

Good Samaritan

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[0 : 00] We're now going to have a reading from Luke chapter 10, beginning of verse 25. Luke 10, 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? What is written in the law, he replied, how do you read it? 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.

You have answered correctly, Jesus replied, do this and you will live. But he wanted to justify himself, so he asked Jesus, and who is my neighbor?

In reply, Jesus said, a man was going down from Jerusalem to Jericho when he fell into the hands of robbers. They stripped him of his clothes, beat him and went away, leaving him half dead.

A priest happened to be going down the same road, and when he saw the man, he passed by on the other side. So too a Levite, when he came to the place and saw him, passed by on the other side.

[1 : 13] But a Samaritan, as he troubled, came where the man was, and when he saw him, he took pity on him. 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. The next day, he took out two silver coins 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. Which of these three do you think was a neighbor to the man who fell into the hands of the robbers?

The expert of the law replied, the one who had mercy on him. Jesus told him, go and do likewise. Now this is a story which I think all of us know well, but it's well worth returning to.

I've certainly found it well worth returning to myself. And there are four points, if you like, or sections that I want to just emphasize in this. The first of these is the summing up of the law of God.

[2 : 24] What is the summing up? What is the most important part of the law of the commandments? That's the first thing. The second thing is, who is my neighbor? The third thing is, what is it to be a neighbor?

What is it being a neighbor? And fourthly, what does this tell about the character of Jesus? So, firstly, the summing up of the law.

And we started at the beginning here. Jesus is approached by a lawyer. That's an expert in the law. Now we're not talking about ordinary civil law here.

We're talking about the religious law of the Jews, particularly from the Old Testament. And all the other laws that were added to it by the scribes and the priests and the rabbis.

It appears he wanted to test Jesus. That's what it says here. He wanted to test Jesus. And we don't know quite why he wanted to do this. Maybe it was to try and catch him out.

[3 : 32] We know that some of the Jewish leaders were very, very keen to catch him out and make him trip up in front of everybody. Or maybe he genuinely wanted to see if Jesus knew his theology properly.

His question was a very good one. He said, what must I do to inherit eternal life? Notice, however, the do in that question.

He starts as if salvation is by doing or salvation by works. That would have been his whole way of thinking about how to be saved.

Jesus knows that he's a lawyer, an expert in the law, and he asks him to give the answer himself from the law. Now, Jesus, just as an aside, often asks questions before he gives any answers.

We find that again and again in the Gospels, don't we? Even somebody who's obviously sick, he says, what do you want me to do for you? Again and again, he asks us to do some of the working

out.

[4 : 44] We are to use our minds and not just passively expect everything to fall into place in our lives. When we read the Scriptures, we hear God asking us questions.

It's not simply learning facts. And so being open to the question as we read the Bible is a great thing. Working out the answers with God's help is far better, isn't it, than sitting back and waiting for it all to come from him.

So Jesus asks him, what do you think? And he answers in verse 27. 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. Now this answer shows that the man really knew his Bible. And it's a combination of two parts of Scripture.

Deuteronomy 6 verse 5 and Leviticus 19 verse 18. Now interestingly, Jesus used exactly the same combination in accounts in both Mark and Matthew.

[5 : 58] When another, a different occasion, another expert in the law came to him with a question. So reading in Mark 12, for instance, Mark 12, 28. We read, one of the teachers of the law came and heard them debating.

Noticing that Jesus had given them a good answer. He asked him, of all the commandments, which is the most important? The most important one, answered Jesus, is this.

Hear, O Israel, the Lord our God, the Lord is one. Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind and with all your strength.

The second is this. Love your neighbor as yourself. There is no commandment greater than these. And so there is a fourfold aspect, if you like, to this love for God.

From heart, from soul, with all your strength and with your mind. Now, one can, of course, spend a long time going into all four aspects of this type of love for God.

[7 : 09] But today, let's just concentrate on the fact that the real message is that our devotion, our love for God, is to be absolute and involve every single part of our being.

Not just our mind, but our emotions and our souls. It's not to be something half-hearted, but it's to be with all our strength.

There's not much compromise here, is there? There's no compromise in this. And, of course, such love seems quite honestly very far from our day-to-day love for God.

Let's all of us admit that we rarely achieve anything close to that. How often do many of us have this total devotion?

I find, or I'm sure you find sometimes, when you speak about sin to people who are not Christians, but people perhaps who are searching and want to know more about Christianity, they sometimes say, well, I'm not a bad person particularly.

[8 : 18] I lead a reasonably decent life. I don't swindle. I don't pay my taxes and all these sorts of things. But when you confront them with this command, do they obey this command to love the Lord with all their heart, all their soul, all their strength, all their mind, and their neighbor as themselves?

That makes people stop short and say, no, I can't do that. I don't do that. And once we realize how far we fall short on this, where do we turn?

We have to turn to Jesus. It's a bit like plugging into that light, which I've tried to show to the kids.

Unless we are plugged in to God and receive the grace and the help by the Holy Spirit to somehow start on the road to such life, then we're not going to get anywhere.

We are driven, if you like, to Jesus. We are to strive with all our strength to have such love for God.

That's a challenge for you and me today. During this coming week, we might be very, very busy.

We might have lots of things to do. We might be distracted by lots of worries and anxieties.

[9 : 41] But can we practice that, concentrating on our love for God throughout all of these, sometimes very mundane things, not just on Sunday, not just at prayer meetings, but in the nitty-gritty of life, offering everything to Him.

And I find, and I'm sure you've found as well, that if you start on that road, you start to experience the grace that follows and His love for us.

Jesus said in verse 28, if we move on, He says that He has answered correctly, and He says, Do this, and you will live. Now, it might seem at first that Jesus is preaching a salvation by works.

Do this, and you will live. If we think about it seriously, this is not really doing anything. It's an attitude of love for God and for our neighbor.

It's our attitude of love towards God that He's speaking of, and an attitude of love for our neighbor. And we cannot have this attitude of love without God Himself working our lives, can we?

[10:54] We can't just summon it up on our own. Only by accepting what Jesus has done for us and having Him as Lord of our lives, we will be able to have that grace to love like this.

And let's remember, too, that love is a fruit of the Holy Spirit. Love, joy, peace, and soul. And as the Spirit works for the lives of Christians, we learn how to love.

And so His answer, do this and you will live, is really a challenge to the lawyer and to us. He, that's the lawyer, would not be able to do this without God Himself working in His life.

Such perfection is unachievable for a fallen human being. And we are driven, if you like, to the cross, realizing our weakness and sin and accepting that Jesus has won our salvation for us there. Remembering, too, all the time, that His love for us is entirely different. It's unconditional. It's constant. And it does not depend on us doing anything.

[12:06] It doesn't even depend on our attitude to Him. His love for us is constant and unconditional. 1 John 4, 18 We love because He first loved us.

His love comes first. So that's the first point, the summing up of the law, which involves loving God with all our heart, soul, strength, and mind.

And we're unable to do this, as we all know, on our own. We are driven, if you like, to Jesus, who alone can take our sins and can start that transformation that we need to love God in this way.

But of course, the second part of this is about the neighbor. And so the next point is, who is my neighbor? In verse 29, we see the lawyer trying to justify himself.

We read that. But he wanted to justify himself, so he asked Jesus, and who is my neighbor? Maybe he tried to gain credibility in front of all the other people who are listening, quite likely.

[13:18] He asked, who is my neighbor? And then Jesus replies with a story that most of us know well, the story of the good Samaritan. Now, at this point, I'm going to show a short film clip, which is from, we could have the lights off, actually, like I said, which is from the, which is from the mission organization Tearfront, and is about the work they do in the country of Chad.

The country of Chad is in Africa, it's in the western part of the Sahara Desert, and it's a place where the rains have failed very, very often in the past year, so the church is doing a lot of work out there. So, if you could show them, just a few minutes. Thank you. beach prof Winter Jonah is more than the whole." Jones and his church are here.

but she and her ginger are hungry this thin soup is all she can give them to me her family are farmers but she has had to turn to leaving because the crops have failed in the drought and sculching heat the bitter irony is that while a basket takes five days to me she can only sell it for her not to buy food for two meals we can, we must help them dear friends, call us to the cases of greatest need we are in Jamila's village share what to share with families close to salvation and long term solutions as well as emergency food that will save lives food that will feed Jamila's children the only day that my daughter Yasmin was happy was the day they distributed foodstuff to us

I was able to prepare good food for my children through their faith and hard work the local church supported my team fund up in the home to this village Jesus led a huge number in his time so he would act he would act so that the community would have something to put on the team because the work of the local church Jamila has hope Jesus is here but tonight our children are going to see the palm of the game our basket is empty you can fill it please give it to Jesus thank you so keep the story of this woman

[16:35] Jumala is her name who is still out there in chat at this very minute trying to feed her family in mind as we look at this parable the man was going from Jerusalem to Jericho now this is a distance of 17 miles it's a road that descends from 2500 feet down to 800 feet below sea level it's a rocky desert country and it's a perfect place for robbers to hide and attack Parsifai now the audience Jesus' audience would have known it well and even up to recent times it has been unwise to travel by car after dark in case of bandits on that particular road the man we read is set upon he's stripped he's beaten severely and he's left half dead in medical terms he was in an extremely critical condition a priest comes along and he takes one quick look but he passes by without checking to see if he's even alive he may well have been concerned about ritual defilement because if he touched the dead body he would be ceremonially impure for seven days after that a Levite came by another religious figure from the Jewish faith what we might call a lay worker in the church or in the Jewish faith he too passes by now both of these men did they not they represented

if you like the established religion the established religion from which the lawyer came and at this point the audience might have expected the next traveller to be an ordinary

Jewish traveller an ordinary Israelite man they already would have started to think that Jesus was being critical of the Jewish religious leaders and that this was perhaps an anti-carrot story of some sort instead he drops a devastating bombshell the next person is a Samaritan I love the way Jesus is unafraid of shocking people into thinking clearly now it's difficult for us to imagine what that meant to those people but we all know that Samaritans and Jews did not mix they were enemies and in particular Jews thought they were really thought they were some sort of low life despite it's hard to hide a comparison in today's world in my own country of Ireland during the troubles the terrible troubles of the past years it might have been a bit like a Catholic from the Falls Road in Belfast crossing to help a Protestant from the

Chantile Road in Belfast and even today in Belfast if you go and see you'll go and see very high walls which are still there separating the streets of Catholics and Protestants it's worth saying of course that the enmity between Catholics and Protestants has very little to do with Christianity and it's more to do with a sort of tribal religion which is something completely different but it illustrates the sort of problem that these Jews were the fact of the Samaritan and what Jesus seems to be saying is that it doesn't matter who the person is in need and it doesn't matter who it is who is there to help you might have nothing in common you might have a history indeed of hatred you might have a different form of religion it doesn't matter compassion he says goes across all boundaries now the work in Chad which we looked at is not just distributing food but it's like irrigation it's trying to get people to have more use of their land and so on but it's interesting it doesn't say that that particular woman

Jamana is a Muslim and that is very interesting because the church doesn't distinguish in that community who they're going to help what happens next he took pity on him he went to him he poured on wine which is a traditional way to clean wounds he poured oil on the wounds to ease the pain he put the man on his donkey so he had to walk himself he took him to an inn and he didn't just leave him there he took care of him he stayed with him until the next day he breathed he then gave two silver coins denarii which is equivalent to two days wages he instructed the innkeeper to look after him until he returned and when he returned he said he was willing to pay even more expenses Jesus basically is painting a picture of immense kindness and sacrifice in order to help someone in need you don't even know and you might come from a background which is actually foreign to you and so he's answering in this story he's answering the main question of the lawyer who is my neighbour it's anybody who is in need the next point so we have what is the summing up of the law to love God with all your heart and soul and mind and strength and your neighbour is yourself who is my neighbour and thirdly how are we to be a neighbour

Jesus says in verse 36 which of these three do you think was a neighbour to the man who fell into the hands of the robbers you see now changing the question from who is my neighbour which is what the lawyer asked to how can you and I be a neighbour to somebody it's not good enough to agree someone is my neighbour and do nothing to be a neighbour yourself to that person you have to practically help them and to be a neighbour is to have compassion and mercy which results in action in James chapter 2 verse 14 we read what good is it my brothers if a man claims to have faith but has no deeds can such a faith save him suppose a brother or sister without clothes and daily food if one of you says to him go

[23 : 31] I wish you well keep warm and well fed but does nothing about his physical needs what good is it in the same way faith by itself if it is not accomplished by accompanied by action is dead very strong words indeed there is a tension particularly amongst perhaps some evangelicals between preaching the gospel and acting out our faith in practical help but the bible knows no such distinctions if our faith is only about belief and no deeds then as James says we are in serious trouble James is very challenging to us he says such faith is literally dead and he is just agreeing with Jesus here of course we have to preach we have to tell people about Jesus but without also practically helping we are not being a neighbour it is of course up to us individually to seek God and decide how to help those in need we can't help everyone at once but the work of the church in Chad is just one example there is a retiring collection afterwards if you are interested in helping with that particular work with Tearfront the basket outside as you go past you can put something in if you like the vision for our church building that we are hopefully going to get soon has to be too one of reaching out to the community does it not practically not simply in preaching and meetings and

prayer and prayer meetings and services and I am preaching to myself here how much do I visit the sick how much do I go to that lonely neighbour how much do I give some practical help to somebody who may not be somebody

I know very well how much am I giving to people like Tearfront who are helping that person on the other side of the world but is nevertheless our neighbour on this earth Jesus asked the lawyer which of the three do you think was a neighbour to the man who fell into the hands of the robbers and of course he had to answer he says the one who had mercy on him notice he could not bring himself to say the word Samaritan the one who had mercy on him and Jesus says to him and to us go and do likewise so we have the love of God and neighbour who is our neighbour how do we be a neighbour lastly what does this tell us about the character of Jesus Jesus holds up the example of the Good Samaritan because this is the sort of compassion which he has himself everywhere we see in the gospel of Jesus reaching out healing touching the untouchable lepers stopping to listen to and help a blind beggar helping prostitutes consorting with tax collectors nothing seems to stop his compassion and I don't think it's stretching the parable too far to say that he is the ultimate Good Samaritan this is the Jesus we worship it's a wonderful thing and whatever state you or I am in today he will reach out to you he won't pass by on the other side do you feel that you're a stranger to Jesus and that he doesn't care do you feel like a foreigner in the church like the Samaritan was a foreigner do you feel alienated from God and notice that the parable in this parable the Samaritan doesn't try to find out anything about the injured man who is unable to speak anyway he's half dead all the Samaritan wants to do is to help him he doesn't try to find out if the man is a good man or a bad man or whether he's worthy of getting his help are you half dead spiritually speaking all

Jesus wants to do is to help you and it doesn't matter what sort of person you are and certainly doesn't matter if you're worthy because you and I are not worthy of his salvation we have a saviour who crosses all the boundaries and he will always draw near to you if you call out to him he doesn't force himself on you you need to open the door but he'll never turn you away ever what's your past is it so alien and distant from the idea of a Christian life that you think God would never come near you but if that's the case you have not understood the character of Jesus just like the wounded half dead man on the road you too can be helped back to health spiritual health by Jesus and he will never pass by on the other side the Samaritan went out of his way to alter his plans to use up his money and his time in fact to do everything possible for this injured stranger

Jesus has done much more he's done everything for your salvation for mine by offering himself on the cross for our sins and that's how we are rescued by acknowledging what he's done by accepting his lordship in our lives so we have the true meaning of the law of God to love him with all our might who is our neighbor how can I be a neighbor and we have the perfect good Samaritan Jesus who does everything to rescue us ?

[29 : 49] SO de