

Luke 10: 25-37 - The Parable of the Good Samaritan (story told in video)

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?" ²⁶ "What is written in the Law?" he replied. "How do you read it?" ²⁷ He answered, "'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, 'Love your neighbor as yourself.'" ²⁸ "You have answered correctly," Jesus replied. "Do this and you will live." ²⁹ But he wanted to justify himself, so he asked Jesus, "And who is my neighbor?" ³⁰ In reply Jesus said: "A man was going down from Jerusalem to Jericho, when he was attacked by robbers. They stripped him of his clothes, beat him and went away, leaving him half dead. ³¹ A priest happened to be going down the same road, and when he saw the man, he passed by on the other side. ³² So too, a Levite, when he came to the place and saw him, passed by on the other side. ³³ But a Samaritan, as he traveled, came where the man was; and when he saw him, he took pity on him. ³⁴ He went to him and bandaged his wounds, pouring on oil and wine. Then he put the man on his own donkey, brought him to an inn and took care of him. ³⁵ The next day he took out two denarii and gave them to the innkeeper. 'Look after him,' he said, 'and when I return, I will reimburse you for any extra expense you may have.'" ³⁶ "Which of these three do you think was a neighbor to the man who fell into the hands of robbers?" ³⁷ The expert in the law replied, "The one who had mercy on him." Jesus told him, "Go and do likewise."



Last week we began the "Simple" series as we looked at the 'Simple Power' we find through our faith in Jesus Christ. Last Sunday we studied and reflected upon Jesus sending out the 72. Drawing upon the simple power they found in the name of Jesus, they went forth and healed the sick and proclaimed that the kingdom of God was drawing near. We also looked at the story of Naaman. We saw that through the simple power of faith, the slave girl stepped out to offer hope for healing and Naaman was healed from the leprosy that afflicted him. In turn, we heard how God calls us out into the world to share the simple power we find in our faith in Jesus Christ so that others may draw near to the kingdom of God.

This week we continue in Luke with one of the most familiar parables in the New Testament. Please turn your attention to the screen to watch this video that tells the story of the Good Samaritan.

[Or you can read it in Luke 10: 25-37.]



When we take the time to wrestle with this parable, there are many possible reactions – depending on where we are in life and in our faith journey at the time. Accordingly, we identify with different characters or aspects of the story at different times in our life. At times maybe we identify with the lawyer. We want Jesus to define just who we “have to” love as our neighbor. In this case, the lawyer wanted a pretty narrow definition of who his neighbor was. When we are honest, isn’t that true for us on some days as well?

On those days when it is hard to love ALL of our neighbors, we can relate pretty well to the priest and the Sadducee. We are aware of someone in need of help and we ignore or dismiss them or we walk or drive by on the other side of the road. We definitely notice them in their state of distress, but we choose to pass by. For me, this is very situational. If I am on the way to a meeting and my timeline is running tight, I probably will not stop. Unless it is my wife or daughter or someone very important to me. Then I will stop no matter what. I will take the time to do what is necessary and will deal with the consequences of that choice later. I would guess most of you are the same.

But clearly, clearly Jesus is calling us to treat all of our neighbors exactly the same as we would treat our family and close friends. In the video, the creators added in some lines that are not found in the actual scripture passage. They added them in for good reason though. In Jesus’ day the Jews and the Samaritans were bitter enemies. Long years of distrust and dislike have typified the relationship between these two people groups. Jews and Samaritans would walk many extra miles to not have to pass through the other’s territory. You heard the children’s comments. The young girl said, “They throw rocks at us” and the young boy said, “I spit on them”. In those two simple statements you get a sense of the animosity that exists between the Jews and the Samaritans. This image illustrates the conflict. You can almost feel the hatred.

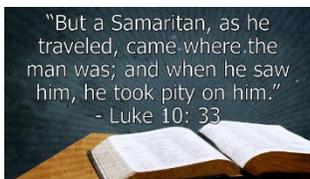




So when the story was unfolding and the audience hung on Jesus' every word, I can just picture them leaning in, anticipating who will finally stop and help this poor man who was attacked by robbers. In their minds they can partially understand why the priest and Sadducee passed by. After all, there were Laws about touching the dead and about exposure to blood. By touching the man they would become spiritually unclean. Then they would have to go through the purification rituals and wait the allotted time and And maybe the man was dead anyway.

In your mind, if this scene were played out today, who do you see stopping to help the wounded man? Would it be the pastor? Would it be a police officer or an EMT? Would it be the kind woman from the grocery store? Surely you can picture someone you know who would definitely stop by to help the wounded man. Would it be you?

So the crowd gathered around Jesus waited to see who would help. Surely someone who was faithful and God-fearing would stop and come to man's aid. And then He said it.



"But a Samaritan, as he traveled, came where the man was; and when he saw him, he took pity on him." Can you hear the gasps?!

Now imagine in your mind for a moment, if someone was beaten up on the sidewalk down on Main Street, who would most shock you if they stopped to help? The answer is probably different for each of us.

In the book of Amos, in the seventh chapter, Amos is receiving a vision from God. God is giving him this vision because the people of God have strayed far from God's ways and purposes for the Israelites. In verse 7 we read, *"Then the Lord said, 'Look, I am setting a plumb line among my people Israel.'"*

The time for judgment had come. A plumb line is used to make sure a wall is true. God was using this plumb line metaphor to remind the people that there is a right way and, therefore, a wrong way to live. And in that time and place, the people of God were clearly out of alignment with God. They were living outside of God's ways and purposes. This leads us to ask, what does it look like to live in alignment with God?

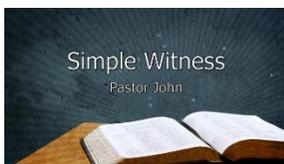




The video we watched earlier does tell us what God expects of us. It is my firm belief that if one were to truly live out the two great commandments that the lawyer quoted at the beginning of the story, then we would be right where God wants us to be. When Jesus asked the lawyer what he thought was required to live right and to gain eternal life, he answered, *“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, ‘Love your neighbor as yourself.’*” He was quoting from Deuteronomy and Leviticus. These were the two great commands that all good Jews strove to fulfill. But just like us, the lawyer wanted to limit and tightly define just who all we were supposed to love. We are no different. We can each picture someone or some group of people who we would rather not love, who we would rather not serve, who we would rather not stop along the roadside to help out.



Jesus chose instead to define “neighbor” as broadly as one could possibly define it. For Jesus, ‘neighbor’ is EVERYONE. Jesus’ circle of neighbors is all people. It is a big circle. And just as Jesus was calling the lawyer and all in the crowd to see ‘neighbor’ the same way, He is calling us to see ‘neighbor’ the same way as well. It is your family and close friends. It is your classmates and coworkers. It is also that person that you just pictured.

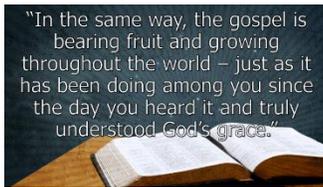


The Samaritan stopped on the side of the road, bandaged the man’s wounds, took him to an inn to be cared for, AND he paid for it. The Samaritan went beyond what anyone would have expected. In doing so, he was bearing witness to a deep, deep faith and an abiding trust in God. The Samaritan gave an excellent witness to his faith. And it was a simple witness. When one thinks about what he did, it was something most of us here could have done. He stopped. He bandaged some wounds. He helped the man to an inn. He paid for it. Nothing too complex.

Sharing a meal at McDonalds with a stranger. Buying some groceries for that family down the street after Dad lost his job. Bringing a meal by the house when a loved one has passed on. Visiting that relative at the Elder Inn. Stopping to talk with the man who sits night after night, alone on his front porch. Nothing too complex. A simple witness to our faith. Loving your God with all your heart, soul, mind, and strength. Loving your neighbor as yourself. Nothing too complex. A simple witness.

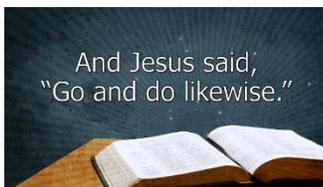


In the passage from Colossians that we read earlier, Paul is commending the church for their faith in Jesus Christ and for the love they exhibit for one another. But Paul also notes that this faith and love is what leads them out into the world. From verse six, *"In the same way, the gospel is bearing fruit and growing throughout the world—just as it has been doing among you since the day you heard it and truly understood God's grace."* For us, when we truly understand God's grace and when we trust fully in the simple power we find through our faith in Jesus Christ, then we too will begin to live as the Colossians lived, bearing fruit through the simple witness of our faith.



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As Jesus said to the lawyer, *"Go and do likewise."* And Jesus says to us, *"Go and do likewise."* May it be so. Amen.