

For Our Neighbors: Who Is My Neighbor?
Pastor Josh Fakhoury

Intro:

- Josh Fakhoury – Lead Pastor
- Part 4 of Series: ***For Our Neighbors***

Last 3 Weeks:

- **Why are we here and what do we want to be known for?**
- **If Our Neighbor's Biggest Need: to know God and to live with God**
- **Our greatest need becomes our greatest purpose – help others KNOW GOD!**
 - “God likes you → LOVES YOU”, wants a relationship with you, Heavenly Father!
- **Sometimes it takes a party – neighbors are VIPs – relational investment in neighbors!**
 - **Challenge:** *do something you don't have to do for a neighbor... (you still can!)*

Today: **Who Is My Neighbor?**

- If we are going to be FOR our neighbors, we need to define who “neighbors” are, right?
- Jesus spoke and taught a lot about LOVING OUR NEIGHBORS...
- The people who listened wondered this too....

Luke 10 – Parable of the Good Samaritan

Luke 10:25-28 – 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?”

²⁶ “What is written in the Law?” he replied. “How do you read it?”

²⁷ 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.’”

²⁸ “You have answered correctly,” Jesus replied. “Do this and you will live.” He’s been listening!

- One of the “experts of the law” was asking Jesus this question – trying to trick him
- The Jewish people had 613 laws that were given from Moses
 - 365 prohibitions (things they couldn't do), 248 positive commands (things to do)
 - And they were divided into: heavy laws and light laws (+/- importance)
- This is one of multiple places in the gospels when Jesus says or affirms that these 2 laws are the most important.
- *Matthew 22:40 – “All the law and the prophets hang on these 2 commandments.”*
- So this guy has been listening... He knew the correct answer... (Love the Lord your God with all your heart, soul, mind – the beginning of a daily prayer... but then Jesus adds...)
- **Love God AND Love Your Neighbor (Ba da ba ba ba... “Nationwide is on Your Side”...)**
- Sometimes we see people – say they love God, but we’ve doubted it... actions/behavior
- **Loving God is authenticated by you and God.**
 - Nobody else can really know if you're doing this... (Love God, believe you, but...)
- **Loving your neighbor is authenticated by anyone who has eyes and ears.**
 - See they way we treat people – words, thoughts, att., actions – is that loving???
- THAT background... **Love God AND Love Your Neighbor**

Luke 10:29 – ²⁹ But he wanted to justify himself, so he asked Jesus, “And who is my neighbor?”

- He wanted to justify himself – to prove that he was adequately loving people...
- So the man asks a clarifying question.... WHO IS MY NEIGHBOR?
- “Because Jesus... When I look at you, you seem to love EVERYBODY... I don’t know if I want that wide of a range of people who I have to love...”
- “Jesus, can you give me a range of people who are my neighbor?”
- So Jesus tells another story – a parable

Luke 10:30-37 – ³⁰ 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.

- CONTEXT: (important to help us understand meaning behind the story – perspective)
 - For us going down the road isn’t that life threatening
 - Traveling from Jerusalem to Jericho: (~20miles, route – here → Nelsonville)
 - This was a dangerous distance for someone to be traveling alone
 - In that day, most people would only travel that far with an armed guard or in a large group.
 - If you were making that trip alone, you’d be likely to run into trouble...

³¹ A priest happened to be going down the same road, and when he saw the man, he passed by on the other side. ³² So too, a Levite, when he came to the place and saw him, passed by on the other side. ³³ But a Samaritan.... (end of slide) (every time I say Samaritan, “Booooo!”)

- The Priest and the Levite didn’t help the man... (these were the church people! The ones we’d expect to help...)
- Jesus doesn’t go into detail about why they didn’t help...
 - BUT He does give some very important details about the one who DOES help...
- When Jesus says the word “Samaritan”, it would bring strong negative feelings in the minds of the people he was speaking to...
 - “Ugh... Those people...” (whoever that is for you...) THE MARGINS their culture!
 - They had a strong dislike for the Samaritans – Jesus was making a point here...

³³ But a Samaritan, as he traveled, came where the man was; and when he saw him, he took pity on him. ³⁴ 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. ³⁵ 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.’

- The next day – this wasn’t just a small inconvenience...
- The Samaritan put his agenda on hold – completely focus on this man’s need...
- Not only that, he also gave him money so that he’d be taken care of...
- AND to come back and check on him, follow-up, give more money if needed...

Jesus continues, *³⁶ “Which of these three do you think was a neighbor to the man who fell into the hands of robbers?” That wasn’t my question! Who is my neighbor? → who was neighborly?*

37 The expert in the law replied, “The one who had mercy on him.”

- He doesn’t even say, “The **Samaritan**” ... “the one who showed mercy” ...

Jesus told him, “Go and do likewise.”

- Go follow the example...
- Go show this kind of love to ANYONE and EVERYONE you meet... NO MATTER...
 - No matter their **age, gender, ethnicity, race, beliefs, economic status**, or **WHATEVER**... Show EVERYONE the love of Christ
- **Take this message of love to your neighbors!**

WHO IS MY NEIGHBOR? – the next person you see, meet, have an opportunity to show love...

- “The Least of These” – People on the margins of the culture!
- Relational dysfunction, lonely, sick, struggling with addictions, stuck in patterns of bad decision, people who are turning to worldly things to try to fill voids – ONLY BY GOD!...
- Neighbors are **not just nextdoor** / Not just **people who are like us/we like** – **ALL PEOPLE!**
- Problem: We are often like the expert of the law...
 - Only help the people who are like us... or who we like...
 - Only when it’s convenient...
 - Only when it’s easy...
- In this parable, Jesus paints us a bigger picture of what it looks like to love people...

The expert of the law wanted to know whom he could reasonably exclude. Jesus described a neighbor as someone who would radically include!

- He described a love that would reach beyond barriers...
- That didn’t focus on who could be excluded, but on who could be included...

(Matt. 25:40 – “Whatever you have done for least of these → me”)

(John 13:34-35 – “New command: love one another... as I have loved you... THIS is how they will know that you are my disciples – know ME, love ME → LOVE YOUR NEIGHBORS!)

When we live FOR OUR NEIGHBORS, we have to continually ask the question:

What does love require of me?

- The answer changes depending on your context, doesn’t it?
 - Sometimes love requires a very difficult conversation...
 - Sometimes... love requires forgiveness... (even before they ask/don’t deserve...)
 - Sometimes... love requires being selfless, serving someone else, putting them 1st
 - Sometimes love requires a little more grace than we’re comfortable with...

Love and discipleship begin where convenience ends! Love is costly – but it’s worth it!

Commitment: **As Jesus loved God, I will love God. As Jesus loved me, I will love my neighbors.**

Prayer