What Does It Mean To “Love My Neighbor?”


In today’s message we are going to be looking at one of the most familiar parables Jesus taught during His earthly ministry, and that is The Parable of The Good Samaritan. This parable is recorded in three of the four gospels. For our study this morning we want to read the account in LUKE chapter 10.


25 And behold, a certain lawyer stood up and tested Him, saying, “Teacher, what shall I do to inherit eternal life?”

26 He said to him, “What is written in the law? What is your reading of it?”

27 So he answered and said, “ ‘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 ‘your neighbor as yourself.’”

28 And He said to him, “You have answered rightly; do this and you will live.”

29 But he, wanting to justify himself, said to Jesus, “And who is my neighbor?”

30 Then Jesus answered and said: “A certain man went down from Jerusalem to Jericho, and fell among thieves, who stripped him of his clothing, wounded him, and departed, leaving him half dead.

31 Now by chance a certain priest came down that road. And when he saw him, he passed by on the other side.

32 Likewise a Levite, when he arrived at the place, came and looked, and passed by on the other side.

33 But a certain Samaritan, as he journeyed, came where he was. And when he saw him, he had compassion.

34 So he went to him and bandaged his wounds, pouring on oil and wine; and he set him on his own animal, brought him to an inn, and took care of him.
35 On the next day, when he departed, he took out two denarii, gave them to the innkeeper, and said to him, ‘Take care of him; and whatever more you spend, when I come again, I will repay you.’

36 So which of these three do you think was neighbor to him who fell among the thieves?”

37 And he said, “He who showed mercy on him.” Then Jesus said to him, “Go and do likewise.”

Introduction

The question, “What Shall I Do To Inherit Eternal Life?” is without a doubt the most important question anyone could ever ask. It is more important than the question: “Whom shall I marry?” It is more important than the question: “What will I do to make a living?” The matter of where I am going to spend my eternity is the most crucial question we will ever answer in this life.

In our text, a Jewish lawyer stood up in a crowd of people one day, and asked Jesus this greatest of all questions: “What shall I do to inherit eternal life?”

As Jesus did so often in the gospels, He answered the lawyer’s question with a question of His own. Verse 26 Jesus asked him, “What is written in the law? “What is your reading of it?” In other words, “How would you interpret it?”

The lawyer responds in Verse 27, “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 YOUR NEIGHBOR AS YOURSELF.”

What the lawyer has quoted here are “The greatest of all the commandments.” To LOVE GOD and LOVE YOUR NEIGHBOR are the “two hinges” upon which all the laws of GOD rest.
Jesus told the Lawyer he had answered correctly, then commanded him to keep this command and he would live.

Being a proud, self-righteous Pharisee, this lawyer believed he had kept both of these great commands. And in an attempt to “justify” himself or “make himself look righteous” in front of the crowd, the lawyer asked Jesus to answer this question: “And who is my neighbor?” You see, this lawyer and all his fellow Pharisees interpreted “one's neighbor” to mean “their fellow Jews,” but not Gentiles or Samaritans.

But as Jesus proceeds to tell His “Parable of The Good Samaritan” it exposes the ugly truth about this lawyer and that is he wasn’t even close to fulfilling the second half of “The Great Command,” let alone the first half.

As we think about “What It Means To Love Our Neighbor” I want to point out three important truths Jesus reveals to us in this parable.

TRUTH #1: Loving Our Neighbor Means Meeting His Most Practical Needs (Verses 33, 34)

vs. 33,34 But a certain Samaritan, as he journeyed, came where he was. And when he saw him, he had compassion. So he went to him and bandaged his wounds, pouring on oil and wine; and he set him on his own animal, brought him to an inn, and took care of him.

1. Being Christians, we might think “the spiritual thing” for the Samaritan to have done would have been to have KNEEL DOWN AND PRAYED WITH THE WOUNDED MAN ........or.......TO HAVE READ HIM SOME COMFORTING SCRIPTURES FROM THE PSALMS........or.........MAYBE HE COULD HAVE LEFT HIM A GOSPEL TRACT TO READ ONCE HE GOT TO FEELING BETTER.
2. But notice, the Samaritan didn’t do anything that we might consider “the Christian thing to do.”

The Samaritan saw a man who was half dead lying in the road who’s most immediate and practical needs at the moment were to have his wounds bandaged up and to get him to a place where he could recover.

3. Just who was this poor victim? Jesus simply says in verse 30, “A certain man went down from Jerusalem to Jericho.” That tells us that in all likelihood the victim was a Jewish man. In other words, he was “an enemy” to the Samaritan, and yet the Samaritan LOVED HIM AS HIS NEIGHBOR.

4. Think about what Jesus said in Matthew 25 about “loving our neighbors” in a very “practical” way:

   Jesus said, “For I was hungry and you gave Me food; I was thirsty and you gave Me drink, I was a stranger and you took Me in, I was naked and you clothed Me, I was sick and you visited Me; I was in prison and you came to Me.”

   (Matthew 25:35-36 NKJV)

4. And do you remember what James wrote in his letter about showing love to our neighbors on a very practical level?

   James 2:15-16 (NKJV) If a brother or sister is naked and destitute of daily food, and one of you says to them, “Depart in peace, be warmed and filled,” but you do not give them the things which are needed for the body, what does it profit?”
5. Dr. Floyd Clark, my professor of New Testament Studies at Johnson Bible College used to tell us, “You can’t minister to a hungry man until you do something about his hunger. You can’t minister to a hurting man until you first do something about his pain.”

6. You see, one of the valuable truths we can learn from “The Parable of The Good Samaritan” is this: When it comes to “loving our neighbor” we often must minister to our neighbor’s most pressing, practical, physical needs before we can minister to his spiritual needs.

Now here is TRUTH #2.................

TRUTH #2: Loving Our Neighbor Means Taking Action, Not Making Excuses (vs. 30-32)

30 Then Jesus answered and said: “A certain man went down from Jerusalem to Jericho, and fell among thieves, who stripped him of his clothing, wounded him, and departed, leaving him half dead.

31 Now by chance a certain priest came down that road. And when he saw him, he passed by on the other side.

32 Likewise a Levite, when he arrived at the place, came and looked, and passed by on the other side.

1. Charles Spurgeon once said, “I never knew a man refuse to help the poor who failed to give at least one admirable excuse.”

2. Jesus doesn’t tell us what the PRIEST and LEVITE were thinking as they passed by the victim on the other side of the road, but both of them probably thought of lots of excuses in their minds as to why they couldn’t stop to help.
*Perhaps they feared being mugged by the same thieves who had attacked the victim.

*Perhaps they had important religious duties to tend to in Jericho.

*Perhaps they had promised their families they would be home at a certain time.

*Perhaps they didn’t want to become “ceremonially unclean” by touching the wounds of the victim.

*Perhaps they rationalized in their minds that someone else would surely come along and help the victim; and perhaps they even said a “quick prayer” for the victim as they passed by to soothe their own conscience.

3. Whatever their excuses may have been, the point is, they didn’t stop to help. They “blew an opportunity” to love their neighbor.

4. But then along came “The Good Samaritan” **WHO TOOK ACTION, INSTEAD OF MAKING EXCUSES.**

*He faced the same risks and dangers as the Priest and Levite.  
*He likely had plans, just like the Priest and Levite.  
*It was just as inconvenient for the Samaritan to stop as it was for the Priest and Levite.

But he took **ACTION** instead of **MAKING EXCUSES.**
5. Does this mean we are to just “throw caution to the wind?” NO! It would be absolutely foolish for any of you women to stop and pick up hitch-hiker or to offer a ride to a stranger who's car is broken down along the highway.

   Sometimes there are very valid reasons why we can’t render aid to someone in need.

6. But when it comes to “loving our neighbor” we must be willing to do THE RIGHT THING at the RIGHT TIME. That’s what the Samaritan did.

   ILLUSTRATION

   Perhaps many of you saw the news report recently (JUNE 26, 2014) of the young mother in Salem, New Jersey who was viciously attacked by a woman wearing a FAST-FOOD uniform.

   After knocking the victim to the ground the attacker punched the helpless victim twenty times. As the attack was going on, the victim's toddler son intervened and tried to stop the attack. The attacker told the mother to get her young son to “back off” or she was going to kick him in the face.

   Perhaps the most shocking thing of all about this brutal attack is that several by-standers stood by and watched the whole attack without ever once intervening to stop it. Instead they pulled out their cell phones and took videos of the attack to post on Face Book and Youtube.

7. I'm sure all those by-standers had lots of excuses as to why they didn’t step in and do something. Ironically, it was the woman's little toddler son who was willing to take action, even risking his own life.
8. Hopefully none of us will ever find ourselves in a situation that drastic. But here’s the point: Whenever we encounter someone in need, whether it’s the person with car trouble on the side of the road or the poor family up the road that can’t afford groceries or the widow who can’t keep up with the maintenance on her house. . . . . WE SHOULD BE WILLING TO DO WHATEVER THE LORD BURDENS OUR HEART TO DO.

That’s what it means to “love our neighbor.”

TRUTH #1: Loving Our Neighbor Means Meeting His Most Practical Needs.


Now here’s TRUTH #3 . . . .

TRUTH #3: Loving Our Neighbor Means Being Willing To Make Sacrifices (verses 34,35)

34 So he went to him and bandaged his wounds, pouring on oil and wine; and he set him on his own animal, brought him to an Inn, and took care of him.

35 On the next day, when he departed, he took out two denarii, gave them to the innkeeper, and said to him, ‘Take care of him; and whatever more you spend, when I come again, I will repay you.’

1. The Samaritan sacrificed his own MONEY . . . . his own TIME . . . . and his own CONVENIENCE to help this man in need.

*He probably tore up some of his own clothing to bandage his wounds.

*He walked while the injured man rode his donkey.
*He gave the innkeeper two day’s worth of his own wages in order to provide for the needs of the wounded man, and promised to pay for any further charges if necessary.

2. And on top of all this, we have to remember the Samaritan had to “tear down the wall” of his own racial prejudice against the wounded Jewish man.

3. Any time you and I demonstrate “LOVE TO OUR NEIGHBOR” it will always mean the SACRIFICE of something on our part.

   - It may mean we have to sacrifice some MONEY.
   - It may mean we have to sacrifice some of our MATERIAL POSSESSIONS.
   - It may mean we have to sacrifice some TIME.
   - It may mean we have to sacrifice some of our own CONVENIENCE.

4. When we truly “love our neighbor” our focus will not be upon OUR OWN WELL-BEING, BUT RATHER ON THE WELL-BEING OF OUR NEIGHBOR.
FRED stood anxiously in line waiting his turn to see St. Peter. Finally when he appeared before Peter, Peter asked Fred if he ever did anything to help anyone on earth in their time of need.

Without hesitation, Fred said, “Yeah, one day I was walking along a road when I saw this big guy who belonged to a motorcycle gang beating up this little old lady. He was smacking her around and picking her up over his head like she was a rag-doll.

Well I stepped in and the first thing I did was push his motorcycle over to attract his attention. Then I kicked him real hard in the shins and told the little old lady to run for her life and get some help. Then I hauled off and gave the guy a hard right to his jaw with my fist.

Peter said, “Wow, I'm impressed!” Taking his clipboard in hand, Peter said, “Can you tell me when this happened?” Fred said, “Yeah! It happened about two minutes ago.”

Loving your neighbor certainly isn't without “risks.” But if there is one thing we can learn from Jesus' Parable of the Good Samaritan it is this:

As those who are the recepients of GOD'S LOVE, GOD'S GRACE and GOD'S MERCY, you and I are obligated to show the love of Jesus Christ in practical ways toward those who are in need.

Let us go now and “love our neighbor!”