

FPFWC Christian Development



Inclusive Love

October 2020

Fall Quarter

October 17, 2020

Lesson #3 –Love for Neighbors

SCRIPTURE TEXT – Luke 10:25-37

Key Verse- Which now of these three, thinkest thou, was neighbour unto him that fell among the thieves? And he said, He that shewed mercy on him. Then said Jesus unto him, Go, and do thou likewise.—Luke 10:36–37

ICE BREAKERS

1. How can you be a good neighbor?
2. What has experience taught you about compassion that is reactive (sees a problem happen, then helps) versus proactive (anticipates a problem, then helps before it happens)?

LESSON BACKGROUND –

In his Gospel, Luke recounts Jesus' ministry in three major sections: (1) events in and around Galilee (Luke 4:14–9:50); (2) Jesus on His way to Jerusalem (9:51–19:44); and (3) the events of Jesus' final week in Jerusalem (19:45–24:53). Luke's Gospel is unique in its central section, which begins shortly before our lesson text. The majority of the parables found in Luke are located in this section, the first being the parable in our text.

A primary theme of Jesus' ministry in Judea was God's love for the lost and lowly: sinners (example: Luke 15), outcasts (example: 14:15–24), Samaritans, and the poor (example: 16:19–31). Jesus' countercultural teaching in last week's lesson text, Luke 6:27–36, challenged us to demonstrate inclusive love even toward our enemies. Today's text calls us once again to practice inclusive love. In the passage just prior to our text (10:1–24), Jesus sent out 70 of His followers in pairs to proclaim, through word and deed, that "the kingdom of God is come nigh unto you" (10:9). Both Jesus and His 70 emissaries rejoiced at God's power working through them (10:17–21).

Immediately preceding our lesson passage, Jesus spoke with His 70 followers at the conclusion of their fruitful mission (Luke 10:17–20). Although some commentators view Jesus' interaction with this "lawyer" (10:25) as an interruption of His debriefing discussion with the disciples, the exact time and place of this scene is unspecified.

This parable is unique to Luke, but its subject matter and setting are similar to texts found in Matthew and Mark. Matthew 22:34–40 and Mark 12:28–34 are clearly parallel to one another, but the connection to Luke is less certain (compare Luke 10:27, below). The Lucan event appears to be a separate incident covering the same theme.

LESSON COMMENTARY –

10:25–29. Luke provided no background for this exchange. Apparently Jesus

was teaching in a public setting when a **lawyer** (10:25a) (a scribe schooled in the law of Moses) asked Jesus a question, attempting to find a flaw in Jesus' teaching (**put Him to the test**, 10:25a). While the question itself is a good one—**what shall I do to inherit eternal life?** (10:25b), clearly he “was thinking of some sort of salvation by works and had no understanding of divine grace” (Morris, *Luke*, 187). Jesus' question in response was not intended to be evasive—**What is written in the Law?** (10:26a)—but meant to limit the discussion so as to eliminate from the outset fruitless exchanges and debates involving human speculations (cf. Ti 3:9). In His next question—**How does it read to you?**—Jesus was not asking for the lawyer's own relativistic take on the law but was conducting a counter-test. There was a right and a wrong answer to this question. When the lawyer quoted Dt. 6:5 (“love the LORD your God”) and Lv 19:18 (“love your neighbor as yourself”) (both cited in Lk 10:27), Jesus acknowledged that he had **answered correctly** (10:28a). However, Jesus' quotation of Lv 18:5—**DO THIS AND YOU WILL LIVE** (Lk 10:28b)—brought home the devastating point that perfect obedience to the law was not possible. At this point the lawyer should have realized the inherent error of “works righteousness” implied in his opening question. The lawyer was not ready to give up and so **wishing to justify himself** (10:29a) he evasively asked another question—**And who is my neighbor?** (10:29b). The lawyer was attempting to “limit the commandment” so as to make it possible for him to obey it sufficiently enough to merit eternal life. **To justify** may carry the same sense of “justification” in Paul's writings since Luke was one of Paul's missionary companions and would be steeped in the apostle's theology. Jesus exposed the fallacy of this tactic, and He answered the lawyers' question in the parable of the Good Samaritan.

2. The Good Samaritan (10:30–37)

Several important features of this parable (mostly lost on those who are familiar with its traditional title, if not its specific contents) would have been “contrary to expectation” for the initial audience. The setting (on the road traveling away from Jerusalem to Jericho), the indifferent characters (a priest and a Levite), and especially the hero of the story—a Samaritan—were all contrary to the expectations of a Jewish audience. Such a morality tale would be expected to have the characters moving toward Jerusalem, the initial audience would have expected that the respected religious leaders would be the heroes and the despised Samaritan a scoundrel.

10:30–37. The scene Jesus drew was credible—the 17-mile road between Jerusalem and Jericho (10:30a) had a reputation as a dangerous road (Josephus, *Jewish War*, 4.8.3. §474)—and it was tragic. A man was set upon by **robbers** and beaten and left **half dead** (10:30c). The appearance **by chance** of a **priest** (10:31) offered a ray of hope into this awful scene, but alas the priest **passed by** the broken figure. Perhaps he had concluded that the man was already dead and did not want to risk ceremonial defilement. Likewise a **Levite** (one who assisted priests in the affairs of their ministry) passed by the man (10:32). Depicting these religious authorities as callous and unfeeling would no doubt have scandalized the audience. They would have bristled at the notion that these respected authorities

could be so unsympathetic. However, the appearance of the **Samaritan**, cast in the role of hero would have perplexed Jesus' audience even more. The Samaritans and Jews despised each other (for the reasons for the hatred, see comments on John 4:4–6). Although the hatred ran both ways, Jewish people thought “such people were unclean and were to be avoided” (cf. Bock, *Luke*, 1031). “Jesus' introduction of the Samaritan was thus devastating” (Morris, *Luke*, 189–90). The actions of the Samaritan were compassionate, selfless, and costly (Lk 10:33–35). (None of the elements of this parable is to be taken allegorically.)

Jesus concluded with a final question to the lawyer, one that he could not evade (10:36). The point of Jesus' parable (in answer to the lawyer's question, 10:29c) was this: anyone in need is my neighbor, anyone who helps another in need is my neighbor, and anyone who helps me is my neighbor. Jesus indicated that one's neighbor was anyone in need that an individual could help, and that the help that should be rendered must be lavish and extensive if one wishes “to justify himself” before God as this lawyer did. But the man would not be capable of always fulfilling the law at the level required, and would not be able to “justify himself” by keeping it. When it comes to works righteousness, God is a maximalist with respect to obeying the law. A minimalist approach, as assumed by the lawyer, is unacceptable to Him. For this reason, because of humankind's inability to live the law, justification must be by grace through faith.

LESSON NUGGET – It costs something to be a real neighbor. Do you pause to help when you see injustice and hurt, or like the priest and the Levite, do you look for an escape? You are never more Christlike than when you feel another's hurt and seek to help.

Sources: *Moody Bible Commentary, Standard Lesson Commentary, and The Essential Everyday Bible Commentary*