

Written Copy: "And Who is My Neighbor?" Luke 10:25-29

Proper 10 – 5th Sunday after Pentecost

Sunday, July 15th, 2019

Text: Luke 10:25-29

²⁵ And behold, a lawyer stood up to put him to the test, saying, "Teacher, what shall I do to inherit eternal life?" ²⁶ He said to him, "What is written in the Law? How do you read it?" ²⁷ 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." ²⁸ And he said to him, "You have answered correctly; do this, and you will live." ²⁹ But he, desiring to justify himself, said to Jesus, "And who is my neighbor?"

Exegetical Statement

An expert in Jewish Law stands to question Jesus in a way that is beyond just fireside chatting. Perhaps he is reacting to Jesus statement that better than authority over demons is the gift of eternal life for all who are members of His kingdom. And that He has been given authority over all things by the Father and chooses to reveal the kingdom to those who have the simple faith like a child. The Lawyer therefore wants to know how orthodox these things are that Jesus is revealing. He asks what he must do to inherit eternal life. Jesus, recognizing that this is an expert in the Law asks him to respond with his summation of the law: Love God with your whole being-body and soul, and love your neighbor as yourself. When Jesus gives approval of his answer the focus in the Lawyers mind changes from testing Jesus to testing his very own obedience to this command and therefore his own place in or outside of the kingdom. Has he really been loving his neighbor? Depends on who the neighbor is. He may have had in mind a fellow Jew-perhaps even Jesus who, if that one was considered his neighbor, he would be falling short. Jesus gives him an even harder truth to chew on through the Parable of the Good Samaritan. Two examples of Jewish orthodoxy refuse to help their own countryman in need. The one who proves to live out the call to love neighbor as oneself is a man all would consider enemy. He does the exact opposite of the other two: he approaches, he gives of his time, personal belongings, and money sacrificially to show loving care. The law expert in the end must admit that the one he would never consider to be a neighbor kept the law far better than he ever has. Convicted of his failure Jesus tells him to go and do likewise. The point being that we cannot earn eternal life but must receive it as God's gracious gift to us.

Focus Statement:

In our moment of need Jesus came alongside us and loved us sacrificially giving of himself to bind up our sinful wounds and save us eternally. He gives that same love to us by faith to share with those in need around us

Function Statement:

Why it's important to know:

Whenever we take a hard look at the Law-what Christ demands of us we see just how far we fall short. Case in point is the description of sacrificial love shown through the Samaritan's giving of his time and his possessions for one who would consider himself an enemy

What the hearer should do as a result:

While we can never love those Samaritans in our life as perfectly as Jesus demands, this parable is our guide for loving our neighbor as ourselves and our motivation to look to Jesus every time and way we fail to live it out.

Subject Sentence: Love your neighbor as Jesus loved you.

There are questions we must ask even though we really don't want to hear the answer. Questions like: How much will it cost to fix my car? What exactly are the results of my MRI? How long will I be in the hospital for? how much do we owe the IRS? I was reminded of a question that had to be asked but which I dreaded the answer of back at Seminary: "What will our final grade be based on?" The answer I dreaded was either a final exam composed of essay questions and or a multi-page term paper. I needed to know in order to prepare. But the thought of either of those things eventually coming due was like the cloud of doom hanging over my head. Especially if passing the class meant both term paper and a final essay which occasionally was the case. But you had to know in order to study. And if one studied and did the research the paper would often write itself. But with both the paper and essay examine I would always be worried whether or not I answered the question sufficiently.

Although he doesn't realize it right away the lawyer in our Gospel Lesson has asked a question that he really doesn't want to hear the answer to. **Luke 10:25 "And behold, a lawyer stood up to put him to the test, saying, "Teacher, what shall I do to inherit eternal life?"** The lawyer knows the answer to this question. He is asking Jesus to test Him. Jesus earlier had claimed to have the authority to reveal who the Heavenly Father really is and to declare who has eternal life. This lawyer wanted to see if Jesus' answer matched what had been taught by Moses so long ago. Now the lawyer believes he has eternal life in the bag. Let's see if Jesus does too. But the question is one of the Law: What must **I do** to inherit eternal life? So, the answer will be from the Law as well.

Jesus answers his question with a question: **Luke 10:26 He said to him, "What is written in the Law? How do you read it?"** Jesus is saying: As a Lawyer you spend your time studying the laws of Moses. What has been the fruit of your studies? What does the Law say? And of course, like any sinful man, the lawyer is more than ready to give an example of his knowledge. **Luke 10:27 "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."** This is a great answer to the question "What must I do to inherit eternal life. You must do what the law says. When the question is about what

we must do the Law is always the answer. **Luke 10:28 "And he said to him, "You have answered correctly; do this, and you will live."** Question answered. Over and done with. Except, its not. What follows is what happens when we are made to focus on what we must do to earn favor with God, what **we** must do to be saved, what we must do to inherit eternal life. We begin to wonder "Exactly how much do I need to do? What does it really mean to love someone like I love myself? How often do I have to do this? The Lawyer could've asked any of these follow-up questions. **Luke 10:29 "But he, desiring to justify himself, said to Jesus, "And who is my neighbor?"** Perhaps the mental picture of someone appeared in his mind. Someone he had issues with in the past. Perhaps it was this teacher who stood before him who he was trying to embarrass and show up in front of his followers. Whatever the reason, the identity of who one's neighbor is became the focus of importance. And with it the fear in his heart that he may not have this earning of eternal life thing as wrapped up as he previously thought.

Well, he did ask. And Jesus is ready to take up the subject of exactly who one's neighbor is. And he's going to lead this lawyer as well as you and I to a place we really don't want to go, with an answer we would really rather not hear. Our neighbor is the one who has been beaten down by life. He has fallen into times so hard that he is left bruised and beaten by the side of the road. He is the one who cannot pull himself up and needs our help. He needs those things that God has given to us for not just our own use but to share His love and compassion with others: our time, our talents, and our treasure. And we see how hard this can be in the reaction of the Priest and the Levite in Jesus Parable. They were the ones a good Jew was to look up to for an explanation and example of how to live in a manner that pleases God. Both are on their way home from Jerusalem, meaning their time of service in the temple is over for now. But neither have the time, or the energy, or the will to help this fellow Jew in need.

The one who does have time to help this hurt and dying man; to love him as he loves himself is the Samaritan. A man who, would under different circumstances would consider this hurt and dying Jew to be his enemy. And this Jew would consider the Samaritan likewise. But as he sees the man lying there something happens in his heart. Something that

doesn't happen in the hearts of the other two. He has compassion for this man who is hurt so badly he cannot help himself. And any thoughts of this Jew being his enemy are washed away by those feelings of compassion and love. Where the other two moved away from the man to the other side of the path this Samaritan moved toward him. He stopped his journey and gave assistance to the man using the means he had available. He used some of the cloth he had on him, perhaps a piece off his robe or his blanket to make bandages. He cleaned out the infection by using some of the wine that he had with him keep himself from dehydration. And he used some of the oil he had which he might otherwise use to bake bread to feed himself. He used what he had to bandage up the man and then put him on his own beast of burden. This meant that the Samaritan was no longer riding but walking. Or that he was carrying some of the load he previously had on the animal. He uses the means he has available to get the man to an inn. But instead of just dropping him off with his own people, he spends the night making sure the man is on the road to recovery. In the morning the Samaritan must be on his way. But this Jew who was robbed has no means to pay for any further care or lodging. So, the Samaritan dips into his own funds and gives the innkeeper two days' worth of pay to make sure this hurt man will be able to stay until he is well enough to go home. But he goes further, promising to cover any debt that the innkeeper incurs in case the man's rehabilitation costs beyond the two denarii already paid.

That is how Jesus describes one is to love their neighbor as their own self. And who is your neighbor? Who is my neighbor? Whoever God places before us in our path. Even the one that under different circumstances we would consider our enemy. The one who we don't want to live next to us. The one who we would never invite over for dinner. The one who even when we see they're in trouble, we struggle to have mercy for. Perhaps the kind of person who Franklin Mission seeks to serve and help. Someone who we may be glad others are helping but we don't really want to offer **our** time, talents, or treasure for. "Who is my neighbor?" The lawyer really didn't want to hear the answer to that question. And truth be told neither do we. Just as we don't really want to hear the answer to "What must I do to inherit eternal life?" Because the answer is always "Keep God's law perfectly" And you and I do not and cannot.

When it comes to keeping the Law, we are like a man trying to walk the road of life, yet we keep getting beat up by our own sin. We get to the point that we can no longer go on and collapse on the side of the road unable to go further. And there is no one who can or will stop to help because everyone else is in the same trouble as we are. Except for one, and His name is Jesus. He has no sin and so is perfectly healthy and able to render aid. He would have every right to cross over to the other side of the path. After all it is your own fault and your own sin that has put you in this predicament. You and I time and again have refused to love God and love our neighbor as ourselves. We deserve to be there dying. But he didn't come here to earth to pass you by. He is the Son of God who became the Son of Man in order to come along side of you. His love and compassion is far greater than your sin. He gives everything He has to help you and to heal you. He gives His very life. You are able to get up and continue on down the road to eternal life because He came and rescued you.

But someone has to suffer the consequences for our failure to love. That someone should be you and me. But for us that someone is our Savior Jesus. He picks you up, heals you, and sends you on your way. And then He takes your place. He takes on your sin and suffers and dies for it on the cross. He does this so you may never find yourself suffering and dying for the sins that you and I will still commit. That's what it means to love like Jesus. That's the kind of love that it takes to earn eternal life. You and I don't have that kind of love in our hearts. Jesus must come to us and pour it into your heart. And He did that in your baptism. It comes to you with the gift of faith. And it is strengthened every time you hear and hold fast to the Gospel Message that assures you that because Jesus died and rose again all your sins have been forgiven, and you have right now that inheritance of eternal life. We could never do enough to earn it. Instead Jesus did all that was necessary to earn it for you and for me and gives it to us as His free gift of grace.

So that means that you and I are off the hook for this command to love our neighbor even if he is our enemy; correct? No! These verses are still directed at you and at me. **Matthew 5:17-20** ¹⁷ "Do not think that I have come to abolish the Law or the Prophets; I have not come to abolish them but to fulfill them. ¹⁸ For truly, I say to you, until heaven and earth pass away, not an iota, not a dot, will pass from the Law until all is

accomplished. ¹⁹ **Therefore whoever relaxes one of the least of these commandments and teaches others to do the same will be called least in the kingdom of heaven, but whoever does them and teaches them will be called great in the kingdom of heaven.** ²⁰ **For I tell you, unless your righteousness exceeds that of the scribes and Pharisees, you will never enter the kingdom of heaven.”** **John 13:34** **“A new command I give you: Love one another. As I have loved you, so you must love one another. Matthew 5:43-44** ⁴³ **“You have heard that it was said, 'You shall love your neighbor and hate your enemy.'** ⁴⁴ **But I say to you, Love your enemies and pray for those who persecute you.**

These stand as the marching orders that He has given to His Church. They tell us that we are supposed to show our love for Him by loving our neighbor is ourselves, even when our neighbor is our enemy. And that we are to do this even when it costs us something. Even when it means we have to sacrifice our some of our time, our talent, our treasure. And these commands do more than offer us instructions on how to live. They always have the power to condemn us, because we can never do them perfectly enough to be right before God and inherit eternal life. And thank God we don't have to

Whenever we look at these words and feel condemned by them, we remember the true answer for “What shall I do to inherit eternal life?” The answer is “Believe” Believe that Jesus death and resurrection covers all your sins and that it is He who declares that by your faith you are right with God. Even when you fail at loving Him and loving others. His grace and forgiveness continue to flow into your life from your Baptism. Because of His gift of faith these condemning words become words of instruction that we are to aim at doing every day. Whenever He gives us that divine opportunity by placing a neighbor in need in our path. And when we fail, we ask His forgiveness and by faith know that it is granted. And His love that flows into our hearts by faith empowers us to try again. And again. And again.

Some scary questions will remain in your life and mine such as “How much will it cost to fix my car? What exactly were the results of my medical test? How much do I owe? But by faith we know Jesus has these covered. Just as He has covered that even more scary question “What must I do to inherit eternal life?” He has that covered for you by His death and resurrection. And what about that question “How can I love my neighbor as myself?” He

grants to you the power to do that through His gift of love that flows into your heart and mine through the Gospel. His gift that flows into your heart through this message I declare to you, that “Jesus loves you; He gave His life for you. Your sins are forgiven.” May that gift of love that comes by faith be yours this very moment. May it keep guard over your heart and your mind in Christ Jesus. Amen.