

Go and Do Likewise

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[0 : 00] And behold, a lawyer stood up to put him to the test, saying, Teacher, what shall I do to inherit eternal life? He said to him, What is written in the law? How do you read it?

And 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. And he said to him, You have answered correctly. Do this and you will live.

But he, desiring to justify himself, said to Jesus, Who is my neighbor? Jesus replied, A man was going down from Jerusalem to Jericho, and he fell among robbers, who stripped him and beat him and departed, leaving him half dead.

Now by chance, a priest was going down that road, and when he saw him, he passed by on the other side. So likewise, a Levite came to the place and saw him and passed by on the other side. But a Samaritan, as he journeyed, came to where he was, and when he saw him, he had compassion. He went to him and bound up his wounds, pouring on oil and wine.

[1 : 20] Then he set him on his own animal and brought him to an inn and took care of him. And the next day he took out two denarii and gave them to the innkeeper, saying, Take care of him, and whatever more you spend, I will repay you when I come back.

Which of these three do you think proved to be a neighbor to the man who fell among the robbers? He said, The one who showed him mercy. And Jesus said to him, You go and do likewise.

Let's pray. Father, we thank you for this word. We thank you for this morning that we get to hear your word and read your word, sing your praises.

Father, we ask that your spirit would guide us now as we look in your word and hear this interaction between the lawyer and the Lord Jesus and what we can gain from this for your glory and for our good.

We ask this in Jesus' name. Amen. Amen. The Good Samaritan. That's one of Jesus' most well-known parables.

[2 : 36] And it's a term that even non-Christians around the world know today. If you help a person in need, you might be complimented by being called a Good Samaritan.

And that sounds normal for us today. But when Jesus had this conversation with this Jewish leader, being a Samaritan was no compliment.

Samaria was between Jerusalem and Galilee. And the Samaritan's living there were distinct from the Jews. They worshipped at a different temple.

And they had some conflicting beliefs. And they were not ethnically speaking from a purely Jewish bloodline. And the Jews and the Samaritans did not get along at all.

In fact, they completely avoided each other. You might ask, well, how bad was it? Well, let me tell you. During a particularly heated exchange in John 8, the Pharisees called Jesus the worst name they could think of as an insult.

[3 : 49] They called him a Samaritan. And the crowd would have just gasped at such an insult. They called him a Samaritan, not related to ethnicity at all, but as an insult to his character.

It reminds me of a scene in the stage adaptation of High School Musical. The drama teacher, Miss Darbus, is constantly frustrated with East High's basketball coach, Coach Bolton.

And during a particularly heated exchange, Coach, Miss Darbus insults the coach by calling him a Philistine. Now, Coach wasn't actually a Philistine.

He wasn't related to Goliath or Delilah or anybody like that. Miss Darbus called him a Philistine as an insult to his character, implying that he was uncivilized and barbaric.

If you're called a Philistine today, that's no good. And if you were called a Samaritan back then, that was no good. But because of this parable, because Jesus chose a Samaritan as the good guy,

being called a Samaritan has now taken on a whole new meaning.

[5 : 16] Let's look at verse 25. And behold, a lawyer stood up to put him to the test, saying, Teacher, what shall I do to inherit eternal life?

This lawyer does not mess around. He gets right to the ultimate question. And this man wasn't a lawyer in the courtroom sense. He was a lawyer in the sense that he was an expert in the law of Moses.

He knew his Torah. And here he is asking the right question to the right person. He asks the one who holds eternal life how to gain eternal life.

And that is amazing. And Jesus turns the question back on the lawyer. Verse 26, he said to him, Well, what's written in the law? How do you read it?

In other words, lawyer, you know the law. What does it say? Verse 27, That's a good answer.

[6 : 32] On a separate occasion, Jesus himself called these the two greatest commandments. So they're starting on common ground. They agree. Verse 28, Jesus said to him, You have answered correctly.

Do this. And you will live. Now let's let that hang in the air for a second. The two laws that merit eternal life.

Love God completely. And love your neighbor completely. So Jesus' answer is clear. Yep, you know it. Love God and love your neighbor.

Now get after it. Alright, who else has a question? You would hope that the lawyer notices a goal. There's a glaring problem here. But no one's done that.

And no one can do that. I mean, think about it. You don't love the Lord consistently with your whole being. And you don't love anyone like you love yourself.

[7 : 35] None of us does that. Including this lawyer. And that's unsettling. According to the law, the way to eternal life is to follow these two exactly.

It's simple. Simple and impossible. It reminds me of a scene in the sandlot. Do you remember when Smalls hits the baseball over the fence?

The baseball that was signed by Babe Ruth and hits it into Mr. Myrtle's backyard? They can't go and get it back because who lives in that backyard?

Anybody know? The beast lives in that backyard. That's right. Now that night, Smalls' best friend, Benny, has a dream when he talks to Babe Ruth who tells him how to get the ball back.

And you know what Babe Ruth says? Just hop over there and get it. The Babe's answer is simple. Simple and impossible.

[8 : 40] Now unlike the lawyer, Benny notices the glaring problem. He says, Wait, wait! I can't. I can't do that. I can't go into that backyard.

There's a beast back there. A giant gorilla dog thing that ate one kid already. The lawyer would have done well to have this same humble insight.

I must love God with my whole being and love my neighbor like I love myself. The lawyer should have said, Wait, wait! I can't do that. Now if this lawyer had acknowledged his inability to fulfill these commands, Jesus would have extended this invitation.

Come to me, you who labor, and I will give you rest. You and I have that same invitation. Come to Jesus because you cannot accomplish what the law requires.

Galatians 2.16 says this, Yet we know that a person is not justified by works of the law, but through faith in Jesus Christ.

[9 : 49] Amen. Amen. We have to acknowledge our helplessness and look to Jesus to forgive our sins and to pay the price that we can't pay.

And then we can praise God that he doesn't treat us as our sins deserve. But the lawyer does not do this. And that's the problem. The lawyer wasn't asking Jesus for guidance.

He was asking for validation. He wanted to justify himself. He wanted to hear that his current understanding of the law is solid.

And that his current standing before God is solid. But before you judge this lawyer, ask yourself, do I do that same thing?

I mean, when you ask your friends or your family for advice or for guidance, are you actually asking them for godly guidance or are you asking for validation?

[10 : 52] Maybe that would be a good response from us. If a friend comes to you with a question or with advice, it might be good to say, wait, are you, do you want guidance or do you want validation?

Verse 29. But he, the lawyer, desiring to justify himself, said to Jesus, and who is my neighbor? It's interesting that he skips right over love the Lord your God with all your heart.

It's possible the lawyer thinks he has that first commandment locked down. So he zeroes in on the second command. And it makes sense why the lawyer asks this because love your neighbor as yourself, presents some loose ends for this lawyer.

For the religious Jews of the day, the accepted teaching was you shall love your neighbor and hate your enemy. But where do they get this?

We can't find God giving this command in the scriptures, which is our only perfect source of God's commands. but the Pharisees had two sources of God's commands.

[12 : 09] There was the Torah and there was another set of teachings called the Oral Torah or the Tradition of the Elders. These Jews believed that on Mount Sinai, Moses received both the written Torah and an Oral Torah or the Tradition of the Elders.

And that's how they interpreted and applied the laws of God. And this still holds true for many practicing Jews around the world. A prime example that helps us understand this is from a man named Maimonides.

Maimonides. I love that name. He lived about 800 years ago. This Jewish rabbi and he was a Torah scholar as well named Maimonides.

He compiled a 14 volume collection of the tradition of the elders and it was known as the Mishnah Torah which means repetition of the Torah.

And this collection is still considered to be one of the most comprehensive and authoritative works of Jewish legal code. And this is what we find when we read chapter 4 paragraph 11 of the section titled Laws for Murderers and the Protection of Life.

[13 : 31] Here's the quote. With regard to a Gentile idolater with whom we are not at war and then it lists some other sinners we should not try to cause their deaths.

It is however forbidden to save their lives if their lives are threatened. For example if such a person fell into the sea one should not rescue him.

Leviticus 19 16 states do not stand idly by while your brother's blood is at stake but this does not apply with regard to such individuals because they are not your brothers.

Love your neighbor and hate your enemy. If he's not your fellow Israelite then he's not your neighbor. You have no obligation to love such a sinner.

You see this is the kind of baggage behind the lawyer's question. So when he asks who is my neighbor Jesus tells the parable.

[14 : 40] A man was going down from Jerusalem to Jericho and he fell among robbers who stripped him and beat him and departed leaving him half dead. Now by chance a priest was going down that road and when he saw him he passed by on the other side.

So likewise a Levite when he came to the place and saw him passed by on the other side. A couple notes here. The road from Jerusalem to Jericho is a real road.

And it was and still is known for being a dangerous place. It's called the Jericho Road. And you would sooner carry jewelry store bags in your hands through a bad part of town at midnight than travel on this road.

This mugging was a believable scenario. And when the priest or Levite show up the crowd would expect Jesus to make one of them the good guy. The priest came.

He was a man set apart for holy work. But he walked by on the other side of the road. And the Levite who would assist in the religious duties of the temple also just walked on by this victim.

[15 : 58] This is where it kind of hits close to home. Can you see glimpses of yourself in these two characters? Surely there have been times when you've had opportunities to be a neighbor to someone in need but you've given yourself some solid reasons not to help.

Here are some excuses that a priest or a Levite would have probably given under similar circumstances. Number one the victim probably brought this on himself.

And if this is part of God's judgment on this sinner I'm not going to stand in the way of God's judgment. Another excuse might be what if this is a trap?

What if I'm going to be the next victim here? Another thought would be I'll become unclean if I touch this potentially dead person then I can't perform my priestly duties.

Or how about this one? I'm busy. And my day is filled with important business. In his reflection on these two characters Charles Spurgeon said there is no man on earth who wickedly rejects the plea

of need who is not furnished with arguments that he is right.

[17 : 30] In other words, everybody who declines to help someone in need has really good convincing reasons not to help. But Jesus contrasts their inaction with a third visitor.

Verse 33. But a Samaritan as he journeyed came to where he was. And when he saw him, he had compassion. You can almost hear the grumbling and the scoffing at Jesus when he chooses to include a Samaritan in this lesson.

Why would you do that, Jesus? Why would you choose a Samaritan? Well, for one, it revealed to the lawyer what was in his heart. The Jews saw Samaritans as inferior and now Jesus was elevating one and he goes on to describe him like this.

Verse 34. He went to him, he went to the victim and bound up his wounds, pouring on oil and wine. Then he set him on his own animal and brought him to an inn and took care of him.

And the next day he took out two denarii and gave them to the innkeeper saying, take care of him and whatever more you spend, I will repay when I come back. Remember, the question was, who is my neighbor?

[18 : 55] The lawyer is starting to get the picture here. The Samaritans didn't have an automatic identity as neighbor to the Jews, but he was sure acting neighborly.

The lawyer has to picture this religiously inferior, ethnically inferior man being a loving neighbor in a way that the lawyer was unwilling to do.

And that is hard to read. I know that I've been humbled and I've felt sheepish when I've seen somebody, especially someone who's not a follower of Jesus, act in a more Christ-like way than I do.

seeing somebody be more generous or selfless or patient. And just like the priest and the Levite, it's convicting to watch, sorry, I'll back that up, just like the priest and the Levite, I've also had excuses not to help somebody, but it's convicting to watch somebody else not be held back by those same excuses and choose rather to act.

This was a real scene. The priest and the Levite would have had reasons not to help, but the Samaritan would have had reasons not to help too. Probably even more. Think of this as a real theme.

[20 : 25] What consequences would the Samaritan face by stepping in and helping? Somebody watching could have accused him of being in on it. perhaps his wife would be upset with him if he was late coming home.

Do you know how long he stayed? He stayed the whole night and into the next day. And he didn't text his wife saying that he was going to be out Samaritan-ing or something like that.

Maybe the money that he used to pay for the inn was set aside for like a brand new donkey.

Something like that. Right? The point is the Samaritan's life would be impacted by stepping in and helping.

And he's also aware of his own status. The man that he was helping most likely a Jew which means that the Samaritan is helping and saving somebody who likely hated him.

The Samaritan in the story approaches the beaten man and he has compassion. But that feeling of compassion wasn't enough. He acted upon that compassion.

[21 : 39] Jesus just piles up the description. First he climbs down off of his own animal and he goes to him and he tends to his immediate needs and he sets the man on his own animal and puts him up at an inn for several days.

This is cover to cover neighborly love. And then I love this. Jesus asks the lawyer after all of this. He said, which of these three do you think proved to be a neighbor to the man who fell among the robbers?

In a way, Jesus never did answer the lawyer's question directly. The lawyer had asked, who is my neighbor? But he doesn't hear an answer to that question.

Jesus doesn't say how the lawyer should identify a neighbor. He says to be a neighbor. The priest and the Levite had identities that implied godliness, but their actions were not godly.

The Samaritan's identity doesn't exclude him from being a neighbor. In fact, the Samaritan's identity as neighbor was proven through his actions. Verse 37, the lawyer said, well, the one who showed him mercy.

[23 : 06] And Jesus said to him, you go and do likewise. The lawyer has to now ask himself, would anyone label my conduct as neighborly?

He gets it. Do we get it? you may have neighbors, but from your heart and through your actions are you being a neighbor?

You may have a spouse, but are you being a spouse? You may have a sister or a brother, but are you being a sister or a brother from your heart and through your actions?

Perhaps the most difficult pill to swallow is that sometimes we treat strangers better than our own family. The lawyer focused solely on those in his own camp, his own neighbors, his own family, his own people that he sees every week at the temple, and he wanted the license to ignore everybody else.

And we may not do that, but it's possible that we overcorrect and find ourselves in the opposite struggle. isn't it possible that in our desire to follow today's lesson that we focus solely on those outside our own camp, those outside our faith or outside our neighborhood or that stranger that we run into one time, but then we fail to love the neighbor in our own church or in our own school or job or even our own family.

[24 : 44] family. When Jesus is asked about eternal life, he shows us that we need a savior. When Jesus is asked, who is my neighbor, he shows us what a neighbor looks like, and then he says, you go and do likewise.

But catch this, Jesus did not say, if you act like the Samaritan, you will have eternal life. That's not what he said. The parable wasn't in response to the eternal life question, but to the question of, but who is my neighbor?

So being kind and generous and selfless are all neighborly things to do and we are commanded to do them. So let's do them. But it will not merit us salvation.

Jesus merited our salvation and our hope must be in him. Our salvation is not found in our identity as a Samaritan. Our salvation is not found in our identity as a neighbor, but as a redeemed child of God.

And we don't have to decide between acting like the Samaritan and acting like Jesus in order to obey the Lord's command to go and do likewise. Because everything that the Samaritan does in the parable, Jesus actually did.

[26 : 09] for us. Just like the Samaritan, Jesus has shown compassion by coming to the helpless.

Just like the Samaritan, Jesus lowers himself and raises up the helpless. Just like the Samaritan, Jesus provides enduring comfort and healing to the helpless.

Just like the Samaritan, Jesus pays the price that the helpless cannot pay. And, just like the Samaritan, Jesus promises to come back again and to make everything right.

This is Jesus. Jesus is our Lord and he's our Savior. And we're commanded to love one another after he first loved us.

So, let's think of the Samaritan and with the Spirit's help, let us go and do likewise. Let's pray. Lord, you know our hearts.

[27 : 19] You know that we are utterly unable to love you with every part of our being and to love our neighbor as much as we love ourselves. We need a Savior.

And Father, we thank you for sending your only Son to live the life that we cannot live and to die the death that we deserve. Jesus, we thank you for that sacrifice and we thank you for being victorious over death and inviting us to share in that victory with you.

And Lord, we also recognize that today's lesson is a command. You tell us, go and do likewise. And Lord, you know our hearts. You know that we struggle sometimes to see everyone as a neighbor or to be a neighbor to everyone.

We need your help. But Lord, we do ask that you would help us, strengthen us to see opportunities to love one another because you are our Lord.

And we want to joyfully obey your commands, knowing that we already have salvation. All of that has been done for us and now you give us this command to go and do likewise.

[28 : 39] Lord, we need your help. ask that you would guide us with your spirit to do what is pleasing to you all of our days. In Jesus' name, amen.

time.