

be-coming-us

Sermon #4: The Parable of the Good Samaritan

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Text: Luke 10:25-37

Theme: Change the Question from, “Who is my neighbor?” to “Who is neighborly?”

Intro: One of the most famous stories ever told started with a question—not just any question, but the most important question. In Luke 10:25 a religious professional sauntered up to Jesus and asked, “Teacher, what must I do to inherit eternal life?” Pretty good, right? The question is good, but the motives were not!

- I. Question #1: The Test - How are we saved?
 - A. Expert in the law
 1. He is an expert in the law; he obviously already knew, or at least had opinions about how to be saved.
 2. Luke reveals his motives with the word test (ekpeirazō). He wanted to trap Jesus in something he said to discredit him.
 - B. Jesus answers the question with a question. This is a particularly Rabbinic form of teaching (it is not avoidance). Rabbis guided the discussion by asking probing questions.
 - C. The answer was a good one. In fact, Jesus agrees. How do we know? Because Jesus gave the exact same answer Tuesday in the Temple the week he was executed (cf. Mt 22:37-40). There too, the question was a trap that he turned on his interrogator.
 1. The answer is a combination of Deut 6:5 and Leviticus 19:18. These two verses deal with our vertical and horizontal relationships.
 - a) Deut 6:5, the famous Shema was the John 3:16 of the Jews. It was inscribed on the miniature scrolls of the phylacteries and mezuzahs of today. It was literally the passage they put on their minds, near their heart, and on their doorframes. **“Hear [Shema], O Israel: The LORD our God, the LORD is one. You shall love the LORD your God with all your heart [lebab] and with all your soul [nephesh] and with all your might [moed].”**
 - b) Notice that the (1) heart, (2) soul, (3) and strength of the OT was parsed into four in Luke’s rendition: (1) Heart, (2) Soul, (3) Mind, (4) and Strength. What gives?
 - (1) The “strength” of the Hebrew verse was divided for Luke’s Greek readers into mental strength and physical strength.
 - (2) The Hebrew word “me’odh” represents the totality of our resources both mental and physical but also includes our influence, connections, and status.
 - (3) The heart is the center of feelings. It is your emotion that drives your action. The soul represents your energy. It is the life force that jolts you into action. It is the twinkle in

your eye, the pattern in your step, that giddy in your giddy up. Your mind is not so much your intellectual capacity as your will. If you've ever raised a two-year-old and said he has his own mind, you know what I mean. It's not that the kid is so sophisticated as much as he is stubborn. Fourth, our strength represents our resources. It, of course, includes our muscles, but it's much more than that. It is the total force of our resources including our money, our time, and the circle of our influence.

(4) Because we assume in the modern Western world that love is an emotion rather than an action, it's easy for us to feel like we are loving God well without putting into practice what will honor Him best. This kind of division between action and emotion would hardly gain a floating in Jesus' native Israel. If love is an action that can only be adequately expressed through loyal obedience than Deuteronomy 10:12 makes sense, "And now, Israel, what does the LORD your God require of you, but to fear the LORD your God, to walk in all his ways, to love him, to serve the LORD your God with all your heart and with all your soul." Let me ask you a question with this verse still on the screen. What is the difference between fearing the Lord, walking in His ways, loving him, and serving Him? The correct answer is nothing! It is not possible to fear the Lord without serving the Lord. It is not possible to love God and not walk in His ways.

2. The Horizontal relationship was encapsulated in Lev. 19:18, to love my neighbor.
 - a) "Do this and you will live." Suddenly Jesus is no longer on trial, but the lawyer is.
 - b) Word of caution: We are not saying that we will earn our salvation by showing compassion to neighbors. Yet neither are we embarrassed to connect tangible actions to demonstrate our faith in Jesus Christ. This is a similar sentiment to the well-known description of judgment that dripped from Jesus' own lips in Matthew 25: "In as much as you have done to the least of these my brothers you have done it unto me."
 - c) This second question becomes the focus of the parable. Why? Because you can't really love God without a tangible and practical application to people around you. 1 John 4:20-21 "Whoever claims to love God, yet hates a brother or sister is a liar. For whoever does not love their brother and sister, whom they have seen, cannot love God, whom they have not seen. And he has given us this command: Anyone who loves God must also love their brother and sister."

- II. Justification: The Justification – Who is my neighbor?
- A. There are two Greek words for neighbor. The more inclusive word is “neighborhood” (perioikos). That’s not what the lawyer used. He used a narrower word meaning “to be near” (plēsios). Thus he is trying to draw the circle as tight as possible.
 - B. Jesus allows it! He is going to allow the lawyer to circumscribe his neighbor in the narrowest possible terms—an 18-inch circle. However, and this is truly brilliant, Jesus’ story will require the lawyer (and us) to bring the circle with us wherever we go! Jesus replied with a parable – literally he “took up” (hupolabōn) a reply. The lawyer threw down a gauntlet and Jesus picked it up.
 - C. Details of the Parable:
 1. This 17-mile stretch of highway was known as “Adummim” the “road of blood” between Jerusalem and Jericho. It was riddled with bandits.
 2. Both the priest and Levite were going down – away from Jerusalem, thus their duties have nothing to do with the situation. They don’t even have that excuse. In other words, they can’t say “I can’t help because it would defile me from priestly duties.”
 3. There is really no such thing as a “good” Samaritan. That title is given by translators of the Bible, but it is not in the text. [For further historical details on Samaritans see the study that follows the outline.] Samaritans were despised by the Jews since they had supposedly intermarried with pagans.
 - a) Interestingly, the text says he had “compassion” on the man. This word is only applied to Jesus in the Gospels outside this passage.
 - b) This is especially shocking after Luke 9:51-56 where James and John are ready to call down a heavenly holocaust on a Samaritan village.
 - c) Taken into Acts 8 we realize what significant ramifications this has for Luke and his theme of inclusion. Listen, this is an important piece of Christian theology to include those we find dangerous, different, and offensive.
 4. We would be wise not to allegorize the details of this story, but they certainly do imply that real love is pragmatically costly with time and money.
 - D. Response: “Which ‘became’ the man’s neighbor?” Notice that Jesus changed the question. The lawyer asked, “Who is my neighbor?” Jesus’ question requires each of us to ask, “Who was neighborly?” Remember, the answer to this question answers the original question, “Who will be saved?” Our reaction to our neighbors is a requisite expression of our faith in Jesus Christ.
 1. The lawyer’s response in v. 37 answers both questions (vv. 36 & 25)!
 2. “Go and do likewise” – theology only concludes in praxis. As James would later say, “Faith without works is dead.” Do we really believe this?
 3. Before you answer that last question, let me tell you a modern parable. It is not a make-believe story. This is a modern study by Darley and Bateson, “‘From Jerusalem to Jericho’: A Study of Situational Variables in Helping

Behavior,” *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology* 27 (1973): 100-108. They designed a study of 40 seminary students who were asked to give a talk on the topic of occupational careers of seminarians. They were sent to a nearby building to record their talks in a studio. On the way, right in their path, the researchers staged a “victim” who was planted to look like he was a homeless vagabond who needed medical attention. They wanted to see how these seminary students, on route to talk about their calling to be pastors, would react. Would they stop to help or would they walk past? Would they be a Samaritan or a Levite? What is your guess? How many walked past without stopping to help him? Answer: 60% walked past the victim, some even stepped over him to get to the recording studio.

4. You’ve heard a powerful series of messages. I have one last question: Are you going to walk past or will you stop and help?