

The Good Samaritan

Day 1 of 5 • This day's reading

- Luke 10:25-28

Devotional

"Do This and You Will Live"

Jesus sets a lofty goal here. He affirms the key to eternal life is to love God with all of who you are—your whole being—and to care for others as you do yourself. This is how to truly live.

On one hand it sounds simple, on the other, impossible. We wonder how to love God with all of ourselves? What does it look like to love other people the same way?

It's not easy. In fact, it is impossible without God.

1 John 4:7 says, "for love is of God; and everyone who loves is born of God and knows God," and later in verse 12, "If we love one another, God abides in us, and His love has been perfected in us."

He is the reason we can love. "We love Him because He first loved us" (1 John 4:19).

So we don't depend on whatever strength we can muster up to earn eternal life. We joyfully, desperately, and assuredly rely on God's Spirit working in us. Like the father in Mark 9:24 who said, "Lord, I believe; help my unbelief!" we say, "Lord, I love. Help me to know how!"

And we walk forward in faith—studying the Scriptures, praying continually, and engaging the Church. We walk forward in

freedom—reaching out to our neighbors next door and across the world—all the while trusting God to enable us to love.

At the end of this passage, Jesus says, “Do this and you will live.” He doesn’t instruct the lawyer to think about it more. Do it, he says. Do the hard work. Take action.

What will you get in return? What your heart truly wants—Christ.

Colossians 3:4 says that Christ is our life.

A wonderful outcome of loving God and others is that the lover receives life. However hard or costly the loving is, the reward of knowing Christ deeper and fuller always outweighs it—and not just by a little. It eternally exceeds any “light affliction” we may endure (2 Corinthians 4:17).

So expend all that you have to give to the Lord today. Love without fear. Rely on His power to care for others, and rest in His bountiful grace when you fall short. Do this and you will live.

Day 2 of 5 • This day's reading

- Luke 10:29-30

Devotional

"Who is My Neighbor?"

The lawyer essentially asks Jesus Christ, "Exactly which people do I have to love in order to get what I want?" or "Who can I get away with not loving?"

His motives are revealed.

This question isn't coming from a heart eager to please the Lord or to care for fellow human beings. Rather, he wants to justify his own actions, as if he could check off a box beside "loved my neighbor," instead of discovering what it means to do the hardest, yet most fulfilling, work of learning how to spend oneself for God and others.

We look for caveats, don't we? We rationalize. We excuse. We dare to ask the Lord which people deserve love.

Jesus doesn't give the lawyer a direct answer. The tension lingers. The box remains unchecked.

Instead, he tells a story about a suffering person. This man was robbed, wounded, and abandoned. He was left helpless and desperate for mercy from someone, anyone.

What if this was your child? What if it was you?

Well actually, it is. Or, it was you—broken and desperate for someone to come help.

The good news is this: Christ came. He climbed into the ditch with us—allowing himself to be wounded and abandoned to die. Then, He conquered death.

“For Christ also suffered once for sins, the just for the unjust, that He might bring us to God, being put to death in the flesh but made alive by the Spirit” (1 Peter 3:18).

His victory bought restoration for every broken, abandoned person around the world, all across time. This includes you and your worst enemy.

Redeemed children of God with eyes fixed on the Lord don't ask who qualifies to be loved. There are men, women, and children—neighbors—here and in faraway lands who have fallen among thieves and been left alone. What will you do?

Day 3 of 5 • This day's reading

- Luke 10:31-32

Devotional

"On the Other Side"

Imagine the man lying there bleeding, barely breathing. Then he sees a figure approaching. As the figure draws closer, he realizes it is a priest. His spirits lift. Help has arrived. But the priest isn't slowing down. His steps aren't turning towards him. No, he passes by on the other side of the road.

Hope rises again when another religious official, a Levite, comes along. Surely he will stop. He looks and sees the half-alive lump of a person. And then, he too passes by—on the other side.

The very people whose "job" it was to help, chose to ignore the man. It's actually as if they went out of their way to avoid him, to put it out of their minds, or to make it less uncomfortable. Do you think they prayed for him as they walked by?

Our real-time reactions reveal the state of our hearts. We do what we most want to do in any given moment. When the priest walked by, his desire for something else was stronger than his desire to help the man. Likewise, the Levite wanted something else more than he wanted to stop.

Paul writes in Romans 7:19, "For the good that I will to do, I do not do; but the evil I will not to do, that I practice."

We need more than our wills in order to obey God. After all, His commands aren't to be learned intellectually; they're to be lived joyfully.

It's frightening to see how religious people who thoroughly know God's Word are capable of such tragic responses to suffering. It's frightening to see those same tendencies in our hearts.

But let's not stop at, "Shame on them for passing by, and shame on me for all the times I've passed by."

Yes, shame on all of us. But, that is why Christ came. And now, glory to God!

A few verses later in Romans, Paul rejoices in the freedom from his slavery to sin: "O wretched man that I am! Who will deliver me from this body of death? I thank God—through Jesus Christ our Lord!" (7:24-25)

Our wills always fail us, but Christ never does. He rescued us and changed us. In knowing Him, we become people who can't pass by. Our hearts slowly morph, and we become people who see suffering and cross over to the same side of the road, to help.

Day 4 of 5 • This day's reading

- Luke 10:33-35

Devotional

"He Had Compassion"

Here is a picture of love.

Samaritans were marginalized people in society, which could have easily hardened this man's heart toward others. But the opposite happened: he had compassion for a fellow sufferer.

It's simple yet extravagant. When he could have done the bare minimum for the injured man and still been the hero of the story, he went over and above. He took care of him in the true sense of the words. And it cost him.

Our honor and joy as Christians is to love others as Christ loved us—through sacrifice. It costs money, time, energy, and pride, among other things. Sometimes it's dangerous. Other times it hurts. But when you compare the cost to what you gain in return, the choice is clear.

"Yet indeed I also count all things loss for the excellence of the knowledge of Christ Jesus my Lord, for whom I have suffered the loss of all things, and count them as rubbish, that I may gain Christ" (Philippians 3:8).

Because of Christ we don't have to maintain a death grip on everything we care about. The Savior has set us free to serve with our resources and ourselves. It's a wonderful and mysterious paradox where the more you give away, the more you have.

The Samaritan also didn't go looking for someone in need. The injured man appears right in his path. The key is that he is willing to be inconvenienced and readjust his priorities to help him.

Likewise, we don't have to look far to find hurting people. But we do have to be willing to sacrifice our time and lovingly meet the needs of others. As ambassadors for Christ in this world, few things matter more than this.

“For the commandments...are all summed up in this saying, namely, ‘You shall love your neighbor as yourself’” (Romans 13:9).

Look for opportunities along your road today to show compassion. Ask God for a soft heart. Give bravely. Let it cost you. Do you really think you will look back and wish you had kept more for yourself?

Day 5 of 5 • This day's reading

- Luke 10:36-37

Devotional

"Go and Do Likewise"

In a reversal from the beginning of the story, Jesus now asks the lawyer, "Who is the neighbor?"

The answer is the person who showed mercy, and the person is a Samaritan.

In general, Jews and Samaritans reviled each other. This could not have been an easy answer for the lawyer (a Jew) to accept.

Think about a person with a lifestyle, political stance, and religion severely different than yours. What if you were in desperate need and everyone passed by except for that person? What if he or she stopped and showed you the compassion of the Samaritan? Would that change you?

Mercy breaks down walls. It's powerful, and we are told to make it a priority.

Jesus didn't then say to the lawyer, "Good answer. Now sit back and relax." He said, "Go and do likewise."

Similarly, in Matthew 9:13, Jesus said, "But go and learn what this means: 'I desire mercy and not sacrifice.' For I did not come to call the righteous, but sinners, to repentance."

Going out and showing mercy is what we have to offer the world. It changes lives—ours included—and opens eyes to the Gospel.

God bestowed upon us the greatest mercy of all in the salvation of Jesus Christ. It was unmerited, unthinkable, and eternally

beautiful. Now, out of gratitude, we get to go and do acts of mercy in His Name.

“May his name endure forever, his fame continue as long as the sun! May people be blessed in him, all nations call him blessed!” (Psalm 72:14)

Thank you for spending these five days reading through the Good Samaritan story with us at Samaritan's Purse. God allows our ministry to partner with brothers and sisters to show mercy to millions of people around the world in the Name of Christ. We pray that your heart would be sensitive to His calling to love your neighbors near and far. God bless you as you go and do His work.