

Luke 10:25-37 – Loving Our Neighbor – Sermon Outline

Intro: The Reformer Ulrich Zwingli ministered to those sick with the plague, not caring for his own health.

Need: Loving our neighbor truly requires sacrifice: of time, health, energy, money, etc. Not selfish motives.

Theme: Jesus teaches true love and compassion for our neighbor.

1. The Lawyer tests Jesus about inheriting eternal life through neighborly love. (25-29)
2. Jesus' parable of the Good Samaritan who showed true neighborly love. (30-37)

I. The Lawyer tests Jesus about inheriting eternal life through neighborly love. (25-29)

A. 25, The lawyer's test of the Greater Lawyer/Teacher Jesus.

1. Lawyer here means one trained in interpreting the Law of Moses/O.T.
2. This lawyer addresses Christ as Teacher, indicating that Jesus had the reputation of being the Teacher of the land, and that the lawyer here addresses him as such, likely enviously.
3. "What shall I do to inherit eternal life" seems like a question of works-righteousness. Jesus will respond and show the Lawyer that perfect love for God and neighbor is required for eternal life.
4. God's promise to Abraham was that his line would inherit the land with the Lord forever. This eternal, blessed state where God dwells in His land with His people is what it means to "inherit" eternal life.

B. 26, Jesus asks the Lawyer for what is written in the Scriptures, and how the lawyer interprets it.

1. Remember Jesus' words to Nicodemus in John 3:10, "Are you the teacher of Israel, and do not know these things?" Here Jesus simply puts the question back on the lawyer, since after all this man ought to know the law and what is written in it. Notice that Christ is asking for the lawyer's interpretation.
2. It must be recognized that Christ alone has the True interpretation of Scripture in full, He is the Word.
3. But as we study the Scriptures enlightened by Christ's Spirit, we come more and more to have this true interpretation. Hence our creeds, confessions, catechisms, etc.
4. The Spirit has worked over many centuries and generations since Christ's coming, shedding light on all the Scriptures. To abandon creeds and confessions is to claim that the Spirit has not been doing the work He was sent to do, which is make Christ and the Father known through the Bible.
5. If we must start at square one, with just us and the Bible, we make our own interpretation the gold standard, the creed and confession, abandoning the work of the Spirit revealing the Word of God in the Scriptures to the body of Christ for the past 2,000 years.
6. At the same time, every creed, confession, catechism must be checked against the Bible, and where the Bible and confessions differ, we must go with the Bible gladly.
7. Christ does not appeal to Jewish interpretive tradition, but to this man's understanding of the Scriptures. If our confessionalism is devoid of Scripturalism, it is a wicked confessionalism.
8. True confession is confessing Christ in our words drawn from the teaching and meaning of the Bible.

C. 27-29, The lawyer answers correctly, Jesus affirms his answer, but lawyer questions who neighbor is.

1. The lawyer does know the O.T. Scriptures, quoting from Deut. 6:5 from the Great Shema passage, and perhaps Lev. 19:18 to love neighbor as oneself. This is technically the correct answer.
2. Life by the law requires perfect law keeping, loving God with your whole being, and loving your neighbor perfectly even as you love yourself. So Jesus says indeed, if you do this, you will live. Indeed, the O.T. faith and the N.T. faith are one, to love God and neighbor perfectly.

D. But the lawyer, "wanting to justify himself" in v. 29, asks who his neighbor actually is.

1. Incredibly, it doesn't dawn on the lawyer, the expert on the law but not an expert on his sinful condition/heart, that he cannot do this and has not done this.

2. Rather, he tries to “lower the bar” of God’s law, which all legalists and antinomians alike do, and justify himself by figuring out who is his neighbor.
3. In short, the expert on the law, with all the rituals and regulations and blood sacrifice to atone for sin that the O.T. vividly portrays, actually thought no blood sacrifice was necessary for him, that by his own obedience he could merit, or inherit, eternal life.
4. He likely hopes and expects to say the real neighbors are fellow Jews, which would equate to fellow Christians for us today. The Jews were often hostile to any foreigners, though even the O.T. commands kindness to those coming from abroad.
5. We likewise should be kind and compassionate even to non-Christians, when need arises and is thrust upon us. Volunteering at food drives, blood banks, clothing ministries, etc., are all good deeds and an expression of loving neighbor as oneself.
6. The needs of the body are true needs, and we hope that through meeting those needs we can point others to the greater need of spiritual healing and provision in Christ.
7. How often do we justify ourselves, by trying to tweak God’s word to fight our sinful lifestyles, to justify ourselves to continue in that sin, or that lowering of God’s standard? We must repent of this twisting.
8. If we are truly saved, we do repent of this, and correct, and turn again to the holy standard of God’s law, and ask for God’s strength to live righteously, not for salvation, but as a blessing of salvation.

II. Jesus’ parable of the Good Samaritan who showed true neighborly love. (30-37)

- A. 30, Jesus describes a common scene of a man robbed and bloodied on the road to Jericho.
 1. Geography lesson. Jericho is about 18 miles northeast of Jerusalem, so how is it that a man can go down from Jerusalem to Jericho? It is the elevation above sea level. Jerusalem was much higher, and received much more rain. Jericho was an arid climate, an oasis in a desert.
 2. One source says, “A traveler descended from Jerusalem’s height, approximately twenty-five hundred feet above sea level, to Jericho’s depth, some eight hundred twenty-five feet below sea level.”
 3. There were some 12,000 priests and Levites that had on a rotational basis to serve in the temple, so many would live in Jericho. So Jesus’ parable is not an unlikely true story/similar to real events.
 4. Historical record and archaeological evidence indicates that bandits/thieves found this route between Jerusalem to Jericho to be very enticing. It was heavily traveled, especially with the pilgrimages made to Jerusalem for the feast days, for commerce, etc., and one could quickly escape into the desert regions and get away undetected.
 5. Evidence also shows that Roman judges deemed the road unsafe, and so setup sentry posts to guard the road for travelers.
 6. So Jesus did not pick the Jerusalem to Jericho road at random, but gave an illustration that was common, likely to happen, and indeed, this lawyer may have been in the very position to help his “neighbor”, a man attacked by thieves and left for dead. Jesus is sticking it to this lawyer here.
 7. This should be something that pricks his conscience. The fact that a Samaritan is the one who keeps the law would be doubly insulting to the Jewish expert of the law, and also points to Christ’s wider mercy and grace working in the hearts of not just ethnic Jews but all peoples.
 8. The man is left “half dead” naked, wounded, and without any help. He needs a neighbor!
 9. This isn’t a fender bender accident. This man’s life is in danger. If we drive by and see a fender bender, we have no real obligations to stop and help.
 10. But if we witness a rollover car crash, particularly if no one else is rushing to help, we should stop and help or at least call for paramedics, etc. That is loving our neighbor well.

- B. 31-32, We see the corruption of the priests and Levites who look but do not help the dying man.
1. The priest and Levite are likely going to or from their priestly service. The Levites assisted the priests, while the priests descended from the line of Aaron, Moses' brother, and performed the sacrifices.
 2. But the Levites were custodians of the temple, keeping the utensils, etc., clean and prepared.
 3. We can think of Elders and deacons in the church. If they pass by to help one in need, if they do not practice what they preach, how can they expect the congregation to practice what is preached?
- C. 33, It is the Samaritan, of all people, to have true compassion on the dying man.
1. Notice the priest, Levite, and the Samaritan all see this man. The first two have no compassion but pass by uncaring.
 2. But the Samaritan has compassion, a word that literally means to be moved in the bowels, in the guts/heart, where the seat of affections resides.
 3. Jesus often, when seeing the multitudes hungry, destitute, needing teaching, or ministering to faithful individuals, has compassion on them, and then feed, teach, or heal them, depending on the need.
 4. The parable of the prodigal son, when the son returns, the father is said to have compassion on his son, seeing him afar off, and runs to him and kisses him.
 5. J.C. Ryle notes that there are few true friends who will compassionately, sacrificially love others.
 6. The care usually has an ulterior motive, some self-interested, or else it isn't given.
 7. "Pure brotherly love is as rare as diamonds and rubies" Ryle says. Yet this Samaritan has such love.
- D. 34-35 The Samaritan's compassionate love in action to a despised Jewish man.
1. True compassion leads to sacrificial action. That is truly loving your neighbor well. A few kind words, or as James 2:16 puts it, saying "be warmed and filled" when you do nothing to help the needy to be warmed and filled when you could, is a great sin.
 2. In fact James says such is a dead faith, a faith without works, without sacrificial love.
 3. It is to be faithless, to lack true saving faith, despite what is professed. The priest and levite cannot even manage to utter a prayer for the man or call for help. They simply pass by.
 4. The Jews and Samaritans would argue about precise rules for worship, dietary restrictions, among other things. This passage also shows that certain minutiae or outward observance avails not if you have not love. I Cor. 13 reminds us of this.
 5. A Covenantal Calvinist who doesn't practice what he knows is a greater sinner than the faithful Arminian who faithfully practices what he gets right.
 6. This lawyer in our text may have better doctrine, but holds it within a dead, unregenerate heart.
 7. Better to be a poor theologian with a renewed heart than an expert theologian with a dead soul.
 8. Picture the Samaritan taking the shirt off his back as it were, to bind up this man's wounds. This man being in Jerusalem was no Samaritan, but likely a Jewish person. So the Samaritan is overlooking that ethnic and cultural and religious rivalry to do what the Lord commands in His Word.
 9. The oil and wine act as a balm and disinfectant. He then carries the man on his animal, brings him to an inn for rest, and even then does not leave him but continues to nurture him, to take care of him.
 10. "Take care" is only used here + next verse, and in I Tim. 3:5, where we read of the Elder qualification to rule his own household well, otherwise, "how shall he take care of the Church of God?"
 11. That teaches us much of the sacrificial care an elder should have both in his home and the Church.
 12. This is a strong statement, a convicted compassion, a heartfelt, actionable love for this dying man.
- E. 35, The Samaritan's true neighbor love is seen by the fruit/actions it produces for the dying man.

1. He cares for the man all night, then gives two denarii, two days' wages, to cover the costs with the innkeeper, and says if there is more costs needed to provide for the man, he will return and repay it.
 2. This is real provision for a stranger, yet in this context, the stranger is a neighbor!" John 4:9 shows the Samaritan woman marveling that the Jewish Jesus would speak to her, for Jews have no dealings with Samaritans. Here we see the Samaritan serving like the Jewish Jesus.
 3. Tithing or giving to a mercy ministry is relatively easy. Getting our hands dirty with the needy is hard.
 4. But money and prayers alone will not help a man who is bleeding to death and wounded. Zwingli did more than just pray and proclaim the Word to those dying of the plague. He met them on their sick-beds, likely bound up some of their wounds, and got the plague himself, nearly killing him.
 5. Our neighbor is not everyone everywhere. It is proximity, family, friends, church, etc., that defines the first circle of who our neighbor is. But anyone who is in dire need, dying, desperate, etc., and who comes to us in sincerity, or we stumble upon them, in that dire moment, they are our neighbor.
- F. 36-37, Jesus now questions the lawyer, asking who was the true neighbor, and tells the lawyer to do as this Samaritan has done if he wishes by his own righteousness to inherit eternal life.
1. The real thief was the one who passed by and did not give the compassion and love that was owed, was due, to this half-dead neighbor.
 2. We rob the Lord and our neighbor when we do not have actionable compassion on them.
 3. The Lawyer rightly answers, saying the one who "showed mercy" on the dying man.
 4. "Showed" is a word that means do, or make. It is an action, not a mere sentiment. The compassion of the Samaritan prompted the merciful action toward the half-dead, naked, robbed man.
 5. Indeed, our Lord's compassion led Him to come down for His bride, to wrest her away from Satan and her sin, to cleanse & sanctify her, to present her spotless in glory at the Lamb's wedding feast.
 6. The Lord's love and mercy led to sacrificial action, indeed, a sacrificial life lived for us, to then face a sacrificial, painful and shameful death for us. This is the true and ultimate mercy and grace.
 7. And it is that compassionate cross-bearing that we are also called to, in service to Him/one another.
- G. Hence Christ says "Go and do likewise". Does this mean Jesus thinks the lawyer can earn eternal life?
1. No, rather he is saying, if you want to keep the law, you have to perfectly do such things.
 2. Jesus knows the lawyer has not done this, and so this is Jesus' way of calling him to repent of self-righteousness and look to righteousness outside of Himself, ultimately to the righteousness of Christ.
 3. But remember that this man came trying to test Jesus, not asking sincerely. He was no Nicodemus, more like a Judas.
 4. So Jesus does not give Him the words of life, does not tell him he must be born again to enter the kingdom of God. He leaves him with the law, and lets the expert of the law figure out how he's going to manage to inherit eternal life by his own inherent righteousness.
 5. Thus the Gospel is hidden from the wise and revealed to babes, as Jesus has just rejoiced.
 6. The Parables reveal Christ and His kingdom/Gospel to humble Samaritans, and conceal it to proud Jewish lawyers. The Lord is no respecter of persons. He saves the penitent, & destroys the haughty.
 7. May we seek the light of Christ in His Word, and ask for a clearer sight of Him, a stronger work of His Spirit in us to serve Him and love our neighbors as ourself, in all humility.
 8. Let us seek sanctification through our Lord and Savior, laying hold of all the means of grace, His Word, prayer, the sacraments, fellowship with the saints, being neighborly to one another, & doing it all as a service to Christ Himself. Our renewed hearts are revealed in loving compassion. Let's pray.