



# gracefellowship

Luke 10:25-37  
Jesus: Our Neighbor  
March 22, 2020

## :: Luke 10:25-37

We are in a difficult stage in the history of our world. As the COVID-19 Virus continues to spread there are all sorts of reactions from people. Some people believe we are overreacting and this is no big deal. Others think we aren't doing enough as a nation to get ahead of this thing. I'm not going to try to tell you how to think about the virus or the response, but I do want to encourage you today to not let our current events bring you to a place of panic or fear. As Christians, I believe we need to have a two-fold approach to dealing with this crisis:

1. **We need to be responsible citizens and follow the recommendations given to us by our government authorities.**

This is why we have chosen to suspend our worship gatherings and Life Group gatherings until further notice. We aren't doing this out of fear, but out of love and concern for our families and communities and in a spirit of submission to our authorities.

2. **We need to be courageous neighbors who are willing to put our own safety at risk to show the love of Jesus to others.**

While there is a call to social distancing and a desire to keep people from being in close proximity to one another or in crowds, there is also a higher call within the gospel to lay down our life for our friends. The greatest love Jesus talked about is a sacrificial love- even to the point of death. And Jesus didn't just talk about sacrificial love, He demonstrated it for us by selflessly going to the cross and laying His life down for us so that we might know the distance God will go to bring people into His Kingdom.

In Luke's gospel we have record of an encounter that took place between Jesus and a lawyer who wanted to know what was necessary for him to be at peace with his eternal destiny. Let's look at the story together.

## :: Luke 10:25-37

**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.”  
29 But he wanted to justify himself, so he asked Jesus, “And who is my neighbor?”  
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.  
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, 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.’  
36 “Which of these three do you think was a neighbor to the man who fell into the hands of robbers?”  
37 The expert in the law replied, “The one who had mercy on him.” Jesus told him, “Go and do likewise.”

I have preached on this passage in the past and we have taken time to look at the first aspect of the lawyer’s question: What do I have to *do* to inherit eternal life? I’m not going to spend as much time on that theological discussion today because I want to spend most of our time talking about Jesus’ response. However, I do want to say that at the heart of many people in our world, and in fact, at the heart of most world religions, is a system of doing in order to earn your way into heaven. People believe if they can just be good enough they can make it into heaven based on their own merit. The problem is you never know how good you have to be in order to be good enough to gain salvation! If I were dependent on my own good works to get me into heaven I would be awake at night reliving every day in my mind wondering if I had done enough that day and fearing to die in my sleep if I felt I hadn’t been good enough!

The power of the gospel is that we do not earn our salvation but that it was earned for us through the life, death and resurrection of Jesus! Jesus gives us salvation freely as a gift when we place our faith in Him for salvation and eternal life. Then...

**As Christians we serve and do acts of good not to be saved, but because we ARE saved!**

This Lawyer asks Jesus what he has to do to be saved and Jesus turns the question back on him- "What do you see in the Scriptures?"  
And the man answers:

**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."**

The Lawyer actually gets the answer correct! Jesus has answered this exact same question in the exact same way in the past. He points back to the OT Commands and says all the Law and the Prophets hang on these two things: Love God and Love people!

We can only love others well when the love of God comes first in our lives. But we can't love God fully if we aren't willing to love our neighbor selflessly. There is no way to separate these two commands. If you don't love God fully then your best acts of love toward your neighbor will fall short. And if you mistreat people then you aren't being loving toward God, in whose image all people are made.

But while the Lawyer gets the answer correct, he also wants to justify himself; he wants to know who he needs to treat in a neighborly manner.

**29 But he wanted to justify himself, so he asked Jesus, "And who is my neighbor?"**

Take off your super spiritual mask this morning and be honest- have you ever asked a similar question? Okay, Jesus, who do I really have to love? Do I have to love that guy down my street who bothers everyone? Do I have to love my boss, who is just the biggest jerk ever? Do I have to love my teacher who seems to enjoy making my life miserable? Can I even possibly love people who cheer for the Florida Gators?

The Lawyer, in essence, is asking, "What is the least amount of love I have to put out and still be in God's good graces?" So the problem is this:

**The Lawyer was looking for minimum obedience.**

**Jesus requires absolute obedience.**

To answer the man's question Jesus tells a story- one we are probably all familiar with to some degree. Even if you're not a Christian, you've probably heard this story, or a version of it.

**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.**

**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, 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.’**

A Priest and a Levite come by- two people who should have seen this man as not only a neighbor, but a brother! These men were fellow Israelites. And they didn't do anything to help the man. Then Jesus introduces a character into the story that his crowd would have hated! He says a Samaritan came along. The Jews and the Samaritans were like the Montague's and Capulet's; or like the Hatfield's and the McCoy's. They didn't get along! So if the crowd were upset at Jesus' story for having two Jews pass their brother up on the side of the road, they would have been furious that Jesus introduces a Samaritan to be the hero of the story!

When Jesus gets to the end of the story he asks:

**36 “Which of these three do you think was a neighbor to the man who fell into the hands of robbers?”**

**37 The expert in the law replied, “The one who had mercy on him.” Jesus told him, “Go and do likewise.”**

The Lawyer couldn't even bring himself to answer: “The Samaritan.” He just said, “The one who had mercy on him.” And Jesus tells him, “If you want to be a neighbor like God expects go show mercy to everyone- even your enemies.” (my paraphrase)

I wanted to share this story with us today to lead us to a place where we look at our current situation and ask some hard questions. I also want to tell you what I am praying and what I want to encourage you to be praying for as we move deeper into our time of social distancing fighting the Corona Virus.

### **Hard Questions:**

- 1. What lengths am I willing to go to in order to show God's love?**
  - a. The Samaritan in the story incurred great financial risk to help a stranger.

- b. Taking care of this man's needs also cost him time.
- c. Being a care given to a Jewish man would have cost the Samaritan socially. Others may not have agreed with what he was doing.

## 2. **Am I willing to put myself at risk to help others for the sake of the Kingdom?**

We are being asked by our government officials and leaders not to gather in groups of 10 or more. We are also being asked to stay away from people as much as possible and limit travel except for necessary things. And while we agree with those policies and are doing what we can to abide by those things, we must also take into consideration that Christians should be on the front lines of meeting the needs of others during this time and showing the love of Jesus.

In 1527, when Europe was being devastated by the bubonic plague, Martin Luther wrote a document he entitled, *Whether One May Flee a Deadly Plague*. In this document, Luther does not ask, "What Would Jesus Do?" Rather, he puts the question in front of us, "What would we do if it were Jesus?"

Luther writes:

**"This I well know, that if it were Christ or his mother who were laid low by illness everybody would be so solicitous and would gladly become a servant or helper. Everyone would want to be bold and fearless; nobody would flee but everyone would come running... If you wish to serve Christ and to wait on him, very well, you have your sick neighbour close at hand. Go to him and serve him, and you will surely find Christ in him..."**

I don't think that means we throw caution to the wind! We should still follow safeguards and do what is necessary to keep disease from spreading. But when we know of a way to meet a need, if we can go and be the hands and feet of Jesus to someone who is struggling, then go!

I have loved hearing stories this week of people buying groceries for shut-ins. It has been inspiring to hear of people checking on their neighbors. Churches are mobilizing to help provide food to food banks, schools and the elderly.

I've heard of kids who are at home from school writing letters to nursing homes where people cannot receive visitors right now.

People are donating blood, which is in short supply.

People are sharing toilet paper with one another (unused of course).

There is no shortage of ways you can show the love of Jesus to people. You just have to have your eyes open to your neighbors.

Here's what I want to challenge you with. In the story Jesus told, the Samaritan came upon a man who had been beaten and left for dead and reacted out of compassion after the fact. How can you be proactive as a neighbor? How can you and I take the gospel of Jesus to people through our loving actions?

Right now this may just feel like an inconvenience, but as this drags on and if things get worse we are going to feel the pull and weight of people's hurts on a larger scale. Be part of the solution by being a proactive source of good.

What would you do if your neighbor were Jesus?

If you or someone you know can use help right now please contact us and if we can help we would like to do so.

**What I'm Praying:**

- **I'm praying that God would awaken His Church to respond to a time of crisis.**
- **I'm praying that we may be stripped of all the things that may be idols to us and that pull us away from God and will have a focus on Him like never before.**
- **I'm praying for parents, especially Fathers, to lead spiritually in their homes. We are each part of the priesthood of believers and we individually make up the Church, so don't rely on coming to the building where the church meets to be all your Christian experience is about- be the Church in your home and community.**
- **I'm praying for the gospel to spread as people watch worship services from the privacy of their homes and hear the gospel of Jesus taught.**
- **I'm praying for an end to this disease, but for us not to return to life as usual. Let us spring board out of this crisis into a place of deeper faith and obedience to Jesus.**

**Discussion Questions for Life Groups:**