

The Good Samaritan // Luke 10:25-37

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[0 : 00] Today's reading is from Luke chapter 10, verses 25 to 37. 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 was attacked by 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 : 34] But a Samaritan, as he traveled, 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 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.

Which of these three do you think was a neighbor to the man who fell into the hands of robbers? The expert in the law replied, the one who had mercy on him. Jesus told him, go and do likewise.

This is the word of the Lord. Thanks so much for reading, and if we've not met before, I'm Martin Ayers, the lead pastor here. It would be a great help to me if you can keep your Bibles open at Luke chapter 10.

So it's page 1041 in the church Bibles, you find in the chairs in front of you. So we can look at that together, and you can find an outline inside the notice sheet to follow as we look at this.

[2 : 48] So do take a look at that. But let's ask for God's help as we turn to his word. Let's pray. Heavenly Father, we praise you and thank you for this opportunity to hear you speak to us, the living God, by your word.

And so we ask that whether we're very new to these things and new to church, or whether we've been Christians for many years, that your spirit will be at work so that each one of us here now will have an encounter with you and will take a step forward in following you and trusting you and knowing you.

For we ask in Jesus' name. Amen. Now, one of our kids is an avid watcher of the program, Is It Cake? I don't know how many of you watch Is It Cake?

The clue is in the name. Some people are nodding their heads. It's a simple premise. As the host says to the contestants, you are all here because you're all talented at making cakes look like everyday objects.

Now, that incredibly specific skill can earn you thousands of dollars. And I get to ask, the best question ever, Is It Cake?

- [4 : 07] Then everyday objects appear on stands and contestants have to guess which one is actually a cake. So the training shoe and then the one that's actually a cake.
- And then a load of burgers on stands and then it turns out one of them is a cake. The crowd gasp.
- There's hysteria at the discovery that what you were looking at is not what it seemed. It was actually cake all along. Okay, now my link is that we come today to a parable that might well be the most famous parable Jesus ever taught.
- And it also might be the most misunderstood parable Jesus ever taught. So as we get into it, it's triggered by a question. That's our first point. The lawyer with a confusing question.
- Have a look with me at verse 25. On one occasion, an expert in the law, that's the lawyer, stood up to test Jesus. Teacher, he asked, what must I do to inherit eternal life?
- [5 : 18] So we're not thinking here of a lawyer and law like we have in the law of the land today. The lawyer here is a biblical scholar. He would probably have known the first five books of the Bible off by heart to recite them.
- And he wants to talk here about a subject that is of first importance, eternal life. I don't know about you, but I wish more people around me day by day would spend a lot more of their time asking questions about eternal life.
- When the Bible talks about eternal life, it's talking about a different quality of life. Life knowing God. And that's the life we were made for. And it's eternal life because it's life that lasts forever.
- That's the subject he wants to hear Jesus on. And all around us, people are so distracted by worries, but even just by entertainment, by questions like, is it cake?
- From asking questions like, what's going to happen when I die? How do I get life forever? How can I know God? Questions about eternity. So this is the subject we want Jesus on.
- [6 : 26] But Luke gives us the man's motive. Did you notice that? He stood up, verse 25, to test Jesus. So he's actually trying to catch Jesus out with his question.
- And you can tell he's not a real lawyer because he asks, what must I do to inherit eternal life? Did you notice that? If you think about it, that's actually quite a strange thing to ask, isn't it?
- If you invited me into your home for lunch and you gave me a tour of your flat and I looked around and I said, you know, I really love your home, what would I have to do to inherit your home?
- I think you might say, well, you can't do anything to inherit my home because that's not how inheritance works. Inheritance is about relationship. It's not about what you do. Now Jesus does what he so often does.
- He answers the question by asking another question. That's what Jesus does. Verse 26, he says, what is written in the law? That is the law of God. How do you read it?
- [7 : 29] And the man gives an answer that is a first-rate summary of the law of God from the Old Testament. He pulls together this sublime summary of the vertical dimensions of the Old Testament law, how we treat God.
- That's from Deuteronomy 6. And this summary of the horizontal dimensions of the law from Leviticus 19. So he says, love the Lord your God with all of your heart and with all of your soul and with all of your strength and with all of your mind and love your neighbor as yourself.
- That is such a good answer that Jesus says, verse 28, you have answered correctly. All the laws of God hang off these two commands.

But then Jesus says, do that and you will live. Do this and you will live, he says. The man's mistake was thinking that the Bible's message is you can keep these commands and so if you want to get right with God, you keep them perfectly.

If you think about the first one, those four dimensions, heart, soul, mind and strength, I take it they're all different ways of saying all that you are. Love the Lord your God with all that you are and all that you've got.

[8 : 49] Make him the subject your mind always runs to when you rest. Make his glory your supreme concern in your whole life. Make him who you most fear losing.

Make him your first thought when you wake and your last thought when your head hits the pillow at night. Make him your consolation if you lost everything else. Use all the strength God gives you to live for his glory.

Now surely you and I can admit if we're being honest with ourselves that we've fallen short of that command. So I find it stunning that our expert here seems not so worried about that one.

What he gets exercised about is ticking off the horizontal one. Look at verse 29. He wanted to justify himself Luke tells us. In other words he wants to lower the bar.

That's human nature to do that. When we think we have to obey God to be accepted we lower his standards and diminish his holiness so that we make what we have to do achievable.

[10 : 01] A standard we think we can meet. So he checks with Jesus who counts as my neighbour exactly. How far does this requirement to love others have to go?

And that brings us to our second point the story with a confronting answer. So Jesus says imagine a man goes down the Jericho road from Jerusalem. He's a Jewish man and this was a notoriously dangerous road.

A road with twists and turns and blind corners. A road for bandits. Some years ago so by the way I'm not going to say a name of a road in Glasgow that's like this road in case you live on it.

But some years ago I was in Brixton with a few mates on a night out and we were at one end of a road called Harbour Lane where there's some trendy bars or there were and we got out and we said oh let's go down the road see if there's anything else to go to.

So we went down and we were walking down the road and we got to like a railway bridge and then we heard a siren and a police car came down after us and the guy said lads where are you going?

[11 : 07] and we said we don't know we're just exploring down the road and he said turn round if you're just exploring don't go any further down this road. That was the reputation of the Jericho Road.

That's what it was like and sure enough this man is viciously attacked by robbers. They beat him up they strip him naked for his clothes and then they abandon him lying by the roadside half dead.

it's brutal left on his own the man is going to die but it just so happens that a priest is going down the same road that day surely of all people he might help but Jesus says he saw the man and he passed by on the other side of the road.

Why? He might have felt restricted by his religious rules and restrictions from helping that it would make him unclean to be with a man who's bleeding and dying.

It could be that he's probably also just scared this is the Jericho Road it's dangerous one section was even called the Pass of Blood everyone would be in a hurry and if you see a man on a road like that who's been beaten up and is dying but is not dead yet is it not natural to think the muggers the robbers may still be very nearby I need to get a move on it's not safe to help.

[12 : 35] Jesus says next a Levite comes so this is again a man of devoutly religious good standing a good man he too saw the man but in verse 32 he too passed by on the other side then in verse 33 we get a third man we're used to these kind of stories aren't we?

We have in our culture there's an English man and there's an Irish man and there's a Scotsman we're used to the three men Scotsmen come third for Jesus' audience they would have expected a scribe I think next so there's a priest and there's a Levite and then a scribe religious good men shockingly Jesus says verse 33 a Samaritan the problem for us is it's no shock at all to us is it?

This parable has had such a massive impact on the world we live in that we now think oh Samaritan relief they're the good guys because we see pictures at the train stations don't we that say are you okay?

are you in trouble? do you need someone to speak to? call us we're the Samaritans we're there for you and when we pack shoe boxes at Christmas to get them sent to poor families around the world the Samaritans deliver them so we hear Samaritan we think oh they're the good guys but only because of this and I know that's a problem for us because we used to have an illustrated book for kids of stories Jesus told and it had this story in it for when our kids were little and we used to read it to them and no one knows what a Levite is so instead of a Levite in the book it says a bishop arrived and walked and saw the man and walked by on the other side so this story was all my kids knew of a bishop and all they knew of a Samaritan and one day a bishop came round and I opened the door and I said oh Hannah come and meet our bishop Julian and she looked up in terror not not a bishop in our house

I know about these people from my story this is the problem okay so we have to think back that by saying the word Samaritan here Jesus has provoked visceral disgust in his audience the Samaritans are the enemies this is no use at all a Samaritan arriving Samaritans had split long ago from the people of God they'd rejected God's king in Jerusalem they'd set up their own capital in Samaria they rejected God's later prophets I think you might even be able to say if there was one thing worse than being a Gentile who maybe didn't know any better it was being a Samaritan and it was unthinkable that you would help them or they would help you and Jesus says the Samaritan took pity on the man in verse 33 and in verse 44 he goes to him and he bandages him and he pours oil and wine which would have stopped the pain and would have healed the wounds and he puts him on his own donkey to lead him to an inn and he stays at the inn to take care of him and then he gives the innkeeper a lot of money enough money

[15 : 56] I'm told that for that that money would have covered typical bed and board for two months for the man and he says he even says to the innkeeper look after him until I come back and any extra cost I'll reimburse you when I come back for him now Jesus noticed flips the lawyer's question around the lawyer was saying well who is my neighbor Jesus says which of these three do you think was a neighbor to the man and the man can't even say the word Samaritan he just says the one who had mercy on him and Jesus says go and do likewise the man is trying to justify himself before God by his good works and Jesus is saying to him in love for the man if you still think that you can do that this is what you'll have to do this is the life you now have to live and you will have to have lived love everyone you see in need in the same way that you love yourself use your resources your energy your time your money lay it all down for the needs of others in exactly the same way as if it was you in need and the point is this is a crushing burden from the law of God the Samaritan in Jesus story is unobtainable for us we cannot meet that standard our problem is not that we're limited

God knows that we're limited we're creatures we can't we can't on our own address everybody's needs because we're finite creatures but that's not the problem the problem is that we're fallen creatures we're just too self-centered to treat people like this all the time we're just too selfish to do that to behave consistently like this towards others there is so much more that we could have done and we should have done to help other people and Jesus is telling the story to convict the man and us that on our own we are spiritually bankrupt we cannot do something to inherit eternal life is that how we feel about our own efforts to be good if we came today to church thinking as long as I'm good to others I'll probably be good enough for God then we should feel crushed by the unobtainable

Samaritan that's how we're meant to feel and then we can go back and look at the parable and think about it from a different angle so our third point is the man who needed a life-saving encounter there are some very intriguing things about this parable if Jesus only wants to tell the man who's talking to him that anybody in need is his neighbour why does he spend so long telling him and us all the details about how the Samaritan helped the man why does he do that so many words why didn't he make the man who got beaten up a Samaritan and the third man who sees him and helps him a Jew wouldn't that be a more natural way to tell the story if your main point was in answer to who is my neighbour your neighbour is even your enemy even a Samaritan tell a story about a Samaritan who gets beaten up and mugged and is lying half dead and then the

Jewish guy goes past and he goes over and helps wouldn't that be the more natural way to tell the story help anyone in need then in verse 33 the first thing he says that the Samaritan does for the dying man is he has pity on him literally it's he had compassion on him and that word is only ever used by Luke about Jesus his compassion and God's compassion it's a divine quality now in verse 30 the man was going down from Jerusalem to Jericho he must have been going out of Jerusalem because Jerusalem is really high up and Jericho is really low down so this man is going away from Jerusalem towards Jericho the Levite the priest is doing the same so the priest is going down from Jerusalem to Jericho the Levite is doing the same they're going down the road so they're leaving Jerusalem going to

Jericho but if you look at verse 33 all we read about the Samaritan is that he traveled and then he came to where the man was now that's really interesting because we saw last week that the big idea governing this section of Luke's gospel is that Jesus is traveling he's on a journey if you look at verse 38 it ends the section that we've we're coming to an end of here saying that Jesus and his disciples were on their way they're journeying and that keeps coming up until later chapters and the section began in chapter 9 verse 52 sorry chapter 9 verse 51 as Jesus has set out on a journey to Jerusalem and the most natural way to think of the Samaritan is that he's journeying towards Jerusalem as well both

[21 : 51] Jesus and the Samaritan are heading from the north to Jerusalem the Samaritan is a man despised and rejected by the Jewish leaders he's an outcast and Jesus is being despised and rejected by the Jewish leaders all around him and the people who are coming to Jesus and love Jesus are the sinners and the tax collectors they are spiritually poor they're bankrupt and the Jewish religious system is passing them by without showing compassion on them it doesn't stop to help so what if we're meant to hear the story not as a moral lesson but as a gospel story what if as well as seeing that we can't be as good as the good Samaritan we also need to grasp that our story is that spiritually we are the man lying in the roadside facing death spiritually and Jesus is the good

Samaritan that we need let's think about what the Samaritan does for the man and compare it with what Jesus is on his way to Jerusalem to do for us the Samaritan saves the man's life he tenderly bandages his wounds to heal him he carries the man to safety and he frees the man from slavery as well if he left the man at the inn the man doesn't have any money he's been robbed so once he's recovered at the inn he owes money he can't afford to pay back and the solution to that in the ancient world was you became a slave so when the Samaritan leaves money at the inn and says I'll come back and pay you the rest if there's anything else he's liberating the man from slavery he's redeeming him and he says he's coming back he says look after him until I return and in Luke we're seeing that Jesus is on this mission to proclaim good news in his name for the spiritually bankrupt he has seen you lying spiritually helpless and dying in your own sin and he's come for you to save your life he heals you he restores you he binds up your wounds and he redeems you paying your debts so that you can be free from the power of sin forever and he's coming back for you so the question the story provokes for you and me is before you try and be the

Samaritan that you'll never manage to be have you called out first to Jesus for your own rescue have you admitted that spiritually you were helpless dying bankrupt without him but realize that Jesus saw you and he's come for you to give you healing and life and redemption if you'll just receive that from him when we've done that it transforms us so that's our fourth point the power to be a gospel neighbor the story works because Jesus commends that the lawyer summarized the Old Testament law right that is the will of God for his people that we would as forgiven rescued people love God with all we've got and love our neighbors as ourselves and our neighbor is anyone in need even our enemies the mistake of the lawyer was to think that he could do these works to earn life but when we've been given life by

Jesus and experienced that kind of rescue well that transforms our hearts and that can motivate us and empower us to go out into the world with compassion to love our neighbors Jesus sent his disciples out at the start of chapter 10 as his messengers to love the world and proclaim the good news about Jesus to the world God and if we see that we ourselves were helpless dead enslaved and even while we were God's enemies running from him rejecting him he gave us new life and he paid our debt we can think how can I now show compassion to others in their needs even others who would call themselves my enemies how can I love them what might that look like well a phrase that helps me with needs that overwhelm us all around us is that we should be concerned as

Christians about all suffering especially eternal suffering so people around us will have needs they'll have physical needs material needs social needs psychological needs and as we see a world in need we should have compassion as God's people and that compassion can move us to seek to help where those needs are great that's true of us in the people we are in contact with I'm so glad as a church as well that we have our partnership with the Glasgow City Mission that has that attitude towards our city as Christians and then also so glad that as a church we have the partnership with Tia Fund Tia Fund are proven experts in when it comes to global poverty working out how can you genuinely help people who are among the global poor so we're concerned about all suffering and as

[27 : 45] Christians we're concerned especially about eternal suffering that's the model that Jesus has given us since Luke chapter 4 in that he's got the power to solve any need and any problem all around him and he's helping people as he goes but he deliberately makes it his priority to keep proclaiming the good news about him that is the only thing that can rescue people from eternal suffering by coming to be saved by him so because that's our priority our love for our neighbors in need should be unconditional but intentional it's unconditional so if you think of just an example you know in the stormy weather we're having at the moment suppose a tree blew down on my neighbor's house and went through their roof I go and help them and I'm not to think well hang on a minute

I would help them but I invited them to the carol service and they actually said no so I'm not going to help no we're unconditionally compassionate looking to help where there's need as though it was our roof that had fallen in but our compassion is also intentional in that we're hoping and praying that this God ordained opportunity to help someone in need leads them to a conversation with us about Jesus and we get the chance to talk to them about him this is what the church has been known for all through the ages what will motivate us to do that well when we feel compassion fatigue this parable moves us to look back to Jesus and reflect on his love for us as we close let's think back one last time to the parable why does Jesus tell us that the Samaritan put the man on his donkey to take him to the inn for safety it's salvation through substitution he can only bring the man to safety by saying the man will take my place but that also goes the other way notice what Jesus tells us happened to the man by the roadside later in

Luke's gospel we see another man get beaten and get stripped of his clothes they cast lots for those and then he gets left to die outside Jerusalem and no one comes to help him people pass by and walk on until he cries out it is finished and breathes his last on the cross Jesus is the man who came for you to save your life but he could only do it by taking your place left to die outside the city so that he could give you life healing redemption and say I'm coming back for you if he has done all this for you and me what now could we do to love others around us for him let's pray together heavenly father we thank you so much that you are a giving father generous good and for your indescribable free gift to us of eternal life in Jesus name we ask that your spirit will impress more deeply on our hearts the wonder of your mercy to us thank you that Jesus would come for us and rescue us and may you then in turn send us out in the power of that same spirit with hearts full of compassion for the needs of others material physical spiritual that wherever we see people beyond the walls of our church around our neighborhoods and around your world we as your people will act towards them with the mercy and love that points people back to you for Jesus name's sake amen for you

Thank you.