

Sunday, March 26, 2023
WHO IS MY NEIGHBOR?

Luke 10:25-37 (NKJV)

This is a story known in the Christian world as the story of “The Good Samaritan”. Truly, this is a story of revival through relationship. Many of us don’t know our neighbors. So, let’s allow Jesus to introduce us to our neighbor.

What shall I do to inherit eternal life?

This question is great because we all want to know the answer. Notice the response:

“You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, with all your soul, with all your strength, and with all your mind, and love your neighbor as yourself.”

Jesus said, “Do this and you will live”. *We can keep all the commandments by keeping two and neither is a command to “do” but a command to “love”.* But, wanting to justify himself, the lawyer asked, “And who is my neighbor?” Not wanting to change but to justify. A big issue in the kingdom. Remember Jesus’ words from Luke 6:32?

“If you love those who love you, what credit is that to you? Even sinners love those who love them.”

Who do you think the lawyer saw as his neighbor – those who think like him – those who vote like him – those who look like him? The definition of “neighbor” in the original language means “near.” It is easy to see how we could justify ourselves according to the definition. But Jesus was about to change or expand upon the definition. He did so by telling a story. A Jewish man is attacked on a journey by robbers. Wounded, he is lying in the roadway to Jericho. The first person along the road is a priest.

Priest: one set apart for a holy purpose.

The priest’s job is to stand in the gap for the people of Israel. One lies in the roadway needing help and he passes him by. The next man who

comes along is a Levite. A Levite was a priest's assistant. How blessed the wounded man must be to have the first two people who happen upon him be God's people. The Levite passes him by. The next man who comes by is a Samaritan. A Samaritan was not simply a person from the region of Samaria. When the Assyrians invaded the northern tribes and carried them off, people from Gentile lands were brought to live in Israel. The Jews despised the Samaritans for two primary reasons:

1. They saw them as "half-breeds" – a product of intermarriage between Israelites and Gentiles, originating from the Assyrian occupation.
2. They saw them as heretics. The Samaritans believed that the Levitical tribe of Israel had been usurped and corrupted and had set up their own site of worship on Mt. Gerizim.

In John 8:48, the Jews accused Jesus of being a Samaritan.

John 8:48 (NKJV)

The hatred between the two was mutual based on a long history of racism and abuse. It was "one of these" who happened upon the wounded Jewish man. He helped him. He nursed him. He paid for his care. Who was a neighbor to the man who fell among thieves? Who was the one whose definition of "neighbor" had been expanded to include those traveling the road of life? Who had his prejudices and his comforts submitted to the Lord? Who was willing to reach even to those who had abused him? Who has become a biblical neighbor?

Jesus said to the lawyer and to all of us:

"Go and do likewise."

If you line up the Great Commandment with Jesus' statement, you hear Jesus saying:

"Go and love likewise."

Today's Scriptures:

- Luke 10:25-37 (NKJV)
- Luke 6:32
- John 8:48 (NKJV)