

## Luke 10:25-37 — The Good Samaritan

**April 9, 2017**

Good morning CrossWinds family. It is great to have you on Palm Sunday. I am really looking forward to tonight, Monday night and Tuesday night. We are hosting the Experience the Passion exhibit at the Dickinson County Expo Center. It should take between 30 to 45 minutes to walk through. It will be a great way to experience the last 18 hours of Christ's life. This will help each of us have greater thanks to Jesus for what he endured to pay for our sins. It is also something geared for your friends and neighbors. If you are able to bring them, it is a great way for them to learn about the good news of the gospel.

This week, we also have Maundy Thursday service in Spencer on Thursday night at 7:00 p.m. On Sunday morning we have a great resurrection celebration service at the Sami Center next Sunday at 10:30 a.m. There are no services at this location. All Spirit Lake campus services are joined into one celebration service 10:30 a.m. at the Sami. It is a busy week.

This morning, we are stepping away from our series in 1 Timothy. We will return to that study after Easter. Our church theme for the year is Generous Living. We have such a generous God. The Bible tells us one of the proper ways to give honor and thanks to God for his generosity is for us to live lives of generosity toward one another. What does a generous life look like? That is what we are going to study this morning.

One of the best ways to understand generous living is by looking at one of Jesus' most famous parables, the parable of the Good Samaritan. This morning we are going to read this parable, study it together then apply it to our lives.

Let's begin by reading the parable.

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, "And 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, when he came to the place and saw him, 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. 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." Luke 10:25–37 (ESV)

This parable breaks into two sections. First is Jesus' discussion with the lawyer. The second part is the parable of the Good Samaritan. Let's jump in.

### **What does God want from my life?**

This first section answers a question all of us ask, "What does God want from my life?" It says a lawyer stood up to test Jesus. When we think of a lawyer, we think of litigation, ambulance chasing and high fees. That is not the kind of lawyer in this scene. This was a theological lawyer. It was a highly-trained expert in theological law. This was your Bible answer man. When there were debates about how God's Word applies to life, this was the man people called on the phone.

He was not on Jesus' team. He planned to test Jesus. The word for test means to put something under stress so its flaws and imperfections can be seen. This guy's plan was to use his Bible knowledge to make Jesus look bad and discredit him. This is why he comes up with the million dollar question: "What should I do to inherit eternal life? What should I do to go to heaven?"

I love the way Jesus answered. If you notice in the gospels, many times when people try to make Jesus look bad, he didn't answer them directly. He answered a question with a question. That is what he did. Jesus simply said, "What is your understanding of what the Bible says to inherit eternal life?"

The lawyer gave a summary answer. He said, "We are to love God with all our heart, soul, mind and strength and then to love our neighbor as ourself." What the lawyer did was he summarized God's law. There are 613 commands in the Mosaic law to follow. An abbreviated summary of them would be the Ten Commandments. Here is where it is interesting. The first four commandments of the ten pertain to man's relationship with God. The next six commandments pertain to man's relationship to one another. The Ten Commandments break into commandments about loving and about loving people. An even more abbreviated version of this would be what the lawyer gave. God calls us to love him above everything in this world, then to love our neighbors.

These two commandments are actually given in the Old Testament. Deuteronomy 6:5 tells us to love God with all our hearts, souls, minds and strength. This was part of the Shema, which is the regular prayer the Jews said every morning and evening.

Leviticus 19:18 gave the second part of this lawyer's answer which says we should love our neighbor as ourselves.

Jesus responded to this by saying, "You are right. Do this and you will live." Jesus was describing the life of followers of God. You can recognize them because they love God with all their hearts, souls, minds and strength, plus they love their neighbors, as they would themselves.

What does God want out of our lives? There are two foci for all of us. The first is to be passionately in love with God. The second is to radically love people. These two must go together to live a life pleasing to God, like a left hand and right hand.

Before we go any further, I want you to notice this is all taking place before Christ's death and resurrection. How does the work of Jesus change this? It intensifies our love for God and our love for people. Look what Jesus said:

*A new commandment I give to you, that you love one another: just as I have loved you, you also are to love one another. By this all people will know that you are my disciples, if you have love for one another. John 13:34–35 (ESV)*

In one sense, this isn't a new command. This is an old command. It is Leviticus 19:18. Why did Jesus call it a new command? It is that we love others with a new intensity that comes from experiencing the way God loves us.

How does God want us to live life? First is a passionate love for God. Second, is a radical love for our neighbors.

### **Who is my neighbor?**

The text says the lawyer at this point wanted to justify himself. The word justify literally means "to show himself righteous." The lawyer's plan was to show off what a good person he was to everyone in the group so he asked, "Who is my

neighbor?” The lawyer was looking for a place he could legitimately limit his love toward other people. “Who are the people I don’t have to love?” This is where Jesus told a story that takes things in a way he didn’t expect them to go.

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, when he came to the place and saw him, passed by on the other side.” Luke 10:30–32 (ESV)

There literally is a road that goes from Jerusalem to Jericho. It is 17 miles long. It goes from 2,600 feet above sea level in Jerusalem to 825 feet below sea level in Jericho. It descends 3,425 feet in 17 miles. It is not a straight road. It is a rocky, windy road with steep cliffs and caves along the path. There is even part of the road mentioned in Joshua 18:17 called the pass of Adummin, which means the pass of blood. That area of the road was a common place for people to be robbed, beaten or even killed from ancient times even into the time of Jesus. Josephus, the ancient Jewish historian from the time of Christ, wrote about the necessity of carrying a sword when you traveled this road because it was a legendary place for thugs, thieves and murderers. You don’t travel this road unless you are an NRA member and you are packing heat.

Jesus told us a man was traveling this road and robbers jumped him. They stripped him, which means they took everything. They took his animal. They took his supplies. They took his wallet. They even stripped his body of his clothes. The dude was stark naked. They didn’t just take everything from him but they also beat him. We are talking MMA, without the gloves or a referee. I picture him on the ground and guys on top of him pounding him in the face. He had a broken, bloodied nose. His eyes were swollen shut. Teeth were broken in his mouth. He

was naked on the ground, and they were kicking and breaking his ribs. That is the picture. Jesus said he was half-dead. This guy was holding onto life with a thread.

But all was not lost. Hope was on the way. A priest happened to be on the road passing by on. Priests at that time were usually wealthy. They had plenty of cash. They knew God's law. They were considered the religious heroes of the day. If anybody would stop and help, you would think this guy would fit the bill. In this story, Jesus said he walked on by. In fact, it says he passed by him on the other side. He literally walked on the opposite side of the road. He went as far away from him as possible.

Now some scholars postulate why he did this. They say the priest was worried about touching someone unclean. If he became ritually unclean, he wouldn't be able to serve in the temple. If you study this, none of those explanations make sense to me. First, he was traveling from Jerusalem, not to Jerusalem. He was on his way home from work, not to work. Second, extra-biblical Jewish literature says ritual uncleanness was allowed in emergency situations. This scenario clearly fits into the emergency category. The truth of the matter is this priest didn't stop because he didn't want to get involved. Taking time to help this guy would have cramped his busy calendar. Maybe he thought the robbers were still around and he didn't want to get robbed too. It doesn't tell us why he didn't stop and help, but in reality, the reason doesn't matter. What matters is he found a way to make a legitimate excuse in his mind to not love his neighbor, especially his neighbor in need. The priest was a really religious guy

who tried to focus on the vertical part of loving but but he neglected the horizontal part of loving God by loving his neighbor.

In the same way, the Levite passed by on the other side of the road. Who is a Levite? A Levite is a JV version of a priest. Levites were also from the tribe of Levi like the priests, but they didn't come from the family line of Aaron, so their job was to help in worship, not lead worship. Once again we have a guy that loves God but in his mind, but he found a way to justify not loving his neighbor. He ignored the glaring needs of a man right in front of him because he could say in his mind that he wasn't my neighbor.

With both the priest and the Levite, we see the common problem of most Christians today. We devote ourselves to loving Jesus and attending church on the weekend, but we find ways to limit our love for people. Jesus says that a life pleasing to God is known for both passionate love for God and radical love for people. You cannot live a life pleasing to God by having one without the other. To drive this home, Jesus gave us the last person in this story, the Samaritan.

**“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. 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.” Luke 10:33–37 (ESV)**

Most of us miss the impact of the Samaritan being the hero of the story because we don't know the racial tension between Jews and Samaritans. In the Old Testament, after King Solomon's death, under King Solomon's son named

Reheboam, the nation of Israel split in half in a bloody civil war. There was the northern kingdom of Israel and the southern kingdom of Judah. The northern kingdom of Israel eventually turned away from God. God sent the Assyrians to conquer them and take them into captivity. The Assyrians didn't deport everyone. They left the poorest in the land behind. As the northern kingdom filled in with gGentiles, the remaining Jews intermarried with them and ruined the purity of the Jewish blood line. They developed mixed religious beliefs that were half Jewish and half pagan.

Eventually the southern kingdom of Judah also fell into sin. God sent the Babylonians to conquer them and lead them into exile. After 70 years, they were set free. Some of freed Babylonian Jews returned to rebuild the temple and the nation. In the books of Ezra and Nehemiah, you can read about the temple rebuilding efforts. When the Jews showed up to build the temple, at first, the half-breed Samaritans in the northern kingdom welcomed them. They even offered to help them rebuild the temple. When Nehemiah didn't allow this the Samaritans showed their true colors. They became the great oppressors that worked against the temple rebuilding effort. That was the beginning of the tension between the Jews and the Samaritans, even though they were neighbors. While the Samaritans did everything they could to stop the rebuilding of the temple, eventually the temple was rebuilt. Out of frustration the Samaritans eventually built their own temple on Mt. Gerizim. In 128 B.C., some zealous Jews attacked and destroyed it. To strike back, the Samaritans at the time of Jesus were engaged in terrorist warfare against the temple. Instead of destroying it, they tried

to defile it. To do this they were known to bring bags of human bones into the temple courtyard.

Can you taste the bitterness between the Jews and their Samaritan neighbors? When Jews went to the northern part of the kingdom, rather than take a direct route through Samaria, they added days to their journey and walked around the region of Samaria. Every morning, Jews would pray a prayer that went something like this, “Lord, give me a good day. Give me this day my daily bread. Keep me safe today. Lord, I pray there will be no Samaritans in the resurrection on the last day.”

In fact, to insult Jesus, the Jews in John 8:48 called Jesus a demon-possessed Samaritan. They couldn’t think of anything more insulting than to call him a Samaritan. There is no love between the Jews and Samaritans.

When the Samaritan sees this Jewish guy beaten senseless on the side of the road hanging between life and death, what would he normally do? Finish him off! That isn’t what happened.

It says that when he saw him, he had compassion on him. That is the Greek word *splagizomai*. This is one of my favorite Greek words because it is just fun to say. *Splagizomai*. Just to say the word means you need to spit. More important than the way it sounds is what it means. It means to feel someone’s pain in your gut. This Samaritan sees this man on the side of the road and what he feels in himself is not disinterest but compassion, like this man was his own son in a crisis. This guy goes out of his way for him and binds up his wounds. Where do these bandages come from? Band-Aid brand bandages were not

invented. The Samaritan was shredding his clothing to bind the wounds and stop the bleeding. Clothing in this time was not mass-produced. It was handmade so it was very expensive. Yet, he shredded his clothing into pieces to care for this man he didn't even know.

He poured oil and wine on his wounds. The alcohol of the wine was an antiseptic. The oil implies the guy had been there a long time and his wounds were crusty and painful. The oil was used to soften the crusty wounds so he could move. This Samaritan then put this man on his own animal so he walked the rest of the trip while this guy rode. He gave up his transportation for a hurting man he didn't even know. He took him to an inn and stayed up all night caring for him, cleaning his wounds, stopping the bleeding, bandaging him and giving him food and drink to nurse him back to health. Notice the Samaritan didn't drop and run. He totally inconvenienced himself. The next day he took out two denarii and gave them to the innkeeper and said, "If you spend more, I will repay you when I get back." It depends on what kind of inn they were staying at. It could have been a Micro-tell or it could have been a Holiday Inn. I don't know. Two denarii would pay for between 24 to 48 nights lodging, depending on the price of the lodging. We are talking radical generosity for a person he didn't even know, a person that would normally be considered an enemy.

Jesus changed the question on this Jewish lawyer. The question he should have been asking is not, "Who is my neighbor so I know where to limit my love?" but "How can I be a better neighbor to the people that are in need around me, no matter who they are or where they come from?"

You see, it is easy to think what God wants out of our lives is to passionately love God, to live like the priest or the Levite. It is easy to think all God looks at is how many times we attend church on the weekend or how many Bible verses have we memorized. The truth of the matter is, while loving God passionately is a good thing and a right thing, it is not the only thing. A left hand and a right hand must go together. We need to love God passionately and love people radically. At the end of the day, nobody cares how much we love God if we don't love people, especially people in need. The sad truth is that just like the Samaritan, sometimes people far from God do a better job of radically loving people than we do.

Jesus said he gives us a new commandment. We are to love others with the same kind of radical intensity that he has for us. My friends, as we look at what it means to be a generous church filled with people that live generous lives, Jesus reminds us that he calls us to radically love people around us in need, not just to follow him and worship him.

## **Conclusion**

As I was thinking about how this connects to our church emphasis of living generous lives of love toward others just as Jesus displayed generous love toward us, I want to give us four practical steps we can take away to guide us in generously loving others, especially the hard-to-love people.

1. **Be generous with my time.** What stands out to me in this story is the generosity of the Samaritan with his time. Like everybody else, he had a schedule to keep. He reached out to someone hard to love and gave him 24 hours of his life. As a church, we want to be known for generosity with our

time. Time is one of the most precious commodities in life. If somebody needs to talk, make time. As a church, we want to be known as a church family where people are more important than our projects.

2. **Be generous with my heart.** This comes screaming out of the story. The Samaritan had *splagizomai* compassion. He felt it from his gut. He saw this man's plight with the same kind of concern as if his own son were assaulted on the side of the road. He genuinely cared and didn't think twice about tearing up his own clothes, using his own oil and wine and taking him to an inn where he stayed up all night to care for his needs. You see, it is possible for us to give time to people, but not genuinely care about people. At CrossWinds, we want to be a church where people don't just give their time serving others but they genuinely care about you.
3. **Be generous with my wallet.** Paying for a month in a hotel for a man you don't even know, a man who would racially be considered your enemy, is radical financial generosity. In addition, he left the tab open to spend more. The simple point is when we genuinely care about people, it will connect with our wallets. We will spend money to help them out.
4. **Go out of my way to love people that are not natural friends, even love my enemies.** The Samaritan didn't just give his time, his heart and his wallet to meet someone's need but he did it for someone that wasn't naturally his friend. He did it for someone that was his enemy. God calls us to do the same. Let me give you some examples. There are some young couples I know that visit the nursing home to love on people that aren't family. They just

care about the lonely people. They take the initiative to reach out to them. Another example might be how you treat your ex-spouse if you are divorced. Instead of being difficult to work with, be gentle and kind. I know there is a lot of pain in a divorced relationship. Be generous and kind to them anyway. Another example would be what we do after service at CrossWinds. Each of us has a natural inclination to talk with friends our own age. After church, go out of your way to talk with people that are not your natural friends. If you are somebody young with kids, go out of your way to talk with someone elderly. If you are a business professional, go out of your way to talk with someone in an entry level job. Go out of your way to talk to someone that wouldn't naturally be your friend. Let us be a congregation that goes out of our way to even radically love our enemies.

This week, as we remember the radical generosity of Jesus when he died on the cross for our sin when we were still his enemies, our challenge is to love others the same way Christ loved us. God calls us to go out of our way to love people with our time, our hearts and our wallets. The people he calls us to love are people that are not naturally our friends. He even calls us to radically love our enemies like he radically loved us.



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