

Won't You Be My Neighbor?

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[0 : 01] Today we are talking about the parable of the Good Samaritan. A very familiar story and something that all 50 states and the District of Columbia have laws on the books that are named after this particular story.

Good Samaritan laws are found and sometimes we lament when we see and because of the modern age in which we live, we see people with their phones that are taking video of crime. Instead of helping the victim of the crime, just sitting there watching them get beat up or mugged or robbed or whatever it is or sometimes murdered, like was the case of Irina Zarutka a few weeks back in North Carolina.

People just going on their way and not noticing, not wanting to notice, not wanting to step in. But the Good Samaritan laws, I did some research on this because I wasn't real sure what the laws were meant to do.

And there's actually a few versions of this. And you can find different places online that will explain what Good Samaritan laws are. But you can see, for instance, all these states that are shaded in red have Good Samaritan laws in place that protect you from liability.

[1 : 35] If you see someone choking, if you see someone suffering from a heart attack or not breathing or whatever it is, and you want to intervene, you want to help that person, and something goes awry, they can't then come back and sue you because you didn't do a good enough job in helping them.

So that's one aspect of Good Samaritan laws, and those kinds of laws make perfect sense and are needed. Then there's another one. If you find a child or a pet in a car that's parked in the heat and you are protected from liability if you need to break a window to get into that vehicle and rescue that child.

So that is interesting. For instance, here in the state of Michigan, we don't have that law, but apparently it's been proposed. I don't know what that means, how old this map is.

Maybe it has passed. I don't know. And then also Good Samaritan laws considering in the realm of fatal overdose prevention. When someone has shot up with heroin, for instance, and they realize that things are not going well, and so they call 911, they are protected from prosecution, depending on the law of any given state.

For them to be rescued, then they wouldn't be prosecuted for the drugs that they would have. So interesting, interesting combination of Good Samaritan laws.

[3 : 12] Now, this story is one that is very familiar. If I were to ask you to raise your hand, are you familiar with the story of the Good Samaritan?

I would think that many of you would raise your hand and say, yes, I know that story. And perhaps the temptation would be for you to check out. Because I've heard that story.

So I can get an app, or I can read something else, or I can flip through my phone discreetly. And I don't necessarily have to pay that close of attention to this story because I know it.

I know what the lesson is. I know what the application is. I know the outcome of the story. I'm not going to be sharing anything. Well, maybe if you're not familiar with the story today, then today's a great day for you to be in church because you're going to hear the story of the Good Samaritan. And I'm hoping that you're going to hear this story in a way that many of the other people in the room have not heard it. And so that's my challenge for you. One is I'd like for you as your pastor, I think I've been here for 25 years, humor me.

[4 : 29] Follow along with the story. At least pretend that you're following along as we make our way through the story. And I'm hoping to share it with you. I want to modernize the story a little bit, bring it up to our day and age, maybe a modern setting here in the United States, and see kind of

maybe a little bit more application for us in that way.

But I want to go ahead and dive into this story. It's amazing to me that all of these Good Samaritan laws are on the books now simply because of a conversation that happened between Jesus and a lawyer.

Now, lawyers in Jerusalem or in Israel during this time were probably a little different than what we normally think of. These were experts in the Old Testament law.

And that was the law by which they lived. So it would make sense that going to courts and so forth, that you would need someone who was an expert in the law in order to do that.

And so this expert in the law, this lawyer, comes to Jesus with a question. And we need to discover, first of all, is he sincere in asking the question?

[5 : 43] We have two clues that let us know that this lawyer is not sincere in asking the question. We see that right off the bat. Well, I just skipped it.

Here we go. Behold, a lawyer stood up to put him to the test. That's clue number one that lets you know he's not real interested in a sincere answer here.

He's wanting to put Jesus to the test. He's wanting for Jesus to dig himself a hole. He's wanting for Jesus to say something that's a little off kilter. That's the goal of this conversation.

And he says, Teacher, what shall I do to inherit eternal life? Another way of asking this question is, how good do I have to be to obtain eternal life?

Just how good is it? How obedient to the law do I have to be to inherit eternal life? And in typical Jesus fashion, he answers his question with another question.

[6 : 46] So here we go. He said to him, What is written in the law? The guy is a lawyer. He would know. Right? How do you read it?

Jesus knows this man's heart. He knows he's not sincere. And so he's asking him, he's turning the question back onto himself and asking him, What do you think is the answer to that question? How good do you have to be? And by the way, this is a typical question for people today. Even people who aren't Christians, they might even be thinking along the lines of, Well, I'm a good enough person.

Boy, that kind of thinking permeates our society in a big way and has for a long time. How good does a person have to be? And most people think that when I get to the end of my life and I stand before God, whoever that might be, I'm just going to kind of weigh my good against my bad. And as long as my good outweighs my bad, I'm okay. And I'm not a murderer. I help people out. I don't cuss too much.

[8 : 01] I don't, you know, I'm okay. I'm pretty good. Especially when we pick out people that we would compare ourselves to, right? Because we're careful about who we're going to compare ourselves to.

The guy over here laying in the gutter, you know, who's drunk and down on his luck and all of that kind of stuff, I'm doing pretty good. But, you know, maybe that religious person over there, I'm not so good.

So we're careful about who we want to compare ourselves to. So Jesus says, okay, how do you read it? And he answered, you should love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your strength and with all your mind and your neighbor as yourself.

Now, this guy's very clever. He takes two very familiar Old Testament passages. Matter of fact, certain sects of Jews today will even wear these little boxes either on their wrist or sometimes on their forehead.

And inside there are passages of Scripture that they want to build their life on. And these two passages are often a part of their little equipment when they go out for the day.

[9 : 12] And so the first one is from Deuteronomy chapter 6, to love the Lord your God basically with everything that's in you. And then the second one comes from Leviticus 19, to love your neighbor as yourself.

And we know from other parts of other Gospels that Jesus would answer the question, what's the most important law on the books? And the answer, again, boils down to these two.

So the guy's on track, right? The guy seems to, on the surface, get it. He doesn't really. And we know that because of how Jesus follows this up.

So, love God, love your neighbor. Pause. How you guys doing with this? How you guys doing? Love God, love your neighbor.

Love God with everything that is in you. How many of you are? I got that one nailed down. And love your neighbor as yourself.

[10:16] Are we, are we, how we doing? Everyone. This is the point that Jesus is wanting to drive home. But because of the heart of this man, that's not where he's going with it.

So Jesus replies, you've answered correctly. You get the star for the day. You get the A plus on the, on the exam. I mean, this is, this is pretty cool.

You're, you're doing well. Do it. Just, just go and do it. And, and you will live. How you doing?

If this is really the message of the gospel, we're in trouble. This is not good news. Because how many of us have passed the test, not in terms of head knowledge, but in actually living it out?

How obedient are you, or have you been to all of the law, summed up with these two phrases, love God, love your neighbor?

[11:22] Because the demand is perfection. We'll see that later. The demand is be perfect as God is perfect. Last I checked, I don't think any of us, I know none of us qualify.

So, he's uncomfortable. The lawyer is uncomfortable now. And, and, and he wants to, what do I do with this? What do I say?

What's my comeback to this? Because I still want to justify. I want, I want to be able to say that I love God with everything that is in me. And, and that I love my neighbor as myself.

And, and matter of fact, if you would go knock on my neighbor's doors, they would tell you, oh yeah, he's a great guy. All of that. And so the question is, how much? How much do I need?

How good is good enough? And, and he, desiring to justify himself. Oh, oh.

[12:28] That's not ever a good place to be. Desiring to justify myself. I can't, you can't ever justify yourself.

And so what he's doing, and, and, and again, desiring to justify himself. Youth group, pay attention. He's trying to give an apologetic that says, I'm justified in the way that I live my life.

We've, we've used that word apologetic at youth group. Who is my neighbor? So he says to Jesus, because he wants to, he wants to see how he measures up.

So he's asking the question, who is my neighbor? Because the, the, the, the Pharisees, the priests, the, the rabbis, they have all weighed in on that question of who is my neighbor.

And they all have given varied answers, but basically have come down on a similar line. Like, for instance, I'm going to quote from a rabbi that, that lived about a hundred years before Christ.

[13:31] And, and he taught his disciples this way. He said, if you do good, know to whom you do it. Give to the devout, but do not help the sinner.

Hold back their bread and do not give it to them. Only give it to those who do good. Love your neighbor as yourself.

So my neighbor is, very common viewpoint. My neighbor, our fellow Jews who believe like we do. We have the same ethnicity.

We, we, we, we go to the same synagogue. Perhaps we, we, we, we all are from the same nation, the same heritage. We, we all strive to, to serve God, to be obedient to the law.

If I am good to my neighbor, my fellow Jews, I'm doing, I'm doing good. I'm being obedient to this law. So then I can exclude anyone who is not Jewish.

[14:36] Gentiles, pagans, people who aren't serving God, people who are down on their luck, people who are in the gutter, people, whatever. However, these people are, if they're down, it's because they've done something wrong and God is judging them.

So I'm not going to intervene and help them in any way and take away God's judgment, what God is wanting to accomplish in that person's life. So I don't have to be nice.

I can treat them with, with hatred or evil because they're not my neighbor. Okay. That, that's kind of how they thought.

And so this guy is wanting to hear what Jesus has to say about answering the question, who is my neighbor? Who is my neighbor?

And at that point we get a story. Jesus tells the story. Again, it's a story that you're very familiar with, but we're going to go through and, and see if maybe there's some information here, some stuff about this story.

[15:39] Maybe you've not heard before and, and maybe contemporize it a little bit. So Jesus replied, and here's the story. A man who was going down from Jerusalem to Jericho.

So who is this man? And as you can see on your notes, we're going to actually dive into each of these characters. And, and see who they are.

So a man, not a lot of information about who this man was. We don't know if he's Jewish or Gentile or if what his skin color was.

We don't know what his language was. We don't know really anything about him. The assumption would have been that he was a fellow Jew because this is Jesus, a Jew telling a story to a Jewish audience.

They would have assumed this, just this man is a Jew, but Jesus doesn't, doesn't tell us here. So on your first fill in the blank there on your notes, bringing this story into our modern world, then this man basically represents anyone, anyone.

[16:47] Well, Jesus, tell me more about him. No. He's going to be purposefully obscure. He's not going to tell us anything about him.

He kept this man's identity as obscure as possible on purpose. Because the victim of this crime is not someone that we need to know anything about.

We just know that this is a man, not a woman. It wouldn't have been normal for a woman to travel alone from Jerusalem to Jericho.

Matter of fact, this road from Jerusalem to Jericho, notice it says that he was going down. That's in elevation, not as in he's going south.

Jericho is actually a little bit just due east. Jericho is due east of Jerusalem. But it's all downhill. And it's all winding, rocky path, caves, hidden places where robbers and bandits could hide.

[17:56] And actually this 17-mile stretch of road, that's all it was, was famously called the Road of Blood or the Bloody Road.

Because it was known, it was infamous for being a place where robbers and bandits would hijack people and take what they had.

And in many cases spill their blood or kill them along the way. And so it would have been normal for people in that day and age to travel in groups.

That's how you countered that. You just traveled in a big enough group so that bandits would stay away from you. They were going to be looking for easy targets. And that's what they did.

And so as Jesus is giving this story, he starts off with an unidentified man who fell among robbers, who stripped him and beat him and departed, leaving him half dead.

[18:57] So let's find out about who these robbers are on your notes. The word robbers here simply means robbers. And matter of fact, if you look it up in the Greek, it just meant robbers.

That's preacher humor. It's bad. So he's fallen victim.

He's half dead. He's bloodied. He's beaten. He's robbed. Laying there on the side of the road. So far, the audience is, the people who are hearing Jesus tell this story, none of this is surprising to them.

Right? Because if you travel on the road from Jerusalem to Jericho, it's a normal occurrence. It's a problem. And it's not been dealt with.

It's just what happens. Now by chance, Jesus says. This is interesting too, because some people would, is there such a thing as chance or luck?

[20:13] Or is everything ordained by God? Well, Jesus said by chance. Now it's a parable. I'm just having fun with you. A priest comes by going down that road.

A priest shows up. And in the ears and in the minds of his listeners, they would have thought, okay, he represents, this priest now represents one of the best of us.

So he's going to come to the rescue of this man, this unidentified man in the story. It's just going to happen. And it would not have been unusual for a priest to be traveling by himself on this road for a couple of reasons.

Jericho was the city outside of Jerusalem where most priests, if they didn't live in Jerusalem, they lived in Jericho, 17 miles away.

And what they would do is they would take turns having a tour of service in the temple. And then when they were done with that tour, they would just head back home and hang out in Jericho.

[21:31] Jericho had been kind of rebuilt by Herod. And he had kind of a resort castle there, complete with a pool. And I mean, it was pretty nice. And so Jericho became known for that kind of a setting.

And you had a bunch of priests and a bunch of Levites who lived there in Jericho. And then when it was their turn to serve in the temple, they would travel back and forth.

And robbers and bandits would generally leave priests alone just because they represented God.

And that would be not good for them to rob someone who represented God.

And so for the most part, they were kind of left alone. Now, who would if we were to try to modernize this priest to our day and age?

Let's say it was a pastor or an elder. So where's Tom? Tom nowhere. There he is. And then Jeff. Jeff McVanel is one of our elders.

[22 : 38] Tom is. And then me. We're the bums in the story, guys. It's fitting. All we're interested in is getting done with the service and heading home and filling our bellies and turning on the Lions game.

That's all we want to do, right? Am I wrong with that? I mean, it's just on my way home. I'm going to kick my feet up and have some food, have some relaxation, watch the Lions win.

That's different. That's different. So this man, at least in the eyes of the hearers of this story, they would have considered the priest as someone who represented the height of devotion to God.

And some people in congregations today kind of have that view of pastors, although I would say it's probably not the most accurate view.

I mean, I would say that pastors are like the rest of us, right? We have to pull our pants on one leg at a time. We struggle with sin.

[24 : 00] We struggle with a thought life. We struggle to pray. We be consistent in the way that we live our lives. We have the same struggles.

And I think, would it be a surprise that when we get around the throne of God and God is handing out rewards, that pastors wouldn't necessarily be at the front of the line?

I don't think they will be. I think there's a lot of other faithful people. Now, hopefully, pastors are faithful. Elders are faithful in that way.

But this is what they thought they were getting. They thought they were getting somebody who, you know, represented God well. So this priest, when he saw this half-dead man on the road, passed by on the other side.

And the way that this is written, the tense of these verbs means he didn't really even stop to take a look. He just, you know how it is.

[25 : 01] You're walking down the road and you see somebody slumped over on the side of the road that you're walking on. And it's like, oh, I don't want to deal with that.

So I cross over on the other side and keep going without even getting a good look. Would he just assume that the man was dead?

Possibly. He could have assumed that. Possibly it's just he doesn't want to make himself ceremonially unclean. It could simply come down to something like that, that religious mindset that says, well, if I come into contact with a dead body, if I come into contact with somebody who's suffering in blood and I get that on me, I'm going to be unclean.

I'm going to have to basically quarantine for a week before I can go and wash and present myself again to the synagogue or the temple and make myself clean again, declare myself clean.

I don't want to have to do that. I'm a priest. I have stuff to do. I'm busy. I'm important. So right on by.

[26 : 16] Now, another fellow comes in and this is a Levite. Now, a Levite, Levites also served in the temple, but not as priests.

Priests were descendants of Aaron of the tribe of Levi and Levites were descendants of Levi, but not of the line of Aaron.

And they served basically as the priest's assistants in the temple duties. So they also would travel to the temple and have tours of duty and so forth along with that.

So to contemporize this, a Levite would represent a deacon. Where are my deacons? Where are the deacons at in the room? Raise your hand.

And you're like, no, I don't want to do that. And so, yeah, you guys aren't any better than us either. Actually, they are.

[27 : 20] In our context, they are. So these guys were considered like assistants and willing to get their hands dirty, willing to get their hands calloused, willing to do manual labor, willing to work.

And perhaps even that's what the priest was thinking. Maybe the priest is thinking, well, I know a Levite is coming in behind me. He'll take care of this. Could have been the assumption.

We don't know. Jesus doesn't tell us. This is not a story that actually happened. It's a parable. Parable is not something that actually happened. And it's a fantastic story meant to teach one point. So here we go. When he came to the place and saw him. Now, again, the tense of the way that this is written, the priest didn't come to the place where the guy was.

He just automatically scooted on by. This guy actually walks up to the guy and looks at him. And I don't know how long he deliberated.

[28 : 25] I'm just imagining that, you know, he just stopped at the Wesco and got a Snickers. And he's over there. Nah. And he moves on.

He just, he more closely examines it. But, again, he's like, well, I don't, this is too much for me. Again, we're not even told why.

We're not even told what the motive is. Is he afraid of other robbers? Is he just thinking the guy's too far gone? Assumes he's dead? Or he's just not interested or doesn't care?

Too busy? Whatever it might be, we find that he passed by on the other side as well. Now, at this point in the story, put yourself in the audience, the group of people who are hearing Jesus tell this story.

Okay? They're probably thinking, okay, Jesus, where are you going with this? Because there's a guy on the side of the road who's half dead, and you're telling me that one of our best, a priest, just walked on by, and you're telling me that another one of our best, a Levite, just looked at it and walked on by.

[29 : 39] What are you going to do with this, Jesus? Where are you going with this? Now, if people had traveled with Jesus up to this point and had heard some of his other stories or seen him with some other interactions, they might have had a little bit of a clue of where Jesus was going with this.

Maybe you do, as you sat through, many of you, portions of the Gospel of Luke, and you kind of know where Jesus is going with this.

But Jesus is about to introduce a new character. And they would have assumed, all right, if it's not a priest who's going to come to the rescue, and if it's not a Levite who's going to come to the rescue, and so perhaps in their minds, maybe it's just kind of a generic, a really good Jew.

Has to be, right? And it's like, okay, wait a minute now. Jesus likes the everyday man, right? He's got a collection of fishermen who are traveling with him, who are disciples, and maybe a fisherman is going to be the one who comes to the rescue, and Jesus is going to highlight the everyday man like me.

And Jesus is going to make a hero out of somebody like me. And so maybe they thought, fisherman is going to come along the road and rescue this guy.

[31 : 10] Okay. But, is that what happens? No. Jesus says, but a Samaritan.

A Samaritan. Last week we talked about how the music goes dark, right? At this point, the music is like, all of a sudden, lighthearted, and a Samaritan.

Uh-uh-uh. All right, Jesus, I didn't see this coming, but good on you, because now you're bringing the bad guy back into the picture.

So was this guy, the Samaritan, was he like the original robber, and he's coming back to finish the job? Or is he like a super really bad guy, coming back to see if there's anything left over that he can take and finish the guy off?

That's why Jesus is bringing up. So Samaritans, in their mind, were the really bad, really bad guys.

[32 : 25] So to modernize this, but a Buckeye. Now, I don't know if you know how much it pains me to write this, seeing as I'm a Buckeye.

There you go. I-O. Ooh. Ooh. I'm going to be found half dead on the side of the road. Let me tell you a little bit about Samaritans and where they came from.

Old Testament history, this might be the part of the sermon where your eyes start to gloss over and toothpicks holding your eyes. Stick with me.

It's worthwhile. Old Testament history, the nation of Israel, after David was king and then his son Solomon was king, they fought, his descendants fought over the kingdom and the kingdom split in two, into a very creative name group, the northern kingdom and the southern kingdom.

And the northern kingdom was known as Israel and the southern kingdom was known as Judah and Jerusalem was the capital city and Bethel would have been the capital or at least the religious capital of the northern kingdom.

[34 : 13] So you had the separation of these two tribes. Now the northern kingdom went into corruption and idolatry and just going away from everything that God stood for and wanted them how they should live.

They just went away from that even more quickly than the southern kingdom did. And as a result of that, one of the nations to the north, what was known as Assyria, and you see this play out in some of the Old Testament prophets, in particular, one guy Jonah, right?

You're familiar with Jonah? He's the one who gets swallowed up by a large fish and then spit out. And why is he swallowed up that way? Because he doesn't want to go where God told him to go and preach.

And that city that he told him to go to was Nineveh, which was the capital of Assyria. Now, Jonah didn't want them to go there because his mindset was these are pagan people who hate God and I don't want them to repent and my God is merciful and he's going to have mercy on them if they respond to this message.

And I don't want that to happen. I want them to get what they got coming. So he runs and then God has to, you know, bring him back to heal and he goes into Nineveh and he preaches and that's exactly what happens.

[35 : 41] But one of the other things that perhaps is in play here that maybe Jonah thought, we don't know, but it makes sense, that if Nineveh repented, Nineveh and Assyria would become a stronger and more prosperous nation in the same way that if America repented and returned back to God, that we too would become a stronger and more prosperous.

It makes sense, doesn't it? It fits. And that's exactly what happened to Nineveh, to Assyria. They eventually, fighting with Egypt and Babylon, Egypt to the south and west, Babylon to the south of Assyria there, Babylon would be like modern day Iraq, Persia, which was also one of the powers, modern day Iran, Assyria, modern day Syria sort of.

Assyria was bigger. If you want to, the relationship between Assyria and Syria, it's confusing. Syria is the smaller nation that we have today that came into being in the 1940s.

The Assyria would be like greater Syria, larger territory, more people groups where Syria is. So eventually, Assyria conquered the northern kingdom and they were experts at taking the nation that they just captured, they would take oh, 30,000 people and move them forcibly to their land and incorporate them into society.

This is what they were experts at. And then they would take people of other conquered nations but pagans and drop them into the northern kingdom right in the territory of where Samaria is located.

[37 : 52] And what would happen if you take oh, we got 30,000 people left over who are Jews and we got another 30,000 who just got dropped in who are not Jews, they're Gentiles, they're pagans, they worship multiple gods, they have heathen practices, I mean it's terrible.

What's going to happen here? Well, what's going to happen is in a couple of generations, you're going to have one guy, let's call him Joey, good Jewish boy who's growing up and he's passed his puberty years and he's a young man now and goes to the well one day and he sees a young lady there by the name of Ophelia from a pagan family.

he don't care, he's smitten, he's looking at her and thinking, oh, I want her.

So he approaches this young lady and says, hey, why don't we get together and she's like, well, yeah, but I serve three gods and you only serve one god.

He's like, that's okay, now we'll have four gods. I guarantee you this is how it happened. And over time, the two populations intermingled, intermarried, had children, these children were half Jewish, half Gentile, and worshipped pagan gods, sacrificed to idols, sometimes even sacrificed children to those idols, and did all of these detestable things, so that by the time we get to the time of Christ and he's telling this story, you had a group of Samaritans basically living in between the southern kingdom and in the north in Galilee, so that if a good Jewish person is going to travel from Jerusalem up into Galilee, they don't cut through Samaria because that's Samaritan territory, and God forbid we come into contact with

[39 : 58] Samaritans, we'll be unclean, and we'll be terrible, and I don't want to talk to them, and I hate them, they're half-breeds, they're dogs, that's how they treated each other, it was mutual, and so now Jesus is introducing a Samaritan character into this story, must be a villain, must be someone who is not, so bravo Jesus, we didn't see that one coming, it's an interesting story, it's an interesting twist here, where are you going with this?

Because it better turn at some point, right, it's got to stop this, so again, when Jesus brought up the Samaritan, and as he journeyed, came to where he was, the man who was beaten, and when he saw him, in their minds, Jesus' next words were, finished him off, that's what they would have anticipated, notice the RPV, this is Rich's Perverse version, it's not what Jesus said, it wasn't the text, he had compassion, on him, and at this point, they're ready to rise up, they're ready, Jesus, you're in Israel, what are you doing, making a Samaritan the hero of your story, what are you doing, what are you getting at, as if a

Buckeye could ever do anything good, good, so the Samaritan goes, and he went to him, and bound up his wounds, pouring oil and wine on them, the oil would be to soothe, the wine would be to disinfect, because of the alcohol, this was typical treatment back then, set him on his own animal, and brought him to an inn, and took care of him, spent the night with him, nursed his wounds, this is really the hero of the story, and the next day, he took out two denarii, which is a couple of days wages, it's more than that, I'm getting that mixed up with another coin, it's enough to pay for this guy's room and board for over a month, and he gave it to the innkeeper, and he says to the innkeeper, take care of him, and whatever more you spend,

I will repay you when I come back, it would be like the equivalent of us leaving our visa card with the hotel, this man must have been a customer of the innkeeper, knew him, knew his reputation, was willing to say, yeah, I'll take care of him, and if you go over that expense, I'll pay him back, he was good for it, the innkeeper knew that, here's what sometimes we miss in this story, in this story, there is a character who is a type of Christ, who is a picture of Christ, and it's the Samaritan, the Samaritan who comes to the poor, lost, sinner, who is dead already in his trespasses and sins, picks him up, rescues him, saved, rescued, it's the same word in Greek, rescues him, restores him, tells him, I'm coming back again, a Samaritan?

[44 : 34] Do we like that? Are we okay with that? So then Jesus, having finished his story, says to the lawyer, which of these three do you think proved to be a neighbor to the man who fell among the robbers?

And the guy, he can't say the S word. Can't do it.

Can't, I mean, the easiest answer, it's just one word, the Samaritan. He can't say it, so he's got to say the one who showed him mercy. And Jesus said to him again, go love God, go love your neighbor.

Is that how a person is saved? No. We're saved because we recognize that we can't. That we've tried and failed.

We can never be good enough. We could never earn it. We could never be in a place of deserving God's grace. But it's only because of his grace, it's only because of his mercy that he rescues us and saves us.

[45 : 58] that's the point of the story. But again, he knows this man's heart. He knows where he's coming from.

So who is then on your notes the Samaritan? It's not a Buckeye. Could be. It's anyone I don't like. anyone I don't like. Got any people you don't like? I imagine we could probably sit around in a circle and share stories about the people that we don't like.

Right? Anyone I don't like. And that could be based on a couple of different things. One is the first could be based on immutable characteristics.

Now the word immutable here, it just means they can't be changed. Like a person's heritage, where they grew up, their skin color, they're immutable.

[47 : 12] They can't be moved. Right? I can't all of a sudden become a different skin color. I can't be any different than what family I was born into. I didn't choose it.

I can't change it. It's just and yet we have people in our world today who would hate someone based on an immutable characteristic because of a skin color, because of what nationality they are, because of what language they speak.

how can I hate someone when they can't change the very thing I hate about them? That's one area, people that we potentially could hate.

Another one, someone I don't like based on, I'll say it this way, hated lifestyle choices.

okay? They're making lifestyle choices that the scriptures would say God hates and that we would appropriately say we hate these certain lifestyle choices.

[48 : 30] It doesn't mean that we hate the person. no, we would want to share with them the gospel of Jesus Christ and rescue them from these destructive choices that they've made.

But sometimes we can say well a person, let's open up a can of worms shall we? Here's some worms, toss them into someone who votes differently than I do. someone whose sexuality is different than mine. These are choices that people make and we can decide to hate someone based on those choices and I would say that is not what we're called to do. That's us being in the place of the lawyer. That's us being in place of the rabbis who were teaching, oh no, no, no, you only have to be a neighbor to someone who's like you, someone who looks like you, someone who sounds like you, someone who lives the same way that you do, values the same things that you do.

You don't have to be neighborly to someone that you would despise. Maybe for something that they can't change about themselves or because of choices that they make in the way that they live.

[50 : 01] What is our response? You could say the same thing about this Samaritan. You could say both things about him. He couldn't change the circumstances of his own birth.

He was born half Jewish, half Gentile. And yet at the same time, Samaritans, also many of them, made lifestyle choices that would say, hey, let's go to the temple and sacrifice to a pagan idol. And let's treat our sexuality like however we want to treat it. And let's just live however we want to live and do all these pagan things and worship pagan gods.

Those choices that people make. Sometimes they're brought up with it, but it's still a choice. So how do we view that?

And I want to remind us of another passage of scripture that tells us exactly, it's the same discussion about neighbors. Who is my neighbor?

[51 : 06] Matthew 5, 43. This is on the Sermon on the Mount. And Jesus is going along and he's saying, you've heard it said, but I tell you this. You've heard it said, but I tell you this.

You've heard that it was said, you shall love your neighbor and hate your enemy. because the rabbis would have taught that your neighbor is literally your neighbor, someone who looks like you, sounds like you, makes the same lifestyle choices.

That's your neighbor. Anyone who doesn't fit that category then is your enemy. And you can hate them. That's what the rabbis taught. That's what the Jewish leaders taught.

Love your neighbor, hate your enemy. You've heard that it was said. It's because that's what they taught. But I say to you, ouch, love your enemies.

This is what we're called to. Love your enemies. Pray for those who persecute you so that you may be sons of your father who is in heaven.

[52 : 12] Do I want to be a son of my father who is in heaven? Do you want to be a child of God? Yeah.

I mean, why are you sitting here if you don't want to be that? If you want to be that, Jesus said this is kingdom values. This is what it looks like that we would express love for the people who hate us. That we would consider enemies. People who are not like us. We're told to love them. For if you love those who love you, and that's the game that the Jews were playing, right?

Just love the people who love me, and we're all going to get along fine. But if you love those who love you, what reward do you have for that?

How is that any different than anybody else? Do not even the tax collectors, the most hated sin group? They love the people who love them.

[53 : 23] Everybody does. There's nothing special about that. There's nothing sacrificial about that. At all. And if you greet only your brothers, what more are you doing than others?

Do not even the Gentiles do the same? Why? Yes, they do. So what is our calling? To love our neighbor.

And then, oh, by the way, I just read to you verse 47. Here's verse 48. It's kind of the, this is the closing verse of chapter five in the Sermon on the Mount.

Therefore, you must be perfect. What's your definition of perfect? Oh, as your heavenly father is perfect. Hmm.

Just in case you were wondering what perfect meant. Okay. So, how many of you would say, I'm perfect? I'm hoping nobody's raising their hand.

[54 : 33] And that's the whole point of the Sermon on the Mount, this section of the Sermon on the Mount, is to make you realize you can't. He said earlier, your righteousness will have to exceed that of the Pharisees in order to get into heaven.

Yeah, no, no, nobody qualifies then. And that's his point. His point is to break us.

His point is to bring us to that realization, blessed are the poor in spirit, bankrupt in spirit, who would fall to their knees, empty handed and say, Lord, I cannot.

I cannot. To which Jesus would respond, finally, you're at the place I could use you.

You're at the place I can save you. Because you can't bring anything into that equation. It's all of Christ. He is the only one who can save us.

[55 : 32] He has already done all the work. He paid the price. He rose again from the dead. It's all wrapped up, taken care of, and done.

All you and I have to do is accept it. Yes, Lord, I trust you as my Lord and Savior.

The rest of my earthly existence, my eternal destination, I trust you with my life. It's yours. It really is that simple decision.

It's simple, but so hard because it involves a surrendering of self that says, I've got nothing to bring. It's a realization that I'm broken, I'm devastated, I am bound for hell.

And the only hope I have has nothing to do with me. It's all of Christ. And this is what he's wanting the lawyer to realize, but the lawyer is still trying to justify himself.

[56 : 56] This is the lawyer who would die and stand before the judgment of God and say, well, here's the reason why I think I qualify. And God will just look at him and say, depart from me.

I never knew you. But what we do, but filthy rags. You got nothing. some lessons from this, and we'll go through these real quick.

Lessons from the Good Samaritan here. Actively pursue a relationship with God that overflows the tangible love for others, regardless of their background or circumstances.

James would go on to talk about this, the half brother of Christ. He would say this in chapter 2, verse 15.

If a brother or sister is poorly clothed and lacking in daily food, and one of you says to them, go in peace, be warmed and be filled. May God's blessings follow you without giving them the things that they need.

[58 : 06] What good is that? I'll pray for you. What good is that? No, Jesus would say step in and meet the need. Step in and meet.

All right, so who am I supposed to do that for? We need to learn to define your neighbor as anyone God brings into your circumstances.

So the guy half dead on the road, is your neighbor, whoever it might be, whatever has background, whatever, you meet the need, you serve them.

Now, understand, there are some boundaries to this. Okay? There are some exceptions to the rule. people. Okay? Understand, the exceptions to the rule deal with people who are saying, yes, I'm a Christian, but are living in a disobedient way.

It's not talking about people who aren't making any claim to Christ. Look what Paul, the Apostle Paul, says in 2 Thessalonians, Now, we command you, brothers, in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, that you keep away from any brother who is walking in idleness and not in accord with the tradition that you receive from us.

[59 : 36] Someone who is saying, yes, I'm a brother in Christ, and then is living in such a way that disparages the name of Christ.

Christ, then we distance ourselves from that. We don't want to put our arm around them and say, yes, this disobedient believer, we're saying that's normal, that's welcome, that's what we are.

No, we can't. Verse 10, For even when we were with you, we would give you this command, if anyone's not willing to work, let him not eat. And it's like, ouch, this in our modern culture kind of smacks of how could you do that to someone?

Because it's what's best for them. If someone can work, they need to work. That is a position that elevates humanity, that honors the image bearer that is in them.

Another passage from 1 Corinthians 5, ugly situation, guy sleeping with his stepmother. I wrote to you in my letter, and this is a previous letter that Paul had sent, I wrote to you in my letter not to associate with sexually immoral people, but now he's got to qualify that.

[61 : 06] Not at all meaning the sexually immoral of this world, or the greedy swindlers, or idolaters. Since then, you would need to go out of the world. You'd have to leave the planet, is what basically Paul is saying there.

Because there's a whole lot of people who aren't believers, who aren't followers of Christ, who don't identify in that way, who are immoral, and greedy, and idols, and swindlers, all of this stuff.

But you've got to buy groceries somewhere. You've got to interact with the world every day that you go out of your house. You're going to interact with people who fit this description, and that's okay. But someone who was a part of your body of Christ, who was in your fellowship, and is behaving in such a way as to bring such a stain in the community among you because of the way he's behaving, no, no, no, no, no, no, no.

You treat that person differently. We're called, we're called, commanded even, to be harsh, towards fellow believers who are living in sin, and not so much to those who aren't believers.

[62 : 24] Our calling with them is to win them to Christ, to be Christ to them. He says, but now I'm writing to you not to associate with anyone who bears the name of a brother if he's guilty of immorality or greed or is an idolater or reviler or drunkard.

Swindler, not even to eat with such a one. Because you don't want to give aid and comfort when someone is behaving badly.

By giving aid and comfort, you're saying a stamp of approval on the way that you're living. And we don't want to do that. We want to put them outside of the church so they experience the discipline of God fully.

And as a result of that discipline they repent. By the way, that's what happened with this guy. He repented. And he says, what have I to do with judging outsiders, people outside the church?

That's not our responsibility. Knock it off. Okay? You've got people outside the church that are living all kinds of terrible ways. It's not your responsibility.

[63 : 36] As a matter of fact, it's not those inside the church whom you are to judge. Yes. God judges those unbelievers.

He'll take care of it. And do you think he'll do a good job of that? I'm thinking he'd do a better job than me or you. And then he quotes from the Old Testament a statement that was made over and over again about those who were caught in sin.

Purge the evil person from among you. This is what we're called to do, to love our neighbor.

Another aspect of this is to respond with compassion and practical help in inconvenient moments. Isn't it true that almost every time you come across your neighbor, it's inconvenient? That's kind of the definition of it.

That's a part of it. Again, returning back to the Sermon on the Mount, if anyone would sue you and take your tunic, is that inconvenient? Someone who wants to sue you for your coat?

[64 : 54] Is that inconvenient? Is that inconvenient? inconvenient? You don't think it's inconvenient to be sued? Some of you are like, I've never seen that before.

If anyone forces you to go one mile, go with him two miles. This is the Roman soldiers who were allowed in their captive territories to make someone carry their backpack and their equipment for a mile.

That was Roman law. Jesus said, hey, if they do that, go two with them. Give to the one who begs from you. Again, it's inconvenient. But instead, model Jesus' example of sacrificial love by going above and beyond in the way that you serve others.

That's what the Good Samaritan did that day in Jesus' story. He went above and beyond. He not only made sure the man was okay, but he took care of him for the following months.

Go above and beyond. And if anyone forces you to go one mile, don't just go the one. Go above and beyond. Go two. Do not refuse the one who would borrow from you.

[66 : 18] Because Jesus would say, you've heard it said. you shall love your neighbor and hate your enemy. But no. Love your enemies. Pray for those who would persecute you.

This is the calling. We're called to be good Samaritans. And that's the story. That's the calling that we have been given.

And in our day and age, just like in their day and age, it's a tough thing to do. We have some pretty defined lines of who we like and who we don't like and what we like or what we don't like.

And it's hard to go beyond that. Let's pray. Lord, we thank you so much for your word. Again, we thank you that your word challenges us out of our comfort zones and brings us to the place where we would say, Lord, help me to be a servant to those who are in need.

Even the people that I don't like. Even the people that I would be in conflict with. Lord, this is the standard that you have placed on each one of us as followers of Christ.

[67 : 47] That we would love our neighbors. That we would define who our neighbor is based on what you have taught. Not what the world would say.

Not what the religious leaders taught. Help us to have your heart. Lord, you came to rescue us. And we would have been dead without it. And we know, Lord, that you are coming again. And when you do, you will make all things right.

Every wrong you will have made right. Every evil act will be accounted for. But Lord, for those of us who have trusted you as Lord and Savior, we have your grace, we have your mercy, and we are grateful.

So let us go from here and live out the truth of the gospel. We know you're coming again, and we can't wait for that day.

[69 : 06] We love you and we praise you in Jesus' name. Amen.