

Luke 10:25-37

25 Just then a lawyer stood up to test Jesus. "Teacher," he said, "what must I do to inherit eternal life?" 26 He said to him, "What is written in the law? What do you read there?" 27 He answered, "You shall 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 your neighbor as yourself." 28 And he said to him, "You have given the right answer; do this, and you will live." 29 But wanting to justify himself, he asked Jesus, "And who is my neighbor?" 30 Jesus replied, "A man was going down from Jerusalem to Jericho, and fell into the hands of robbers, who stripped him, beat him, and went away, leaving him half dead. 31 Now by chance a priest was going down that road; and when he saw him, he passed by on the other side. 32 So likewise a Levite, when he came to the place and saw him, passed by on the other side. 33 But a Samaritan while traveling came near him; and when he saw him, he was moved with pity. 34 He went to him and bandaged his wounds, having poured oil and wine on them. Then he put him on his own animal, brought him to an inn, and took care of him. 35 The next day he took out two denarii, gave them to the innkeeper, and said, 'Take care of him; and when I come back, I will repay you whatever more you spend.' 36 Which of these three, do you think, was a neighbor to the man who fell into the hands of the robbers?" 37 He said, "The one who showed him mercy." Jesus said to him, "Go and do likewise" (NRSV).

In the middle of Jesus' ministry he sends his disciples out on a mission. They return with news of great success. Then a lawyer challenges Jesus. We know nothing about him and his connection to Jesus. We don't know if he witnessed miracles, heard Jesus himself, or heard about him through the disciples. What we do know is that he decided to test Jesus. His thinking is focused on one thing - his own salvation. So, Jesus responds with something like - you're a lawyer, you know the law, what does the law say? The lawyer responds with something like - love God completely, one hundred percent, with all of your heart, soul, mind, and strength and your neighbor as yourself. So, here we see that the commandment to love your neighbor as yourself is not unique to the teaching of Jesus. The lawyer knew this, but not from the teaching of Jesus, he knew this because of the law. **Leviticus 19:18** You shall not take vengeance or bear a grudge against any of our people, but you shall love your neighbor as yourself: I am the Lord (NRSV). It is a scriptural mandate that is commanded by God. It is the word of God from Moses to love God completely and to love your neighbor as yourself. The lawyer knew the answer and has known the answer all along, but he needed justification so he asked Jesus "Who is my neighbor?" The answer from Jesus is the famous Good Samaritan parable. A man is robbed, stripped, beaten, and left for dead. The priest should be one that is willing to help. He should be following what his religion designates. He is a priest and helping is a mandate from God. Instead of doing what is righteous, he ignores the man that needs help. The Levite should help for the same reasons. The tribe of Levi is consecrated as the religious tribe of Israel. He is supposed to be righteous but ignores the man that needs help. The Samaritan however, is rejected and despised because he is from the northern tribes that have a long history of conflict with the southern tribes and are, at that time, in opposition to Judaism.

Jesus identifies the neighbor through righteous action. The victim that needs help is not identified in any way other than being a man. We do not know anything discriminatory: religion, race, age, or social status. The Samaritan is moved with pity and is classified as righteous by the actions that he takes in helping the victim. It is important to understand that he is not righteous because of his actions; he takes the correct action because he is righteous. I call your attention to all of the things that he did. First of all he went to the man in need while others avoided him. He makes an effort to help when others avoid the need. He bandaged the wounds using his own resources of oil and wine. He provided transportation by using his own animal. He found a safe place, took the man to an inn and paid for it. He stayed the night and then paid for someone else to care for him.

There are three loves demonstrated in the parable - love God, love your neighbor, and love yourself. The Good Samaritan exhibited self-care. He delegated responsibility of care to others and finished his journey. He avoided burnout because he delegated a shared responsibility. Last week the lesson was on not growing weary. Well it is one thing to have it commanded; it's another thing all together to have a lesson on how to avoid it. We walk in footsteps of Christ. We are all called to help those in need. But the world is full of need and there is more need than we can possibly meet. So, you have to maintain a balance between devotion to God, helping the suffering, and self care. To be in good spiritual condition you have to have resources outside of the life of the church: sleep, exercise, hobbies, and passions. Many times in the life of Jesus he took time away from ministry and found places of solitude. Christ did not heal all the sick in Palestine and he did not feed all of the hungry.

The lawyer realizes that the one that is acting like a neighbor is the one that showed mercy. The lawyer has known all along the answers to his own questions. What must I do for eternal life? Love God completely and love neighbor as yourself. Who is my neighbor? Everyone regardless of religion, race, age, or social status is your neighbor. The lesson is about showing mercy. Then Jesus concludes the lesson by instructing the neighbor to go and do the same.

The neighbor is anybody and everybody regardless of religion, race, age, social status, and gender. The good neighbor is you - the one that shows mercy and does not avoid the need. The one that is able to provide help is one that balances loving care of God, neighbor, and self. Care for self is modeled in the Scripture as the Samaritan finished his journey. He exhibited a balance of care for the other and care for the self. The love of God is interconnected with love of neighbor as the wounded victim experienced the love of God through the ministry of care.