

Parable of the Good Samaritan, Part 2

Luke 10:25-37

ABC 9/27/20

Last week we took a look at the parable of the Good Samaritan in our series on Jesus' parables. We focused on Jesus' primary point in telling it. Today, after reviewing, we'll focus on the secondary point Jesus makes in it. Look with me at Luke 10. Verse 25 sets it up for us. **25**

An expert in the Jewish law is testing Jesus' view on salvation. What is intriguing is the phrasing of the question: **What shall I do to inherit eternal life?** *Do? Inherit?* These words don't seem to go together, do they? An inheritance, by definition, is something done to you. So this question is like asking, *What can I do to be born into Bill Gates family?* The question also shows us where the lawyer's heart is, which is where all humans go by default. *What can I do? How do I earn salvation? What can I do to be saved?* Jesus responds with a question of His own. It's not a difficult one but a slow softball question intended for an easy answer. *Mr. Legal Scholar, how does the Law answer your question?* The lawyer responds with a classic *Sabbath School* answer. He quotes 2 OT vss, Dt 6:4-5 & Lev 19:18. To paraphrase, he says, *Love God supremely & love people sacrificially.* Crack! Out of the park! Home run! He's exactly right. He should have stopped there or taken a different path in the conversation. He did what we so often do. He knew the right answer but he'd never applied it to himself. He knew what God's Word said but what it meant never really made it down into his heart. The question, **& who is my neighbor?** (29) shows this man's heart. How often do we fall into the same pit? *How much to I have to give? How often do I have to go? How long do I have to serve? How many times do I have to forgive? How much do I need to love my neighbor?* We seem to have this insatiable need to put limits & caps on God's commands. Jesus then tells the parable. **30-35**

The 2 religious guys purposely ignore the need of their fellow country man. But the Samaritan, one who would be least likely to help & probably wouldn't have been helped by the man who was robbed if the situation was reversed, not only helps but goes above & beyond the immediate need. In this parable are at least 3 things we're meant to see. 1st, loving God supremely & loving people sacrificially requires more than religious knowledge. Remember the conversation that triggered

this parable. Jesus & the lawyer agreed that to have eternal life one must love God supremely & love people sacrificially. But the lawyer wanted to know the limits on this command. He wanted to make it a religious system. The parable does the exact opposite, decimating the preconceived limits the lawyer had. This is demonstrated in the 1st 2 travelers. They were doing their religious duty. They were obeying the Law. They were keeping themselves pure for service to God. & yet, they didn't do what was most honoring to God nor what was most loving to their neighbor. Would there have been a sacrifice in crossing the road & helping? Absolutely. The law would have declared them unclean & they'd be out of service for the next 7 days until they could become ritually clean again. But what is that compared to saving someone's life? But we can do this too, can't we? Choosing something good over something better. Helping ourselves rather than helping others. Using our religious traditions to limit the prompting of the Holy Spirit in our lives. A 2nd thing to see in this parable is that loving God supremely & loving people sacrificially can't be limited by our social ideas. The Jewish / Samaritan divide was what was in view here, but in reality Jesus has any such barrier in view. Male / female, rich / poor, strong / weak, white / black, straight / gay, American / foreign, liberal / conservative, Christian / secular, & on & on. If the extent of our love for God is measured by the scope of our love for those who are different from us, even our enemies, then perhaps our love for Him isn't as deep or wide as it should be. The 3rd thing Jesus is pointing out to the lawyer & to us about loving God supremely & loving people sacrificially is in regard to the expanse & extent of this love. Notice the Samaritan doesn't stop with just checking on the traveler or cleaning up his wounds. He also took him to a place where he could recover & provided for his stay & further care. He promised to pay any extra costs that might be incurred. His love was extravagant. To love God supremely & to love others sacrificially requires us to break down our social barriers & allow the boundless love that we've received from God through Jesus to flow freely to those around us. If we do that perfectly, every time, we will inherit eternal life. The law demands that we love perfectly, both God & our neighbor all the time & every time. As a lawyer, the man should've known he couldn't perform a single act of extravagant selflessness & think he'd fulfilled all the demands of the law forever. The law demands perfection all the time. As Dt 27:26

says, **Cursed is he who does not confirm the words of this law by doing them.** James tells us, **whoever keeps the whole law & yet stumbles in one *point*, he has become guilty of all** (2:10). Jesus' words at the end of the parable, **Go & do the same** (37), should have moved the lawyer to plead for grace & forgiveness. If that's what the law means when it promises life to those who obey (Lev 18:5), we have no hope at all under the law. The only thing the law can do for us is condemn us & make us realize we are sinners. As Paul tells us, the law, **which was to result in life, proved to result in death** (Rom 7:10). Why? Because the law demands absolute & utter godlike perfection (Mt 5:48). No one who's ever sinned, & that's all of us, can be fit for eternal life on the law's terms. That's what the lawyer should have realized & so should we. Even Christians, into whose hearts **the love of God has been poured** (Rom 5:5), don't consistently love like the law demands. But there's a deeper lesson here as well. The way the Good Samaritan cared for the traveler is the way God loves sinners. In fact, God's love is infinitely more profound & more amazing than that. The Samaritan sacrificed his time, schedule, comfort, & resources to care for a wounded enemy. God gave His own Son to die for sinners who deserve nothing more than eternal damnation.

While we were still helpless, at the right time Christ died for the ungodly. For one will hardly die for a righteous man; though perhaps for the good man someone would dare even to die. But God demonstrates His own love toward us, in that while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us. In fact, while we were enemies we were reconciled to God through the death of His Son (Rom 5:6–8, 10).

What Jesus did to redeem us far exceeds the act of generosity pictured in the parable. Jesus Himself was the one & only perfect model of compassion for those in need of mercy in His day, & in every day, & only He will ever show us complete & perfect mercy. Jesus, even more than the Samaritan, is the model worth imitating. & when we do find someone in need, we must remember that we can find all the strength we need in Christ.¹ He is the living incarnation of divine love in all its perfection. He is spotless, sinless, **holy, innocent, undefiled, separated from sinners** (Heb 7:26). During His earthly life, He obeyed & fulfilled every part of the law to absolute perfection. & by dying, He bore the penalty of sin for us. Moreover, His perfect righteousness is imputed to those who trust Him as Lord & Savior. Their sins are forgiven & they're clothed in the perfect righteousness the law

¹ Blomberg, C. (2004). [Preaching the Parables: From Responsible Interpretation to Powerful Proclamation](#) (p. 65). Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic.

requires. They inherit eternal life, not as a reward for their own good works, but purely by grace, because of Jesus' life, work, & death on their behalf. If that lawyer had confessed his guilt & admitted his inability to do what the law demands, Jesus would've been ready to offer him an eternity of mercy, grace, forgiveness, & love. If he'd simply sensed his need, the answer to his question was already on Jesus' lips, who repeatedly said things like, **He who believes in the Son has eternal life** (3:36). **He who hears My word, & believes Him who sent Me, has eternal life, & does not come into judgment, but has passed out of death into life** (Jn 5:24). **My sheep hear My voice, & I know them, & they follow Me; & I give eternal life to them, & they will never perish** (10:27–28). **Everyone who lives & believes in Me will never die** (11:26). Both this lawyer & the rich young ruler asked Jesus about how to inherit eternal life & He answered by confronting them with the law's demands. But for those with ears to hear, He constantly made it perfectly clear that eternal life isn't earned through merit but is the gracious gift of all who truly put their faith in Christ as Lord & Savior. Did the man accept what Jesus was teaching him? Did he confess his inability when Jesus said, **Go & do the same?** Did he acknowledge his need for grace & repent? Apparently not. That's the end of the story. The lawyer simply disappears from the story & we never hear of him again. Like all proud, self-sufficient, religious people, he might have made a resolution to try harder to do good works in order to prove himself worthy of God's favor & eternal life. Maybe he tried to love his neighbor more. But all such people who think trying harder is the answer are oblivious to what the righteousness of God really demands of them. They seek to establish their own righteousness without submitting to the righteousness God has revealed in Christ (Rom 10:3). They read the parable of the Good Samaritan as if it were nothing more than an encouragement to help those in need. Granted, it's fine to be motivated by the parable to increase our love for our neighbors, & we should. I hope you are motivated that way & we'll talk about that momentarily. But if that's your only response to this parable, it's not the right one. This parable is meant to compel us to confess our sinful weakness, revealed in our lack of compassionate & sacrificial love, & to seek grace & mercy by turning with repentant faith to Jesus Christ, the only One who truly & perfectly fulfilled what the law demands. He alone **is able also to save forever those who draw near to God**

through Him (Heb 7:25). He is the only true source of eternal life. If that lawyer had truly looked into the law of God, which he knew, & recognized his sin, he would've found a Savior whose yoke is easy & whose burden is light (Mt 11:30). But the story ends without a hint of his repentance. That must not be our response. So the primary point of the parable is we can't earn salvation because we can't keep the law perfectly. The idea is that only by continuously, perfectly loving God & every neighbor, even his worst enemy, on every occasion could this man satisfy the 2 most important commands & obtain eternal life. Obviously, Jesus' point is that neither the lawyer nor anyone else is capable of such love. The only proper response was for him to acknowledge his inability to save himself, & plead with God for mercy & forgiveness. Jesus, God incarnate, stood before him ready to extend forgiveness, grace, & mercy. But there's no indication the lawyer did so; his pride & self-righteousness held him captive & he likely forfeited eternal life.² It takes more than right answers to inherit eternal life. It requires a life of perfection in not just giving the right answers or knowing the right answers but living the right answers & doing the right answers & guess what? No human being except One has ever done that. So on the last day you can either say with this lawyer, *I tried to love God & my neighbor as best I could.* & if you say that you'll have rejected eternal life. Or you can say, *Not what my hands have done can save my guilty soul.*³ It's only Jesus.

Just to be clear, was Jesus teaching salvation by works? Not at all. He was merely pointing out that if you could truly love God & love others perfectly, you'd have eternal life. God demands perfection. That means loving God always, every moment of every day, with all your heart, soul, strength, & mind, never deviating from that from the moment you're born until your final breath. It also means loving other people perfectly all the time. That's God's standard. It's perfection or nothing. Jesus is really telling the man, *You want to go to heaven? Great! Be perfect & you'll make it.* But no one can do that. We're all sinners. & God doesn't grade on the curve. That's why we need the gospel.

² MacArthur, J. (2011). [Luke 6-10](#) (pp. 358-359). Chicago, IL: Moody Publishers.

³ Horatius Bonar, *Not What My Hands Have Done*, 1861

The secondary point Jesus makes here is telling us who our neighbor is & what it looks like to love them. Let me rephrase that: How do we love an invisible God? By loving the visible people He's placed in our lives. Francis Schaeffer wrote years ago,

Through the centuries men have displayed many different symbols to show that they are Christians. They have worn marks in the lapels of their coats, hung chains about their necks, even had special haircuts. Of course, there is nothing wrong with any of this, if one feels it is his calling. But there is a much better sign—a mark that has not been thought up just as a matter of expediency for use on some special occasion or in some specific era. It is a universal mark that is to last through all the ages of the church till Jesus comes back. What is that mark? Love—and the unity it attests to—is the mark Christ gave Christians to wear before the world. Only with that mark may the world know that we are indeed Christians.⁴

The primary way we demonstrate our love for an invisible God is by loving the visible people He's placed in front of us on a daily, weekly, & monthly basis (1 Jn 4:7-21). In other words, we're called to show compassion to those who are in need that God brings us to or them to us. Obviously, there's an example here that we're supposed to imitate. The very last line of the passage says that Jesus told the lawyer, **Go & do the same** (37). But do *what* the same? Jesus could hardly expect us today to find a donkey, grab some oil & wine, look for every battered person, transport them to the local motel, & pay for them with two silver dollars & a blank check. No, but there are people all around us who're in need of mercy & compassion, physically, emotionally, & spiritually. Do we share the Samaritan's compassion for the needy people around us or have we become calloused to them? Do we make excuses of why we can't help? Each of us probably reacts differently to our needy world in light of varying personal circumstances & experiences & depending on the particular needs we encounter. It could be a single mom struggling to make ends meet, a roadside beggar with a cardboard sign asking for money or food, or a family who's lost their home to fire. Maybe it's a poorly dressed visitor coming to church asking for help. & what, if any, of these situations reflect scams by con artists, as some of them truly are? In some cases the most compassionate response may be to refuse the request. As Augustine once commented, when Jesus says to give to everyone who asks, he doesn't say to give everything he asks for.⁵ Is there at least one area in each of our lives in which we're personally involved in the ministry of compassion for

⁴ *The Mark of the Christian*, pp 13-14, 59

⁵ Blomberg, C. (2004). [Preaching the Parables: From Responsible Interpretation to Powerful Proclamation](#) (p. 60). Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic.

hurting people in our world? While our personal world may be dominated by conservative, white, heterosexuals, how do we view & respond to people of a different race, gender, sexual orientation, or political views? Do we really believe such people are our neighbors, created in God's image, no less precious to Him than we are? Most 1st-century Jews couldn't have imagined calling Samaritans their neighbors & having to love them. By making the Samaritan the hero of this story, Jesus may be saying that one's enemy is the most important neighbor of all, especially if one wants to determine if Christianity has turned us into people who're different from the world around us.⁶ Yes, we may argue about what the most appropriate or effective ways to help are but are we at least asking the question because we sympathize with the desperately needy enough to want to help in some way? One must show compassion to those in need regardless of the religious, ethnic, or political barriers that divide us. Even one's enemy is one's neighbor who we're commanded to love. Jesus clearly shows that our neighbor is any person in need whose need we know & whose need we're able to meet. If we refuse to respond to the need, then we are not neighborly.⁷ We fulfill the righteousness of the law that demands we love our neighbor as ourselves when we respond to such a person's need according to our ability. Your neighbors are all around you. They live on your street, you go to school with them, you shop at the same stores, eat at the same restaurants, drive the same streets, you work with them, & you see them when you go to church. But no matter who you are or how much you care or how hard you work or how much you pray, you can't save them all. You can't rescue every baby. You can't save every marriage. You can't help every homeless person. You can't help every victim of fire. It just can't be done. But that's no reason not to help those whom God puts in your path. We rarely know what compassion & neighborly love will demand of us. Which is why we shouldn't be overly calculating before we get involved. Don't think, *God's teaching them a lesson! Or, They deserve it!* That's not our call. Sometimes the help we give will be brief & easy to do. Other times we'll discover that the demands are long-lasting & heavy to bear. Remember, **compassion** is *painful sympathy*.⁸ Most of the time

⁶ Blomberg, C. (2004). [*Preaching the Parables: From Responsible Interpretation to Powerful Proclamation*](#) (p. 64). Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic.

⁷ Pentecost, J. D. (1998). [*The parables of Jesus: lessons in life from the Master Teacher*](#) (p. 70). Grand Rapids, MI: Kregel Publications.

⁸ Webster's definition of *compassion* in 1828. <https://1828.mshaffer.com/d/search/word,compassion>

we can't do it all by ourselves. No one can do it all & no one is being asked to do it all. But we all can do something. Don't say, *I'll do more when I know more*. No! We know too much already. Act on what you know & God will bless you. Don't say, *If I am ever going down a lonely road & happen to see a dying man, I'll stop & help him*. No, that man is all around us. He's young, old, male, female, rich, poor, black, white, Asian, Hispanic, a child, a beggar, a divorcee, a cancer victim, an AIDS patient, an out-of-work dad, a single parent, a lonely widow, a new arrival from another country, legal or illegal. He doesn't look or act or sound like you but he's there anyway & God has put him in your path. What will do you? Will you walk on by? Start with the need that is near you & God will give you grace. Your religion is empty if it doesn't compel you to reach out to those who are hurting who cross your path. There are people in your life who need the help only you can give. Some of them need a word of encouragement & you're the only one who can give them that. Some are staggering beneath a heavy load & you're the only one who can help ease that burden from their shoulders. Some of them are about to quit & you're the only one who can keep them going. Some of them have been hit with an incredibly long string of trials & you're the only one who can help them move forward. Those people are all around you. Your only problem is that you don't see them. Therefore, we must pray that God will give us eyes to see the needs in front of us. Those are eyes that see the real needs of the people you meet. Pray that God will bring at least one person across your path who needs the help only you can give. That's a prayer God will answer because there are folks all around you who're just barely making it. You see them where you work & you live next door to them. They're out there waiting for someone to help them. God has helped & blessed us for a purpose: that we might take what we've received & share it with those who desperately need it. How do you change the world? Not through programs & not even through preaching done at a distance. You change the world one heart at a time, one life at a time. Let me read what someone has written & then try to get practical.

The irrevocable Word of God still remains valid, that He who observes the law perfectly will live. He who always loves God & his fellow-man will inherit eternal life. But alas, no man (except Jesus) has ever been able to observe this law perfectly, nor can anyone do so. & because no imperfect observance of the law, however excellent it may be, can be accepted; & because the judgment of God that the soul that sins (even if only on a single occasion) shall die, is just as irrevocable, we know that no man can ever inherit eternal life on the grounds of his own merit. But God be praised

*that Christ Jesus as Man lived a life of complete love towards God & men &, as the entirely Innocent One, endured death for us on the cross, forsaken by God, so that by faith we are absolved from the death we deserve, & inherit eternal life. This, however, doesn't remove the obligation to obey Jesus' words: **Go & do the same**. But the difference is the Law has said: "Do this & thou shalt live", while Christ says: "I have given you eternal life through grace, & this new life in you will enable you to have real love towards God & your fellow-men & to carry it out in practice; so go forth & live a life of true love to God & to your fellow-men, through the power I give you."*⁹

So, how can we *go forth & live a life of true love to God & to your fellow-men*? How can we love the invisible God? By loving the visible people He places in our path. What are we as a church doing? Elder's met again last night to discuss this. Obviously, we will do all that we can to help those in our church who lost their homes. We're staying in touch & want to do whatever it takes to get them resettled. Of course, if you've suffered loss, you need to let us know what you need! We can't read your mind. The elder's directed me to contact churches in Paradise, CA who have gone through this & learn from them. We've reached out to Valley Bible Fellowship (Mountainview) who lost their building, offering them & their families help & support. I've contacted PT Schools for names of families who need help & offered the church parking lot to stay in. Samaritan's Purse met with pastors last Thursday & we are networking with them to coordinate our efforts. We are actively seeking out families who need help in our community. If God brings them across your path, let us know. Maybe that's who God has for us to come alongside of to help.

What can you do? Being a Good Samaritan is hard. Most of the time, we're so wrapped up in our own lives we forget about the less fortunate around us. But we can fix that. Start with little acts of kindness & practice more empathy & compassion. Think less about what others can do for you & more on what you can do for them.

What's the one thing we all can & must do?

1. Pray. Pray for eyes to see needs. Pray for the willingness to meet needs. Pray for those who are suffering & struggling. Pray for opportunities to not only be a Good Samaritan but also a good witness of Jesus Christ.

2. Listen to their stories & fears. Use your words to validate, not minimize. Refrain from saying, *It was just stuff*. They know it was just stuff. But it takes *stuff* to live. After listening consider asking:

⁹ Norval Geldenhuys, *Commentary on the Gospel of Luke*, p 312

What feels overwhelming today? What's on your mind & agenda today? What do you miss or feel angry about? What are some tasks you need to accomplish today? How can I help? Ministry involves a willingness & ability to enter into the feelings & experiences of other people. In reaching out to fire victims, we have to realize there are no quick & easy ways to deal with the long-lasting effects. The events of the past 3 weeks have pushed thousands of people beyond the limits of anything they've ever had to endure before. Our first responsibility is simply to be with them & listen to them in their pain & confusion.

3. Call & write. Stay in touch. Encourage. Pray with them.

4. Buy them tank of gas

5. Give books or toys (new ones) for children

6. Provide meals (in containers that don't need to be returned)

7. Help with the shopping to replace things

8. Donate items carefully. What do I mean? Used items can be a blessing or a curse & need to be given thoughtfully. Random junk that even a thrift store wouldn't take are probably not needed. Also ask yourself, where is a person who lacks their own space, dressers, & storage containers, going to store stuff, even if it may be useful one day? Keep in mind that donations, especially of large items such as appliances, electronics, or furniture, can end up creating extra work for them as they'll have to sort through it all & figure out what to do with it or find a place to store it until they're ready for it. On the other hand, gift cards are small, light & give the recipient more control.

9. Gift cards for groceries, necessities, restaurants, gas, movies etc.

10. Help with debris removal or provide a meal for those who do

11. Price out items & help with the personal property inventory

12. Realize **this is a marathon**, not a sprint. It will take months, even years for people to navigate the insurance, financial, & physical process ahead to replace necessities & bring normalcy back to their lives. This can be an exhausting process for all involved. This is a long haul of negotiating sadness. It's a long grind of learning nitty-gritty details of debris removal, insurance policies & law, hiring contractors amidst shortages, rebuilding, replacing documents, working with banks. It's a

drawn out process of holding scared & confused children. It's a slow slog of shopping for things a person doesn't want to buy again. None of this is easy or quick. Yes, be there for them today but also be there for them next month, at Christmas, next year, & following.

Being a Good Samaritan takes time, effort, & compassion. But when the burden seems too heavy to bear, remember the incredible promise God has given us in His Word:

Who will separate us from the love of Christ? Will tribulation, or distress, or persecution, or famine, or nakedness, or peril, or sword? Dare I add, *or fire?*.... For I am convinced that neither death, nor life, nor angels, nor principalities, nor things present, nor things to come, nor powers, nor height, nor depth, nor any other created thing, will be able to separate us from the love of God, which is in Christ Jesus our Lord (Rom 8:35, 38-39).

There will be needs for a long time where your help can reinforce & encourage those who are suffering. There will be a need for a long time where your kindnesses can heal. Love God by loving your neighbor & by His grace He will be glorified through it.