merciful Samaritan he acts mercifully he acts as God acts towards us we are to love our neighbor in the way that God has shown his love for us greater love has no man than to lay down his point in Luke Jesus is heading to Jerusalem and is calling his disciples to take up their cross and follow him it's not going to be an easy road and here we sit on the other side of Jesus death and resurrection we can look back and see and understand Jesus death and resurrection in the way the disciples couldn't so we should understand more clearly shouldn't we how we should follow Jesus that we should take up our cross and follow him it is the same path that we will take until

Jesus returns to take up our cross and to follow him but we can't do it ourselves can we this isn't DIY religion there's nothing we can do to inherit eternal life except follow Jesus loving God with all our heart with all our soul with all our strength and with all our mind and loving our neighbour just as God does with compassion and with mercy with a desire to care for them and to see them following Jesus and inheriting eternal life and so Jesus has his face resolutely set towards this goal towards laying his life down so that we might gain life what is your heart resolutely set on set on following Jesus whatever the cost set on loving those around you acting mercifully towards them dealing with their needs dealing with their greatest need of knowing

[28 : 45] God and following Jesus themselves well let's pray that God would open our eyes to see those around us who need his mercy and particularly need to hear about what it means and what it looks like to follow Jesus so let's pray and ask God to help us do that heavenly father we do thank you we thank you that you do challenge us that you do rebuke us even though it hurts we pray that you give us eyes to see those around us to see those around us that we need to act mercifully towards people who are broken people who are half dead people who reject you give us the words to say give us the opportunity to say them help us to care for people and have concern for people that we would love them that we would have compassion on them that we would act mercifully towards them and we pray that through this that your name would be glorified and that people would know what it looks like to follow

Jesus and we pray this in Jesus name Amen