

Intro: From the point of Peter's confession that Jesus is the Christ of God, and the transfiguration where we hear God's confession that Jesus is His well-pleasing Son, we are being shown what it means to follow this Christ, this Son of God, this Jesus of Nazareth. A couple of weeks ago we saw that following Jesus means being Ambassadors. After that we saw that following Jesus means being receivers of God's gracious revelation, which caused Jesus great joy. It is after this great exclamation, in which Jesus rejoiced that the Father reveals Himself to children, not to great and wise men, that our current passage begins, with a "wise man", a scholar of the law, bringing a question to Jesus about how he can inherit eternal life. This is how this parable starts, the parable of the Good Samaritan. And it is a difficult sermon to preach, not because of difficult content or complex language, but rather because most of us come to this passage of Scripture with a preconceived notion as to what it is about and probably come expecting to hear the same.

Our society uses the term, "good Samaritan," as a noble compliment, a praise of somebody who has gone above and beyond to help someone in need. We have good Samaritan laws, Good Samaritan hospitals, Good Samaritan schools, even Good Samaritan RV Clubs who endeavor to do good works for those in need. Now, altruism and beneficence are virtuous attributes which we should, with every effort, encourage and pursue. Yet, this parable by Jesus is actually much greater than a mere call to virtue, but rather a call to weakness and need. It is a parable to show that only the needy and humble obtain eternal life because they know their need for a Rescuer and Liberator. For, ultimately, this parable is not only about us being merciful neighbors, which it is certainly that, but that we become merciful neighbors as we look at, trust in, and rest upon the Great Merciful Neighbor, the Ultimate Good Samaritan, Jesus. Because we have been shown great mercy by Him, then we, too, can show great mercy to others and so prove to be merciful neighbors like Him. Following Jesus means being a merciful neighbor because He is a merciful neighbor to us.

Key questions:

- a. "What must I do to inherit eternal life?"
- b. "Who is my neighbor?"
- c. "Which of these proved to be a neighbor?"
- d. Implicit - "Am I a neighbor?" - "Go and do likewise"

1. To Follow Jesus Means to See Your Absolute Need

- a. Lawyer - one skilled in the Mosaic Law
 - i. This guy was a learner, a student, a dedicated and persistent seeker of knowledge and truth
- b. The lawyer is looking to inherit God's blessing based upon his actions or performance
 - i. The lawyer addresses Jesus as "teacher"
 1. He came to Jesus to be taught what to do, because he "wanted to justify himself"
 2. He is looking for what to do, not to be transformed in who he is
 - ii. Inherit - word is used of the land given by God and possessed by the Israelites each to their own allotment
 1. "How can I get my place of security, provision, and rest?" - eternal life?
 2. What did the Israelites have to do to inherit the land?
 - a. They only had to trust the Lord and follow His glory cloud
 - b. He rescued them from Egypt, from Pharaoh's power and slavery, and led them through the waters of death of the Red Sea
 - c. They only had to follow...they failed
 - iii. "Who is my neighbor?"
 1. He is looking for what "I must do..."
 2. Give me the parameters, so that I might justify myself
 - iv. Amazingly, he seems to assume that he is loving God with all his heart, etc. and only needs to know now who to love as a neighbor
- c. Jesus doesn't tell him to repent and believe - he uses a different strategy, one that he understands
 - i. Jesus' point here, and Luke's by deference, is not merely a way of salvation, but particularly "what does it look like to follow Jesus" (hence the teacher language?)
 - ii. Following Jesus means that you love God with all your heart and your neighbor as yourself

- iii. The truth is that if one did love the Lord God with all our hearts and our neighbors, then we would earn eternal life
 - 1. If Adam had kept this law, we would not know sin
 - 2. And is it not likely that God chose the best representative for humanity in that moment? Thus, as Adam sinned, so we all are now born into sin and actively sin
 - 3. We need a new representative who can do this, fulfill the Law, perfectly, loving God wholeheartedly and loving neighbor as himself

d. **The problem of salvation lies not with the Law, but with the heart of the sinner**

- i. James 1:23-24 "Mirror Problems"
 - 1. The Law is a mirror that reveals what we are really like - it is not to save us, but rather to reveal our inadequacies and desperate need for a Savior to absolutely save us
 - 2. The problem is that we look at the Law and see our failures, our soul flaws, then turn around and think that look like Brad Pitt (the 27 year old version, before Jolie)
 - 3. We forget not the words of the Law, but the condition of our souls, thus we do not do the works of the Law because we think ourselves befitting already to glory.
- e. The lawyer thought of himself too highly and of God's mercy too lowly
 - i. When we have this orientation toward God, when we believe that we've loved Him well and that we just need to brush up a bit on our religious endeavors and walk in line with his moral imperative, we will find that we will treat our neighbors selfishly
 - ii. Neighbors become projects, functional obstacles which must be won or overcome in order to gain peace with God, to inherit eternal life

2. To Follow Jesus Means to Be a Merciful Neighbor

a. The Suffering Neighbor – the beaten man

- i. He was "one of us" – a Jew who travelled the same road that you travel
- ii. He was robbed of honor - shamed and humiliated publicly
 - 1. Stripped of his clothes
 - 2. Naked and vulnerable before all who came by
- iii. He was robbed of physical wellness – beaten and destroyed, half-dead
- iv. He was robbed of economic power – money was stolen
- v. He was robbed of community – left alone on the side of the road, helpless

b. The Self-Righteous Neighbor – the priest and Levite

- i. The first man comes "by chance"
 - 1. How fortunate in the story that a helper is right around the corner!
 - 2. This phrase sets us up for the conflict to be resolved, but the priest
- ii. Priests were to lead the charge of justice for the unjustly treated
 - 1. They were to stand between sinners and God, between sufferers and their Provider, between saints and their God
 - 2. He SAW the man – and he moved away from the man
 - a. What reasons were used to justify this action?
 - b. Was there danger? Was he making himself vulnerable? Was he in a hurry?
 - c. Many priests lived in the area around Jericho, so maybe he was headed to business
 - d. Either way, there is no motive given, only that the one that should have helped did not
 - 3. Poem by A.H. Clough, line from "The Latest Decalogue": "Thou shalt not kill; but needs not strive officiously to keep others alive"
 - a. "The Law says that we shouldn't kill, not that we should keep alive"
- iii. Levites were those to whom no land was given, they existed on the care and sacrifice of others in Israel
 - 1. They were dedicated to God, as an offering for His service

2. He should have known God's graces firsthand, in the very existence of his tribe and of his service
3. He SAW the man and came near the place – and moved away from him
 - a. There is an intensification of this moment from the priest in that the Levite came near
 - b. He seemed to take a closer look, intensifying the story's hope and tension
 - c. But he did the same as the priest, walked on the other side
- iv. These are the two categories of people that should have been most compassionate and gracious to the man, yet they were not
 1. This would have surprised the lawyer, who knew the law
 2. This would have angered the priests and Levites, too!
 3. This was an official reprimand of the religious and self-righteous hearts of Judaism – they were given two chances, from the greater to the lesser, but failed to love their neighbor
- v. So, who will be a neighbor to this dying man? - TENSION
- c. The Unexpected Neighbor – the Samaritan
 - i. Jesus makes the hero an enemy of the Jews, a Samaritan
 1. Jesus is not merely anti-clerical whose hero was an everyman, a layman poor person
 2. Notice that when Jesus asks the question, "Who proved himself to be a neighbor to the man?" that the lawyer did not answer, "The Samaritan" but rather "the one who showed mercy."
 3. How theologically accurate but affectionately bankrupt!
 - a. He knew the right answer but refused to feel its weight!
 - b. He could not pronounce the man's affiliation because he was "unclean" and unacceptable, a vulgar man, so he described him instead
 - ii. The Samaritans were Jews who had intermarried with Assyrians during the Exile and thus were considered "half-breeds" and not pure Jews
 1. There were racially separated and seen by Jews as mongrels
 2. They were sociologically separated so that Jews avoided going through their land
 3. They were theologically separated so that they were not allowed to worship in the Temple and had built their own Temple on Mt. Gerezim (see John 4)
 4. Jesus made the hero of this story, the true neighbor, one whom the audience would have hated and despised, even the beaten man would have hated presumably
 - iii. This Samaritan saw the robbed and beaten man and moved in for LIFE
 1. Jesus says that "BUT a Samaritan on a certain journey..."
 - a. "certain" – this man was busy, on his way to a particular task for a particular reason
 - b. This word is not included in the Levite's journey or the priest's journey
 - c. Yet, "a Samaritan" did not let his plans move him from compassion
 2. He came up and "seeing him had compassion"
 - a. In the act of seeing – participle – he was moved with compassion
 - i. This is the same word, compassion, used of Jesus as he saw the widow weeping over her dead son (Luke 7:13)
 - ii. It is the same word used of the father of the prodigal son in Luke 15 – the only other times the word is used in Luke are used by Jesus (HINT HINT)
 - b. This hated enemy moved toward the powerless broken man with compassion and grace when the Levite and Priest would not
 3. He expended his own resources to help
 - a. Oil and Wine – alcohol to clean the wounds and oil to soften and numb the wounds

- b. Placed him on his own donkey and walked himself
- c. Paid the innkeeper two months room and board and promised more if needed
- d. Promised to return to care for the man and fulfill any obligations that the man may incur while he was gone
 - i. This future salvation of this man actually saved him from slavery, because if the man had nothing and could not care for himself, he would have had to sell his future services to pay for his present care
- d. Jesus never answers the question “who is my neighbor?” but rather turns the question on its head to implicitly be “How shall I *be* a neighbor?”
 - i. When Jesus asks the lawyer who proved to be the neighbor, the man responded with: “the one who had mercy”
 - ii. You would expect, then, that Jesus would the man to love Samaritans, but he doesn’t
 - iii. He replies, “Go and do likewise”
 - 1. In other words, “Go and be the Samaritan!”
 - 2. Don’t merely love those who show you mercy, but love those whom despise you and have done nothing to deserve your kindness, who make you unclean, to cost you greatly and cannot pay you in return
- e. “What does it look like to follow Jesus?”
 - i. It means to *be* a neighbor because *Jesus is the Great Neighbor*

3. Jesus is the Great Neighbor to You

- a. Remember that this parable takes place on the way to the Cross in Jerusalem (“the days had come for him to be taken up, he set his face toward Jerusalem” 9:51)
 - i. Luke has so configured this story in his sequence as Jesus “sets his face to Jerusalem to be lifted up”
 - 1. Thus, this is the point of the gospel writer! We know the end of this story which the original hearers of the parable do not
 - 2. Yet, at the same time, it is the major point of the parable for it is the major point of history!

“God could have poured out judgment on mankind in the Garden, therefore the only reason there is any history is because God has purposed to send his Son into the world, to pour out judgment on him and thereby bring salvation. Jesus is the only reason there is human history, and therefore he is the goal of human history. Thus everything God says and does in history explains and prepares for the salvation of his Son.” — Tim Keller
- b. YOU ARE THE HALF-DEAD MAN IN THE ROAD
 - i. In fact, the New Testament teaches us that we were in an even greater predicament for we were not mostly dead, but all dead!
 - ii. Eph 2:1-7
- c. Jesus is the Outsider, the Hated Enemy, the Samaritan Neighbor – the Great Neighbor
 - i. Just as the Samaritan had no legal obligation to help the Jew, he did, so also Jesus had no obligation to help us, but he did
 - ii. Look at how Jesus moved toward us with compassion
 - 1. When we were robbed and powerless, helpless
 - iii. Look how he, though we hated him, healed us at his own cost
 - 1. He carried us while he walked
 - 2. He bore our burdens and sins upon our tree so that we might inherit eternal life
 - iv. Cost so deep: the oil of His Spirit and the wine of His blood
- d. The Ultimate Good Samaritan is JESUS

- i. He who comes to the broken and beaten down, the rejected and the lost, the helpless and destined for death
- ii. He who sees and comes near with compassion to rescue!
- iii. He who binds up our wounds and saves our lives and frees us from slavery forever because he generously pays it all

Conclusion: This is the “how” we can love our neighbors well, the power to die to ourselves and give of our own resources to show mercy to those in need. To the degree which we know God’s mercy in Jesus, rest in His grace towards us as complete and super-sufficient (I will pay what he owed when I return), is the degree to which I can pour out my own resources for others. Let us see His great mercy towards us, so that we may be filled up to all the fullness of God and “Go and do likewise” for our neighbors as well. This is what it means to follow Jesus.

PRAYER FOR THE PERSECUTED CHURCH!!!