

Be Good Neighbors
April 22, 2012
Allen Power

Luke 10:25-37

There's an advertising jingle we all know: "Like a good neighbor..." State Farm has branded themselves well as the GOOD NEIGHBOR insurance company!

Question: Anyone ever have a GOOD NEIGHBOR? BAD NEIGHBOR? Let's focus on the POSITIVE. If we were writing the JOB DESCRIPTION of a GOOD NEIGHBOR...what are the CHARACTERISTICS of a GOOD NEIGHBOR?

Who IS my neighbor? I'm embarrassed to admit how many times I've asked that question! Usually it happens at the grocery store. Susan will speak to someone in the aisle or checkout, and as we walk away I ask: "Who is that?" There's a kind of sideways look, a SIGH, and the reply: "She's our neighbor."

Now, I know who is next door and across the street. But get about four houses away and I'm usually at a loss.

Not good. I need to do a BETTER job with KNOWING MY NEIGHBOR.

In the scripture we're about to read, a LAWYER asks Jesus that question "WHO IS MY NEIGHBOR?" But the REAL QUESTION is "To WHOM can I BE a neighbor?"...a GOOD NEIGHBOR!

Luke 10:25-28

The Parable of the Good Samaritan

25 On one occasion an expert in the law stood up to test Jesus. "Teacher," he asked, "what must I do to inherit eternal life?"

26 "What is written in the Law?" he replied. "How do you read it?" 27 He answered: "'Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your strength and with all your mind'[a]; and, 'Love your neighbor as yourself.'[b]" 28 "You have answered correctly," Jesus replied. "Do this and you will live."

- Verse 25: This was an EXPERT in the LAW...a LAWYER. What does the verse say he stood up to do? TEST Jesus. His motive is not to LEARN but to DISCREDIT Jesus.
- Verse 27 is familiar to us if we are a BELIEVER and a Bible student. This lawyer quotes from Deuteronomy and Leviticus. Love the Lord your God with all your heart; soul; strength; and mind. And love your neighbor as yourself. --- Jesus acknowledges: "Right answer!"
- Verse 28: The lawyer's answer was TECHNICALLY CORRECT. That is, his KNOWLEDGE of the law was CORRECT. How did Jesus take this FURTHER at the end of verse 28?

James 1:22

22 Do not merely listen to the word, and so deceive yourselves. Do what it says.

- Jesus said: "Do this and you will LIVE."

- Question: Was Jesus teaching "salvation by works"? NO! What could He have meant?

Ray Stedman wrote-

Was Jesus teaching salvation by works? Not at all. He was merely pointing out that if you could truly love God and love others perfectly, you would have eternal life. God demands perfection. That means loving God always, every second of every day, with all your heart, soul, strength and mind, never deviating from that from the moment you are born until your final breath. And that also means loving other people perfectly all the time. That's God's standard. It's perfection or nothing. Jesus is really telling the man, "You want to go to heaven? Great! Be perfect and you'll make it." But no one can do that. We're all sinners. And God doesn't grade on the curve. That's why we need the gospel.

- At this point the lawyer wants to CHANGE THE DEBATE. He's asks a FOLLOW UP question of Jesus:

Luke 10:29

29 But he wanted to justify himself, so he asked Jesus, "And who is my neighbor?"

- The lawyer wanted to JUSTIFY himself. In the sense of SALVATION we know that to JUSTIFY means that God MAKES US RIGHTEOUS.
- Question: What's another meaning of JUSTIFY, when we sometimes say: "He/she is trying to JUSTIFY their actions"? To make other people see what we are doing as RIGHT.
- This LAWYER poses a question to JUSTIFY the way HE wanted to look at things.
- Note his question: "And who is my neighbor?" Jesus just told him to LOVE YOUR NEIGHBOR. He could have asked "Okay, then, HOW do I love my neighbor?" Instead he asks "WHO is my neighbor?"
- Question: What was this man LOOKING FOR in this question? Remember, he's a LAWYER.
- The lawyer was looking for a LOOPHOLE so he could LOVE SOME PEOPLE but NOT OTHERS!

Charles Spurgeon writes:

He (the lawyer) probably meant to say, "I have not any neighbors. I have no near relations. My father and mother are dead and gone, I have no brothers and sisters, and therefore I may be excused from the duty of loving anyone else as I love myself."

- What if you told your child: "Pick up your toys." And they replied: "Which toys?" ALL
- Who is the NEIGHBOR I'm supposed to love? ALL people who have a need!
- Jesus answered the lawyer's question with a PARABLE...a STORY to illustrate the point. We've heard it since childhood.

30 In reply Jesus said: "A man was going down from Jerusalem to Jericho, when he fell into the hands of robbers. They stripped him of his clothes, beat him and went away, leaving him half dead. 31 A priest happened to be going down the same road, and when he saw the man, he passed by on the other side. 32 So too, a Levite, when he came to the place and saw him, passed by on the other side. 33 But a Samaritan, as he traveled, came where the man was; and when he saw him, he took pity on him. 34 He went to him and bandaged his wounds, pouring on oil and wine.

Then he put the man on his own donkey, took him to an inn and took care of him. 35 The next day he took out two silver coins[a] and gave them to the innkeeper. 'Look after him,' he said, 'and when I return, I will reimburse you for any extra expense you may have.'

Verse 30: "A man was going down from Jerusalem to Jericho..." and is robbed, beaten, and left half dead.

- Question: What kind of man did Jesus say this VICTIM was? A Jew? A Gentile?
- It's obvious, Jesus was PURPOSELY SILENT regarding the man's race; class; economic status. He was JUST A MAN. He could have been ANYBODY! You see, right here in the first sentence Jesus has begun to answer the question: "Who is my neighbor?" ANYBODY!
- In verses 31 and 32, the first two people to happen upon the man in distress were a A PRIEST (think preacher or pastor) and a LEVITE (descendants of Levi, set aside to assist the priests)...in our day we'd call them CHURCH STAFF MEMBERS.
- If ANYONE would stop and help a person in crisis WHOM should it be? Church people.
- But they DON'T. In fact...they CROSS THE ROAD to avoid the situation.
- Those of us who grew up in the 70's used to watch Freddie Prinze in "Chico and the Man". Whenever Freddie's character didn't want to do a task what did he say? "Heees not my job mon!" The priest and levite were saying: "Heees not my neighbor, mon!"
- Question: What "reasons" or "excuses" could we imagine the priest and the levite might have had for not stopping?
- What do you believe was the REAL REASON they didn't stop?
- Verse 33: Then a SAMARITAN shows up.
- Question: If you were a Jew in that day, what was a SAMARITAN to you? The most hated people.
- Samaritans were descendants of both foreigners and Jews who intermarried.
- They claimed to worship Israel's God but they incorporated their own PAGAN elements.
- A Jew would take a longer journey to avoid going through Samaria.
- In John 4:9 The Samaritan woman [at the well] said to Jesus, "You are a Jew and I am a Samaritan woman. How can you ask me for a drink?" (For Jews do not associate with Samaritans.[a]) in some translations it reads: Or do not use dishes Samaritans have used
- When Jesus revealed that the HERO of this parable...the EXAMPLE OF COMPASSION...was a Samaritan it would have SHOCKED the whole audience!
- Question: Why a Samaritan? How does that speak to you and me today?
- Let's don't SKIM OVER what the Samaritan did...there's some real significance.
- Verse 34: What do the first few words say the Samaritan did? "He came to him" Then what did he do? First aid.
- Why would coming and touching have been significant? Defilement. Contrast that with the "church people". Not only did they not help...they didn't even COME to him. They crossed.
- Back to verse 34: What did the Samaritan do next? Gave up his ride for the victim. He INCONVENIENCED himself.
- Then he took him to the police station and dropped him at the curb! Right? Left him at the emergency room? Homeless shelter?
- He not only took him to a place of help...what did the Samaritan do? Took care of him PERSONALLY. He got his hands DIRTY in the task of helping!
- Finally, what did the Samaritan do in verse 35? He PUT HIS MONEY where his mouth was. Question: Anyone know how much TWO DENARII were worth? Two days wages.

- The Samaritan was willing to "come out of pocket" to help this man.
- As Jesus finished the parable he turned back to the lawyer...verse 36:

36 “Which of these three do you think was a neighbor to the man who fell into the hands of robbers?”

- The lawyer who had been trying to trap Jesus was in the trap himself! There was only one way he could answer with any credibility and it STUCK IN HIS THROAT...he couldn't even bring himself to say the word SAMARITAN!
- “Which of these three do you think was a neighbor to the man who fell into the hands of robbers?”

37 The expert in the law replied, “The one who had mercy on him.”

- Question: Why would a BELIEVER IN CHRIST be motivated to show MERCY to others? God has shown US mercy! ([Ephesians 2:4-10](#))

That great theologian, William Shakespeare...(PAUSE) okay...great WRITER William Shakespeare...in the Merchant of Venice...wrote these well known words about MERCY:

“The quality of mercy is not strain'd,
It droppeth as the gentle rain from heaven
Upon the place beneath. It is twice blest:
It blesseth him that gives and him that takes.”

Questions:

- The quality of mercy is not strain'd. What does "not strain'd" mean? At least two meanings.
- What does "mercy falls like rain" mean? Ever hear the term "a good soaking rain"?
- How is showing mercy a "double blessing"? It is twice blest:
It blesseth him that gives and him that takes.

Here's the bottom line: the definition of a GOOD NEIGHBOR who lives out the GREAT COMMANDMENT is one who shows MERCY to ANYONE IN NEED.

Not just those who are LIKE US. Not just family and close friends. OUR NEIGHBOR is ANYONE IN NEED... “Red or yellow, black or white, they are precious in His sight!”

Jesus told the lawyer, “Go and do likewise.”

Again, don't just KNOW but GO. Don't just BELIEVE SOMETHING; DO something!

So, What's the Takeaway?

Who IS my neighbor?

Warren Wiersbe writes:

It all depends on your outlook. To the thieves, this traveling Jew was a victim to exploit, so they attacked him. To the priest and Levite, he was a nuisance to avoid, so they ignored him. But to the Samaritan, he was a neighbor to love and help, so he took care of him. What Jesus said to the lawyer, He says to us: (literal translation) “Go and keep on doing it likewise”.

- MERCY and COMPASSION come from the OVERFLOW of the love of God in us.
- This takes us back to how this encounter started. “How do I inherit eternal life?” Love God with all your heart, soul, mind, strength. And love your neighbor as much as you love yourself.
- It's not just a high standard...it's an IMPOSSIBLE STANDARD that can only be reached if we have the Spirit of God living in us because Jesus is the LORD OF OUR LIVES.

If we are in right relationship with God through His son Jesus Christ, we won't have to DRUM UP mercy...it will pour out of the abundance He's placed in our hearts. Only by THE GOSPEL can we truly be a GOOD NEIGHBOR!