

Who Is My Neighbor?

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References: **Luke 10**, Leviticus 19:18; Luke 19:10; Isaiah 53:4-5; Romans 3:23; Romans 6:23

Introduction: Is It a Parable?

Well, good morning, everyone. Good morning. I guess we have the speaker working properly this morning. It's a good sound; I think everyone can hear.

I'd like you to turn with me in your Bibles to the Gospel of Luke and the 10th chapter. It's commonly known—the story is commonly known as the parable of the Good Samaritan. But I would suggest that that title is **wrong**. It's not really a parable. The Lord doesn't say that it's a parable. It's actually a **true story** that He is using here. It is a story that took place in the time probably of all the characters that are mentioned here—four different men. And it was probably common news in Jerusalem, the story of the Good Samaritan.

Verse 25 of chapter 10, we begin to read:

[Luke 10:25-29 NKJV]

²⁵ And behold, a certain lawyer stood up and tested Him, saying, "Teacher, what shall I do to inherit eternal life?" ²⁶ He said to him, "What is written in the law? What is your reading of it?" ²⁷ So he answered and said, "You shall love the LORD your God with all your heart, with all your soul, with all your strength, and with all your mind," and "your neighbor as yourself." ²⁸ And He said to him, "You have answered rightly; do this and you will live." ²⁹ But he, wanting to justify himself, said to Jesus, "And who is my neighbor?"

Father, we approach You this morning—what is left of the morning, Father—and we would ask by Your Holy Spirit to unfold the thoughts and intentions of the Spirit of God in this passage that we are reading and will read. That, Lord, our own hearts may be searched, as our Lord intended for this lawyer who approached Him. We need Your help, Lord. Guide us now and direct us, our thoughts, we pray, in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ. Amen. Amen.

So there's a real gem of a story about the Good Samaritan, but this is almost universally misunderstood. There's a law actually written in many of our Western nations, which is called the Good Samaritan Law. And basically what that means is if someone comes to the help of someone in trouble, then they are not responsible if something goes wrong, if their intentions were to help that person. Say they make a mistake medically, and that person dies. In other words, the relatives of that person who died cannot sue the Good Samaritan who tried to help. It was the good intentions.

So in Western culture, certainly, we have this idea that we should help other people, but it's gone beyond that to the point where people say, "Well, I do my best and I help other people, and therefore I should be allowed to go to heaven. On my good deeds, I help others, I do good things, I give money to the poor, I give my time to help people around the world, and so on." And so they think then that somehow they have bought favor with God. And so they... they don't need the salvation that God provides.

The Lawyer's Question

Now, in our story here, there's a certain lawyer that comes. He stood up, and no doubt the Lord Jesus was teaching, as He always did. The crowds are listening to Him as He teaches, and suddenly a man stands up, a lawyer. Now, not a lawyer like we know in the West here. More, we might call him a theologian, one who studied the Bible—the Old Testament in this case—and knew the Old Testament backwards and forwards. He knew the law of Moses. He knew the prophets, and he knew what was written in the Psalms. And so he could answer any question that there might be in the Old Testament. He was expected to do so.

So this lawyer, he stood up. And we notice here that it says to **test** the Lord Jesus. Well, you know, it's a mistake that this man learned, and others would find out as well, that you don't test the Lord Jesus. Because what He does is He always turns it around and He tests **you**. You can't test God. God is beyond any type of failing to be able to answer accurately, perfectly.

So, at any rate, this lawyer makes the attempt. And he says to Him now—he carefully phrases his question—"What shall I do to inherit eternal life?" But we know that we can do **nothing**. That the gift of eternal life is a gift alone. It's a gift of the Father through faith in the Son. Now, the man, the lawyer, asks Him, though, "What can I do to inherit eternal life?" And so this forms the basis, really, of this story.

But Jesus now, as He often did, He often would answer by posing another question to the question. The lawyer asks a question, Jesus asks him a question. In other words, wanting the

man to frame his own question for himself in his own mind, to be able to step back a minute and look at his own life.

And so Jesus said to him in verse 26, "What is written in the law? You are an expert in the law. What does the law say? If you want to do something, what does the law say? What is your reading of it?" And now that becomes something personal because the lawyers, the theologians of that day, they all had different ideas about the law. They interpreted Moses' law according to their own desires. They made the law of no effect by adding certain things to the law and taking away from it. But Jesus wants to expose this man to himself. He wants to get him to think.

The Reading of the Law

And so He says to him, He asks him the question, "What is your reading of the law?" And so he answered and said, "You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, with all your strength, with all your mind, and your neighbor as yourself." Now he's quoting from the law, a summary of the two tables of the law in Leviticus chapter 19, verse 18. He's actually directly quoting that.

[Leviticus 19:18 NKJV] - You shall not take vengeance, nor bear any grudge against the children of your people, but you shall love your neighbor as yourself: I am the LORD.

The first table of the law has to do with our attitude toward God. The first four commandments have to do with our position before God and what we owe God. The next six, the last six of the ten commandments, have to do with our responsibility to our fellow man. Remembering that man has been created in the image of God, and so requires the honor and respect given to God we give to our fellow man.

So Jesus said to him, "You've answered right. You've done your homework. You paid attention in school. You have answered correctly. This do," He says, "and you will live." Notice there's something missing there. He didn't say, "You'll have eternal life." "This do and you'll have eternal life." No, He says, "This do and you will live." Eternal life is a gift that God gives that cannot be earned. What can be earned, if you keep the law, is a continuation of life that no one ever has.

So the man now, he has a question now appearing in his mind, because he wants to justify himself now, it says in verse 29. This is a crucial verse: "He, wanting to justify himself, said, 'Who is my neighbor?'"

Now, the first four commandments have to do with God, our attitude, and our responsibility to God. But nobody sees what's in our heart, what's in our mind, what's in our soul, and you can't see what's in a person's heart. So you can't see if they are really loving God with all their heart, soul, mind, and strength. But you can see a person's actions to their neighbor. That's exposed. That's open. One is hidden; the other is open.

And so he has the question now in his mind, "Who is my neighbor?" Because in answering this question, the lawyers of Israel long ago, they had certain categories of people that they placed, and they were saying, "This is my neighbor, and these are not my neighbors. I have no responsibility to them." They had limited God's instructions, God's word. They limited them in order to justify himself.

The Journey Down to Jericho

Now, the Lord Jesus now begins His story—a current event that had taken place not long before, certainly in the memory of this lawyer, about a certain man who went, it says, down from Jerusalem to Jericho.

Now, the reason I say that it's a current event is that He uses a certain term. The term is "a certain man went down." An unnamed man, but a particular man, a certain man. Because we read there in verse 25, remember, that "a certain lawyer" stood up, asked a question. Jesus says, now, "a certain man" whom you have heard about in this story. He went down from Jerusalem to Jericho, fell among thieves who stripped him of his clothing, wounded him, and departed, leaving him half dead.

Well, here we see a picture, do we not, of mankind? Going down from Jerusalem. Jerusalem is the city of the Great King. The place where God said He would set His name there. Jerusalem the beautiful. How beautiful are the tabernacles of Jerusalem. It's the place where God would reveal Himself to His people, dwell among His people.

And he was going down to Jericho. Jericho is a place that had been cursed. A place that was at the bottom, you might say, the lowest place on earth. Jerusalem the beautiful, Jericho the place of a curse. This is a picture of the journey of mankind from the time that he sinned in the garden and had fallen from God's grace and mercy, and gone his own way down, down, down, down.

And then not only that, he'd fallen into the very clutches of the devil himself, who stripped him of every sense of dignity. All his clothes were torn off. He's lying there naked. Not only that, but they beat him so that he had numerous wounds, we find out, in the plural. He just wasn't wounded in one spot. He was wounded head right down to his feet, and he was left half dead. Unable, completely unable to help himself. Lying there stripped of all dignity, lying wounded, and soon to depart out of this life for an unknown destiny. And that's the picture of mankind.

Jesus, on the other hand, we read that He went up to Jerusalem. He went up and up and up from the depths of that valley as He walked through that city of Jericho, the place of cursing. He walked through healing people. He went up to that place there because there was a place, a meeting place, where God's justice and love were going to meet. And He would go there to the place of the cross and lay down His life as a ransom.

There we read what is the key verse of the whole Gospel of Luke, Luke chapter 19, verse 10. Luke 19:10:

[Luke 19:10 NKJV] - for the Son of Man has come to seek and to save that which was lost."

So now we're introduced to the second man, the Lord from heaven, who came to seek and to save that which is lost. He's the second Adam. As the first Adam failed in sin, the second Adam mounted that journey up to Jerusalem to lay His life down as a ransom.

The Priest and the Levite

It says now, verse 31—we've left our man who had come down from Jerusalem lying stripped, wounded, lying half dead. But now another figure appears on the scene. In his priestly garments, he's gone his way up to Jerusalem. There is a priest. And as he comes to the place where the man lies, he looks at him, passes by on the other side.

What's in the mind of the priest? Well, he says, "Under the law, if I help this man and he dies, I will be polluted. I'll be unclean. I won't be able to serve in the temple. My journey there will be in vain. I can't touch him. I have a higher calling. I've got to minister in the temple through worship. I have no time or ability to help this man," just like the law.

Another man appears on the way up as well. He's a Levite. Now the Levites, they were chosen—a special tribe chosen to help the priests in the temple. They ministered in the

temple. It was their service to do so. But he would be disqualified as well. He even comes over and he looks at the man, and he makes his decision, and a close inspection sees that the man is half dead. "There's nothing I can do. If he dies, I will not be able to serve." So he passes by, perhaps regretting the poor man's condition, sorrowing over his position, but realizing that he can't do anything for him. Because if he's going to serve in the temple, he cannot touch a dead body. The blood of the man, if he should die, would pollute him. And so he passes by on the other side.

The Despised Samaritan

These men came, it says, by chance. But it doesn't say that about the next man. The next man is a Samaritan. It didn't say he came by chance. It says, "as he journeyed."

There is really a beautiful picture of our Lord Jesus, that He came to seek and to save that which was lost. Now, it wasn't in the mind, I don't think, of the Samaritan that he would look for wounded people on the way to Jerusalem. But wherever he saw them, his compassion came out for that man as he saw him.

We read here, "a certain Samaritan." So we have a certain lawyer. We have a certain man that went down. We have a certain Samaritan.

The Samaritans were despised by the Jews. They were hated. A Samaritan was publicly cursed in the synagogue. They could never be brought as a witness in a Jewish court. A Samaritan could never be proselytized, could never renounce his religion and become a Jew. Any Gentile could, but never a Samaritan. The Samaritans were outside of the blessing of God entirely.

And what a picture, really, of our Lord Jesus, who took upon Himself the form of a servant. He became in our image like a despised Samaritan. That's what He became. He was despised and rejected of men, a man of sorrows and acquainted with grief. That's a picture of our Lord Jesus, this Samaritan that we have here.

It says, as he journeyed, what did he do? He came where he was. We think of the long journey from heaven through the womb of a virgin, through the many years of growing in Nazareth under the direction and the control of his mother and his stepfather, in quiet obedience until it was time for Him to step out in public ministry, but disdain. Now completely under the direction of God His Father, He begins His journey there to the cross. He has one focus, and that is to lay His life down as a sacrifice for mankind.

He came where he was. He had to come. Jesus had to come to this world to save sinners. He had to lay His life down as a sacrifice. Otherwise, we could never have been saved. He came where he was.

And when he saw him, did he have fear of the robbers? Perhaps that was part of the motivation of the priest and the Levite. Maybe fear of looking around to see if the robbers were there. Did he recognize him as a Jew? Very likely. But it didn't matter. He saw one made in the image of God—a man in need.

It says, so he went to him and bandaged his wounds, plural. The many difficulties, scars, the wounds that mankind has:

[Isaiah 53:4-5 NKJV]

⁴ Surely He has borne our griefs

And carried our sorrows;

Yet we esteemed Him stricken,

Smitten by God, and afflicted.

⁵ But He was wounded for our transgressions,

He was bruised for our iniquities;

The chastisement for our peace was upon Him,

And by His stripes we are healed.

He bore our iniquities. He Himself took the place of that man. But he had compassion on him. And he tenderly, with those loving hands, poured on oil and wine.

But oil is always a picture of the Holy Spirit—that Holy Spirit that is needed to mollify, to begin the healing process of the wounds, the Holy Spirit of God Himself. And the wine, speaking of the joy of salvation. The man was in good hands.

The Inn and the Promise of Return

And then it says, "He set him on his own animal and brought him to an inn, tenderly lifting him onto his beast of burden and carrying him to an inn, and took care of him." All night long, he took care of that wounded man. Tending to him, he was half dead, but by morning, no doubt, that life had begun to return, and the man is on the way to recovery.

Now the inn, I think, is a picture really of the assembly, is it not? We can make it like a picture of the church, the local assembly, where sinners that have been torn by the evil one

are left half dead through sin, through their own actions, condemned by the law, under judgment. But by the Spirit of God, the Lord Jesus appears, tenderly saying, "I will attend to your wounds. I will bear them for you upon the cross. And if you believe in Me, trust in Me, then you will be healed of all your wounds and diseases."

And our Lord Jesus is a good picture of that Samaritan. And he's brought to the inn. And the next day, as daybreak comes, the condition of that man has improved to the point where he's able to leave him in the care, further care for further recovery. And he leaves him with the innkeeper. And he takes out two denarii and gives them to the innkeeper.

It's been 2,000 years now since our Lord came. He's been caring for sinners for 2,000 years. Two denarii, would that be a connection there somehow? But he said to him, "Take care of him, and whatever more you spend, when I come again, I will repay you."

When I come again—He's promised to come again. And I can imagine in my mind, the man, as he's recovering, he gets on his feet and he says, "Did he say that he was going to come again? Yes, he said he was coming again." And I can see him looking perhaps down the road and up the road, and where and when is he going to come again? "I want to see him again face to face and thank him. I barely could remember his face when he tended to my wounds. And during that long night, how he tenderly took care of me."

"When I come, I will repay you." There is a wonderful reward given to those who care for their brothers and sisters.

The Conviction of the Law

"Who is my neighbor?" the lawyer asked. You know, he had so glibly said, "You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart." But who's my neighbor? He knew the law, but he didn't know his own heart. He knew the law in his mind. He could quote it publicly, no problem, without a mistake. But he never applied it to his own heart. If so, he would have been disillusioned. He would have been convicted very much: "I have never loved the Lord with all my heart. If I hate my brother, or even do not count him as a neighbor to love my neighbor as myself, I'm under conviction." He'd never done that.

So Jesus asks them the question, "So which of these three do you think was neighbor to him who fell among the thieves?" He wouldn't even so much as name the Samaritan, but he says to Him, "He who showed mercy on him." There's a glimmer of hope there. He didn't argue with Jesus and say, "No, the Samaritan is not my neighbor." I think he was beginning to see the beginning of light going into that lawyer's heart.

And I wonder today, if there's someone here, that perhaps for the first time, you begin to see the perfections that God demands if you want eternal life. That doing good, trying to make up for your past failures, turning over a new leaf in your life, beginning afresh, promising God all kinds of things will never get you eternal life.

[Romans 3:23 NKJV] - for all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God,

The purpose of the law was to reveal the fact that we are incurable. We have an incurable disease. We're half dead. Each of us here today is half dead, because we're going to die, certainly, very shortly. Every one of us. Some a little longer than others, but we don't know. We don't know the date of our death. We're all in the condition of that poor man who lay on that road down to Jericho, until the Samaritan found him.

Well, perhaps most of us here today have been found and have been nurtured in the inn, carried forth through the night, and in the morning, we're waiting for His return. That's wonderful. That's wonderful.

Conclusion and Prayer

Today, then, I ask the question one more time: Where are you when it comes to the care of the Savior? Has He lifted you on His beast and taken you to the place where He cared for you, where you have light, where you're waiting for His return? Or are you still lying there?

This lawyer, after his answer, "He who showed mercy on him," Jesus said, "You go and do likewise." You show mercy to him.

Now, the answer there that the lawyer should have given was, "I could never do that. I don't love God enough to do that." See, the law was only given to expose sin. It was not given for the cure. It was for the analysis to tell us what was wrong. It convicts of sin but doesn't save him. The law promises life, but no one can attain to it. It's only through the salvation that is provided through Jesus Christ and His death upon the cross and the gift of salvation:

[Romans 6:23 NKJV] - For the wages of sin is death, but the gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord.

This is a simple story, as I mentioned. A beautiful, simple gem, but often misunderstood. The law never promised eternal life. Sinners in the Old Testament had to look beyond the

offerings and look far beyond there to that one great offering that would be offered, where the Lamb of God Himself would lay down His life for the world.

May the Lord encourage each of us as we journey along. And if any take the place of the innkeeper today, the Lord says, "If you spend more, when I come, I'll repay you." The Lord has got a reward for every believer who cares for his neighbor.

Let's pray.

Father, we thank You again for Your grace to us through our Lord Jesus Christ. He was the Good Samaritan. He took upon Himself—He made Himself of no reputation. Further than that, He took the reputation of a sinner. He was sometimes called a Samaritan, deriding Him, dishonoring Him, to call Him the worst of the worst. But He bore that patiently, that He might go to the cross and take the place, yes, even of the despised Samaritan.

Now, Lord, we thank You that the Samaritans—the Samaritans as a city—opened their hearts to the gospel in the book of Acts. That that whole city, Lord, was led to the foot of the cross to believe in the Lord Jesus, believing that this was the Christ, the Son of the living God, and how You had mercy upon them. And, oh, Father, we thank You for Your grace again to us today and for the salvation of the One who came to seek and to save that which was lost. Amen.