

CANeeded – Welcome to the Neighborhood

6/27/21

Luke 10:25-37

Sunday AM

cancel – to nullify. Invalidate. Abolish. Void. Quash. Negate. Annul. Dissolve. Reject. Eliminate. Ignore.

Such is the rabid climate in our current culture better known as CC. CC is a mass form of ostracism sweeping across our nation where groups of offended (or pseudo-offended) people are exerting influence to silence/banish people/issues they dislike/disagree.

Of course, **canceling others is nothing new**, it's been around since the fall when the serpent tried to get Adam/Eve to cancel God. It was present when Cain canceled Abel and when Joseph was canceled by his brothers and later by Potiphar's wife.

The roots of CC have been present thru-out human history as every society has used canceling to shame people who've behaved outside of perceived social norms. CC today is the just the latest variation.

As we conclude our series on living for Christ in a CC, today discuss how we can go on the offensive.

One day an expert in the law stood up to test Jesus, "Teacher, what should I do to inherit eternal life?" Jesus said, "What does the law of Moses say? How do you read it?" The man said, "You must love the Lord your God w/ all your heart, soul, strength, and mind, and love your neighbor as yourself." Jesus replied, "You are correct. Do this and you will live!" Wanting to justify his actions, the man asked, "Who is my neighbor?" Jesus replied w/ a story: "A Jewish man was traveling from Jerusalem down to Jericho, and he was attacked by bandits. They stripped him of his clothes, beat him, and left him half dead beside the road. By chance a priest came along. But when he saw the man lying there, he crossed to the other side of the road and passed him by. A Levite walked over and looked at him, but he also passed by on the other side. Then a despised Samaritan came along, and when he saw the man, he felt compassion for him. Going over to him, the Samaritan soothed his wounds w/ olive oil/wine and bandaged them. Then he put the man on his donkey and took him to an inn, where he took care of him. The next day he handed the innkeeper two denarii, telling him, 'Take care of this man. If his bill runs higher than this, I'll pay you the next time I'm here.'" Jesus asked, "Now which of these three would you say was a neighbor to the man who was attacked by bandits?" The man said, "The one who showed him mercy." Then Jesus said, "Yes, now go and do the same." Luke 10:25-37

We all know this story as the parable of the GS. IT's one of Jesus' most famous teachings. Contextually, this parable is concerned w/ the question – **what must I do to have eternal life?** While practicality, it asks the question of **who is my neighbor** and **what kind of neighbor will I be**.

The unique thing about this parable was how real the context was. The 17-mile stretch of road b/w Jericho to Jerusalem was a perilous road due to sharp turns, steep drop-offs, and 100's of marauding gangs taking advantage of travelers. It was so dangerous, the locals called it "**the way of blood**." So, when Jesus offered this parable, it had a familiarity to it.

While this story certainly makes Jesus' point about salvation, I think it also addresses a relevant question that applies to living proactively/positively in a CC – and it all has to do we deciding **who is my neighbor** and **what kind of neighbor will I be?**

I WHO is My Neighbor?

How we see/engage people will make all the difference. If we only see people as an obstacle to overcome or a difficulty to endure, then we'll struggle w/ life. But if we see them as a gift to enjoy, a friend to support, and a blessing to our lives – then we can make a difference in each other's lives no matter our culture.

In this story, we learn there are (5) kinds of neighbors:

- **Ransacked** – those who've been wounded and victimized and in need for someone to help them.
- **Robbers** – those who live by the philosophy of what yours is mine and I'm going to take it.
- **Religious** – those who fake being concerned for others b/c they're only really in it for themselves hiding behind the banner of "loving" God.
- **Reluctant** – those who lend a hand b/c they're forced to help whether they really want to or not.
- **Responsive** – those who genuinely live their faith caring for others the way that Jesus cares for them.

Here's the mil. \$ question? Which of these people is our neighbor? ALL OF THEM! The good, the bad, and the ugly are our neighbors. People we like/don't like – those who like/don't like us! They're all our neighbors.

I think we sometimes forget this! I think we see our neighbors as only the people we like and who are like us – people who are worthy of our investment.

LBH – life/ministry is so much easier/non-invasive when our neighbor is someone we like/get along w/. After all, isn't it easier to talk w/ a person of faith more than it is to speak w/ an atheist? Easier to talk w/ someone of our political leaning than someone who disagrees w/ me. Yet the Gospel is for everyone – no matter their station in life.

This is one of the points of Jesus' story – everyone matters to God. While no one may be worthy of His grace/mercy, He loves them and died for them.

God made Him who knew no sin to become sin so that we all could be made right w/ God. 2 Corinthians 5:21
I think a big point in this parable is that b/c God so loved everyone in the world, we too should love everyone no matter their race, gender, socio-economic background, national origin/culture – even whether or not they're UGA or GT fans. **I know!**

Point – the more we see people the way Jesus sees them, the more likely we are to love/help them instead of cancel/hurt them.

Which brings us to the second and possibly, more important question...

II WHAT Kind of Neighbor Am I?

Once we begin to understand/see people the way God sees them, it should begin to change how we engage.

- **We too can be robbers** – people who only engage to take advantage of the situation for personal gain. We see this far too often in our world. Something bad occurs and the vultures swoop in.
- **We can be like the religious** – talking a great spiritual game, but when the need arises, we're nowhere to be found passing by on the other side.

Let me mention of something here. These guys were as bad, if not worse, than the robbers b/c they had the ability to help but didn't want to be bothered.

I read a story this week about a woman who was attacked in broad daylight. For 30 min., she screamed for help as her assailant brutally beat/stabbed her. At least 38 people looked down from their apartments and watched the crime take place w/ no one bothering to call the police. When the authorities arrived and began asking questions about why no one had done anything, the response was, "We didn't want to get involved."

These religious leaders could've done something. They could've helped. **But they did nothing!**

Listen – the greatest indictment on a reality/vitality of a person's faith is their unwillingness to get engaged. ***The problem w/ the priest/Levite is not what they did – but what they didn't do.*** They didn't rob/beat the man, they just left him for dead – they did nothing!

Can I tell you the quickest way we can shut this church down; the quickest way we can kill our witness and cause others to have no interest in God – it's to **do nothing and by passing by on the other side.**

Possibly the greatest problems in ministry today are too many professing Christian have become far too casual w/ ministry and too consumed w/ themselves. It can be as simple as passing by on the other side when the offering plate is passed – to passing by the church services to engage in a community activity – to passing by a chance to serve/bless others when the need arises – all b/c we don't want to get involved!

- We can also be like the **reluctant** – people who get involved only so deep, so long as we never have to get our hands dirty or be inconvenienced.
- We can be like the **responsive** – b/c of our genuine faith/trust in Christ, we'll do what is necessary to minister to others to influence them to Jesus.

Let me take a moment to point out the (5) essential actions required to being a good neighbor in a CC.

A A GN isn't **CONCERNED** about what others think

While this truth isn't obvious in the text, it is implied. In this time, if you really wanted to insult someone, you'd call them a Samaritan. It was the ultimate jab.

DYK – the Pharisees were known to go into the Temple to thank God that they had not been born a woman, a Gentile, or a Samaritan.

I think Jesus was making a point in making the Samaritan the hero in this story. ***It doesn't matter who you are or what others think of you – being a GN is the always the right thing.*** Yet this will never happen if you're too concerned about what others think of you.

B A GN **SEES / RESPONDS** to the Need

The robbers saw an opening. The religious saw an inconvenience – but this Samaritan saw/met a need.

Honest – If you've ever truly been in need, it makes it easier to have a sensitivity for others in need.

Several yrs ago, **I hated making hospital visits.** Yes, it's part of being in the ministry, yet I didn't like going to the hospital. That is, until Meg/I were in the hospital for (4) days after Colin had a bad seizure and almost died. For (4) days, no one called/checked on us. No pastor. No friend. No one. ***That experience changed me.*** Now, instead of being concerned about my dislike for hospitals, I think about the family not experiencing what we experienced – and I go willingly.

Yet it's more than just seeing the need, we also must be ready/willing to respond to the need. We've got to be willing to get our hands dirty.

Yet if we're honest, sometimes we're like the little girl in S.S. studying the GS story. The teacher asked, "Now if you saw a person lying in a ditch, beaten up, lying in his own blood, his teeth knocked out – what would you do?" The little girl said, "I think I'd throw up."

Yes, ministry is messy! And sometimes it's sickening. But this is what is required to meet someone at the point of their need. I can't begin to tell you the things our staff has had to deal w/ and the challenges we've been fortunate to engage over the past few weeks. There's no shortage of need – and much of it is really difficult – yet this is what Jesus has called us to be a part of for His glory – but we have to see/engage it.

C A GN isn't **INCONVENIENCED** by the need

While it is only implied in the story, we often miss that the Samaritan was busy on his journey. He too had somewhere to be, people to see, and things to do. For all we know, he may've been on a business trip or attempting to meet a deadline – and yet he stopped.

Why? B/c that's what we all should do. To help someone isn't just Christian – it's human.

Can I share a kind but difficult word I see/hear all too often when it comes to ministering to others?

Far too many of us are too busy, too preoccupied, and too consumed w/ our own plans to meet the needs of others. Too busy to attend a church service or grab a few extra items for the food drive. Too preoccupied to take an hour to paint a room at the church or help pack a meal for a less fortunate child in our community. Too busy? Or are we too consumed – we're too something.

Listen – If you're waiting for the ministry needs of others to fit into your plans, you're going to be waiting along time. Our lives will always be inconvenienced by real ministry b/c real ministry seldom ever occurs according to plan. So, the question of ministry can never be defined by convenience, but rather by our disposition/focus. The GS stopped for no other reason than he had a genuine care/compassion for others. It was never about him. **Who is your life really about?**

D A GN **GIVES** to Meet the Need

Not only will ministry be inconvenient – we learn that it'll also be costly. For the GS, it cost time, money, and even his ride.

Listen – if we want to see things in our culture change than we must be willing to make a few sacrifices to meet the need. It might cost time. It might cost money. Or it might be as simple as costing us our opinion/bias.

I can assure you of this – digging in to fight culture was neither Jesus calling nor His teaching. But He has called us to lay down our lives to give life to others just as He laid down His life to give life to you/me.

I read a story this week about a shoe salesman looking out of the store window on a cold winter's day as a young boy stood barefoot outside. Trying to keep warm, the boy was standing on a grate blowing hot air outside the bakery. Here was this shoe salesman surrounded by all kinds of shoes, yet he was uncertain about what he ought to do. Suddenly, a lady walked up to the boy, whispered in his ear, and then escorted the boy into the shoe store where she bought the boy new socks/shoes. As the shivering boy put them on, he asked, "Are you God's wife?" She said, "No, son, I'm just one of His children." He smiled and said, "Well, I knew you must be kin to Him somehow."

The way I see it – we can be a part of the solution or we can be a part of the problem.

We can engage/love our neighbors as Jesus loves us and as we want to be loved – or we can live only concerned for ourselves.

We can continue to cancel others b/c of their sin or we can strive to introduce others to the God who canceled their sin on an old rugged cross.

It all boils down to the kind of neighbor we decide that we want to be!