

Who Is My Neighbor? (Well, It Ain't Easy!)

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Scriptural Text: Luke 10:25-37, ESV

The Parable of the Good Samaritan

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?” ³⁰ 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. ³¹ Now by chance a priest was going down that road, and when he saw him he passed by on the other side. ³² So likewise a Levite, when he came to the place and saw him, passed by on the other side. ³³ But a Samaritan, as he journeyed, came to where he was, and when he saw him, he had compassion. ³⁴ 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. ³⁵ 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.’ ³⁶ Which of these three, do you think, proved to be a neighbor to the man who fell among the robbers?*” ³⁷ He said, “The one who showed him mercy.” And Jesus said to him, “*You go, and do likewise.*”

The story of the Good Samaritan captures our imagination with its bold drama. What a story it is! Both Christians and non-Christians often reference this story as a healthy guide to living life in a cold, loveless world. Yet, this story, though very popular, remains as the most misunderstood parable Jesus ever taught. Many who read it read a story which teaches us to be kind to other people. Yes, the story does that, but the story theme is much more theologically profound. This story awakens our conscience to our own sinfulness. It drives us to our knees seeking mercy underneath the weight of the Law and the guilt which is ours as a result of our own transgression.

If we are to understand the story rightly we must look at the question which prompted Jesus to tell this story. That question is found for us in Verse 25. Here we have a “lawyer” and a lawyer in Jesus’ day was simply a Bible professor, someone who knew Scripture and who taught it daily. He comes up to Jesus to test Him because the lawyer believes he already knows the answer, but he is testing Jesus,

^{25b} “Teacher, what shall I do to inherit eternal life?”

This is one very smart Bible professor. This professor, this teacher, is wrestling with the most important issue of life, “Jesus, talk to me about the life beyond this world. Talk to me about what happens after I die. Talk to me about how I might obtain eternal life.”

His questions pushes our minds past the world of the stop watch and into the world of unending time. Every devote Jew in Jesus’ day wrestled with the eternal because that is what the Bible is about. The Bible, from beginning to end talks to us about a world beyond this temporal world. Jews, in Jesus’ day, and in particular this Bible professor, had read the Bible and they knew God had promised a future resurrection. They knew God had promised a Kingdom that was established beyond the kingdom of this world, a Kingdom that offered a hope of living in God’s presence forever and ever. They knew, for instance, the truth of Psalm 23 where the psalmist says,

⁶ Surely goodness and mercy shall follow me all the days of my life, and I shall dwell in the house of the LORD forever.

They understood life was not only about the here and now, but it was important to live in view of an eternity. So, they refused to be enamored with this present world and they thought of the next. That is where this question comes from.

Let me pause for a moment and say our world has lost much of the wisdom of the 1st Century Jew. How often do you think of the life that is beyond the one you are living now in this present world? If we live our life fixed with a focus upon this world then we are living for something that is passing away, something that is temporal. We are chasing after the wind and we are pursuing a solid foundation on a castle of sand. What a foolish way to live. How often do you think of the life beyond this present world? Neglect of our eternal condition will fill us with regret forever and ever and it will lead us misery. I know this is the way of modern man, “Eat, drink, and be merry.”¹ This world may be all there is so let us live it up!”

I urge you to enter into this lawyer’s question, one which asks diligently about the life beyond the one we see, feel, and touch. It is really the most important question anyone can ask, “Teacher, tell me, how might I inherit eternal life?” If we do not know the answer to that question then everything else in life is lost to us.

One chapter earlier, in Luke 9, Jesus asks this question,

²⁵ *“For what does it profit a man if he gains the whole world and loses or forfeits himself?”*

If we do not know the answer to the question the lawyer is asking, it does not matter what else happens in our life because there is no real profit. We are living and moving our life toward a day in which we will have misery and eternal regret. That is the end of everyone who forfeits his own soul. What do we gain if we have a great life now and an eternity which is miserable?

God teaches us in the Beginning He created each of us with a soul that would live beyond the body, a soul that would live into Eternity. Jesus tells us there is an Eternity so we should live like it. This lawyer understands the importance of eternity so he asks Jesus on the right subject, however this lawyer’s theological foundation is faulty. Notice how he framed the question, as we consider that verse again, “Teacher, what shall I **do** to **inherit** eternal life?” He knew eternal life was something to be inherited and on that he is correct. But, he thought there was something he could do to earn or merit this inheritance.

Let us consider that for a moment. If we inherit an estate, it is likely we have inherited it because of relationship and not because of our performance. In our human economy, people usually inherit wealth by being in relationship to the person who is passing on that inheritance. This is the way an inheritance is usually received in man’s economy. But, in God’s economy an inheritance is always given on the basis of right relationship. It is never given on the basis of merit because no one merits the inheritance of Heaven. We inherit eternal life through our relationship with God made available to us through faith in Jesus.

It is odd he would say, “What must I do to inherit...?” because even in human economy that is not the way we think of an inheritance, and it is certainly never in God’s economy. In his Gospel, John writes these words,

¹² But to all who did receive him, who believed in his name, he gave the right to become children of God...

Inheritance is passed down from a father to his children. John tells us what we must do in order to become a child of God and receive an inheritance from God as our Father: we must simply receive Him and believe on Him. But, the teacher of the Law is thinking there is something he can do in reference to obedience to the Law to merit, or gain, this inheritance. Right relationship with God is always established through faith in Jesus and not through obedience to the Law. That is where this lawyer got off track theologically.

There are two great lessons from the parable of the Good Samaritan which I believe God wants us to learn. The first lesson is the primary lesson and the main lesson of this story: No one fulfills the Law’s demand upon our life. No one can merit eternal life. Jesus takes this lawyer, this teacher of God’s Law, back to the Law and He asks, “What is written in the Law? How do you read it?”

Notice what Jesus does: Jesus asks a question to get this man thinking about the question he himself had asked Jesus. Jesus’ question points this man back to God’s Word. He tells him, “If you want to know the truth to spiritual

¹ Luke 12:19

questions, you must go to God's Book. You will never find it through philosophizing. What does the Bible say?"

Too few people look for answers to the deep questions of life through God's Word and there is where we get off track in the beginning, "Do you want to know the answers to truth regarding the deep questions of life, go back to Scripture?" When we ask the great questions of life we must search the Great Book to find the answers. In Psalm 119 we read,

¹⁰⁵ Your word is a lamp to my feet and a light to my path.

So, the lawyer answers Jesus because the lawyer knows God's Word and he says,

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,² and your neighbor as yourself.³"

The lawyer quotes Scripture; this man knows his Bible. I wonder if we would have answered Jesus' question as well as this man? Do we know our Bible well enough to know what the Bible says about this important question? If we do not know the Bible we certainly cannot benefit from it.

Earlier our memory verse for the church was 2 Timothy 3,

¹⁶ All Scripture is breathed out by God and profitable for teaching, for reproof, for correction, and for training in righteousness, ¹⁷ that the man of God may be complete, equipped for every good work.

The purpose of God's Word is to inform us and to offend us. It is to inform us in our ignorance. It is to offend us in our sin. This is what Jesus is doing as He asks the lawyer to recite Scripture to himself. He wants to inform the man regarding the Truth God has revealed about Himself and about the path that leads to salvation and He wants to offend this man regarding his own sinfulness and his own lack of merit.

At this point, this lawyer, this Bible professor, is a bit smug. He actually believes he is fulfilling the requirements of the Law, so as he recites it, he expects Jesus to say, "Good job! Of all people, if there is anyone who merits Heaven, you do and you do." This is what the lawyer anticipates. This man confuses knowing God's Word with fulfilling the demands of God's Word. Isn't that easy for us to do, to believe the simple knowledge of Scripture is the equivalent to living out Scripture? But, there is a world of difference. Knowing and doing are two completely different things.

So, this Bible professor does not ask Jesus in order to be informed and he does not ask Jesus, certainly, in order to be offended. He does not understand the purpose of God's Word. He asks the question to be affirmed in his own personal perspective and life choices. What a deadly thing to do. If we read Scripture in order to be affirmed in our own personal philosophy and in our own life choices, we will miss the meaning of Scripture all together. This is why Jesus will tell this story so that the man who is missing the whole meaning of Scripture will come to grips with what Scripture really means when it tells us to love the Lord our God with all our heart, soul, mind and strength and to love our neighbor as our self.

So, this man, believing he had fulfilled all of the requirements of the Law, Jesus would answer, "You are fine. You do not need to worry about this question. You have already inherited eternal life. You have already done everything you need to do." Instead, Jesus confronts him with the sobering ramifications of the Law upon this man's life,

²⁸ And he said to him, "*You have answered correctly; do this, and you will live.*"

Jesus presses the full weight of God's Law against this man's soul. If we want to know what we must do to inherit eternal life, God's Word tells us: We must love the Lord our God every moment of every day with all our heart, all our soul, all our mind, and with all our strength. That means we must obey God's Law completely, because if we love God completely we will obey Him thoroughly and completely and without exception. And, we must love our neighbor as we love our self. If we do this, if we fulfill all of the Law's demands, we will live. The requirements to be accepted by God on the basis of our merit are simple: complete and constant obedience to God's Law.

² Deuteronomy 6:5

³ Leviticus 19:18

At this point, this man begins to squirm a bit, as we all would. He begins thinking about his failures and that is what Jesus is pressing him toward, “I want you to think as to how you have broken God’s Law, the Law you know, the Law you have just recited.” The lawyer begins to squirm and feel the infinite weight of God’s righteousness upon him and his knees begin to buckle; the Law is a mountain too heavy for any sinful man to lift. The proper response would be the Law of God to crush him to his knees so he would cry out for mercy, but that is not what he does. He is still prideful and he is still willful. Instead of being contrite and penitent and broken, his pride inflames self-righteousness,

²⁹ But he, desiring to justify himself...

This is the heart-attitude of this man. He wanted to defend his life and his life choices in front of Jesus the Son of God, the Holy One. Do we ever do that? Do we ever read God’s Word, understand its implications, understand the severity of its righteousness, but then seek a way to squirm out from under the demands of God’s Law upon our life? Of course we do! That is who we are. We are a people in constant pursuit of justifying our own thoughts, our own actions, and our own life choices. That is what self-righteousness does and that is a characteristic of the soul of man who has been broken by sin.

There is a story of W.C. Fields. I do not know if many of you know of him. I asked my sons if they knew him and none of them did. He was a comedian back in my father’s day when he was young. He wore a top hat, smoked a big cigar, and had a big, bulbous nose. He was known to be a renown skeptic who denied God. Toward the end of his life, W.C. Fields was sitting on train and he had a Bible and he was reading it. One of his friends came along side and he was shocked that he would be reading the Bible. He asked him, “What are you doing, W.C., reading the Bible ” In his characteristic fashion, he said, “Looking for loopholes!”

That is what we do, also. He recognized his time on earth was about over and he might stand before a Judge and he was not ready. He was looking for a way to justify himself. Is there a loophole that would get him out from under the immeasurable weight of God’s righteousness. That is what this teacher of the Bible wanted to do as he sought a way to justify himself. Our big problem is our pride that willfully rejects God’s kind correction.

Jesus is poking this lawyer, not because He wants to irritate the lawyer, but it is because He wants to help the lawyer. The only way we will ever be helped is if we receive the poke of God against our soul and we receive that pain that drives us to our knees, that reproof, that correction. Instead of receiving correction, in our pride we stubbornly kick against it and we often do what this man does, we seek to justify our self and make an excuse for our sin and defend our self.

My son, Jackson, is a sixteen-year old young man and we try to make it our habit to start off the day, before he goes to school, with devotions. Together, we read Scripture. One of the Scriptures we read are a few verses from Proverbs. We have been noticing how often Proverbs urge us to listen to correction as a part of what it means to have a wise life. In Proverbs 12, we read,

¹⁵ The way of a fool is right in his own eyes, but a wise man listens to advice.

The way of the fool is always wanting to justify himself, “I am already right and now I need to demonstrate that and show others.” We have talked about this particular characteristic. I do not believe I am exposing Jackson’s sins when I say a humble reception of correction is sometimes very hard for him. I do not believe I am exposing his sins because that is true for me and it is true for all of us and it seems particularly true in a relationship between a parent and a teenager. We have observed this and I have seen this mixture inside of Jackson, as I do inside of myself, that when I bring correction there is sometimes the sweetest, softest heart of receptivity and wisdom. Other times it is as though it is so hard to get to him. He recognizes this as well and he talks about it, “I do not know why, but yesterday I just did not want to listen.” I believe that is a mark of a healthy soul which acknowledges those things because all of us wrestle with those kinds of issues.

Jackson, in his fine moments, would say, “I do not want to justify myself. I want to listen to rebuke and I want to receive it,” yet his flesh often wants to do exactly what this lawyer does. And, that is where I am as well. As a part of our family time together, we were reading this story. We came to this part about the lawyer wanting to justify himself. This has been one of our themes in our conversations through Proverbs. We began talking about this issue and I asked this question: How can a person receive instruction when their flesh, their will, their pride is driving them to justify

their self? A person is in that mode to justify their self and their pride is awakened, how can a person have a soft hearted receptivity to correction in the face of pride? What can we do when we are experiencing that kind of struggle? How can we overcome? Jackson's answer was great, "Well, dad, it ain't easy!" That is exactly right, it is not easy to allow Scripture to have its correcting, rebuking work in our life. We want to justify our self. He continued some really great counsel to himself when he said, "We need to prepare our heart to receive correction. We need to open our ears to listen to what God is saying. We need to meditate upon Scripture." That is great counsel. I wish this young lawyer would have been observing this counsel.

This lawyer decided if he defined "neighbor" in a very limited way, then he would be able to pass the law test, he would be able to justify himself, and he would be able to defend himself. Our flesh delights to diminish the requirements of God's Law in order to make our self feel as though we are meeting the Law's demands, as though somehow we merit God's approval. Beloved, God's Law is immovable, immutable, and unrelenting.

Jesus, in this story, instead of allowing this Bible professor to narrow the application of the Law and its righteousness against his life so he could fit it, He explodes it, "Do you want to know what it means to love your neighbor? We are not going to discuss loving God with all your heart, soul, mind, and strength. We are only going to discuss loving your neighbor." Jesus explodes the idea as to what that means with this story.

When we read this story we say, "No one does that every moment of every day of their life!" That is exactly the purpose of this story. When we read it we ask our self, "Is that what God expects me to do?" Sometimes, in our finest moment, we might be able to say, "I did that once!" but that is not the issue. This is love your neighbor as your self every moment of every day. This is the way we live our life consistently. This is what Jesus tells us is a requirement of the Law.

This story is not merely a morality tale which encourages us to be nice to other people. If we think that we will miss the whole point of this parable. This is a story to help us to understand the requirements of God's Law to a person who wants to merit salvation. It is a story that tells us all of us fail to merit eternal life in the deeds we do. Jesus tells this story to reveal how far out of reach the requirements are to inherit eternal life and how far short we fall.

The point of the story is not: if we try harder to love people we will merit Heaven. No, the story is told so that no matter how hard we try, we will fail to meet God's standards of righteousness. The road of God's Law is too steep for any of us to climb, but praise God that there is great news in that. There is only one person who really does what Jesus describes in the story and that is Jesus. He accomplishes and He meets all of the requirements of the Law for us. Instead of asking the question: What should I do to inherit eternal life, the Gospel turns that question upside down and tells us: here is what Christ has done for us to inherit eternal life.

There are only two kinds of religion in the world. There is "do" religion and "done" religion. "Do" religion tells us, "This is what you must do in order to have a joyful future beyond this present world." "Done" religion tells us, "Here is what God has done so that you can have a joyful future beyond this present world." Praise God for the Good News that everything the Law requires has been done and accomplished for us in Christ.

The purpose of the story is two-fold. First, to slay self-righteousness that claims to have kept the Law of God so that we would fall upon our knees in contrition seeking His mercy for our salvation. Secondly, and I believe this is true, the story calls to those who have been redeemed to live a redeemed kind of life; to those who have been adopted into God's family to live as sons and daughters of the God who loves in this way, to live Christ-like in this world. Christ-like living begins with Christ-like loving. The story urges us, as well, to an excellence of love that only the grace of the Gospel can produce inside of us.

The second lesson of the parable of the good Samaritan is: God calls His people to love hurting people by taking action to help them. Here is the Gospel truth: as Christians who are loved by God, who have an inheritance as a result of what Christ has done, we are given the ability and the responsibility to demonstrate Jesus' love to others through our actions. The love of our neighbor is not a condition of our salvation, but it is the fruit of our salvation. It is what God works within us. Our faith in Jesus works and it works in love.

Let us consider four specific actions Christ-like love takes. This is beyond our flesh but it is within the reach of those who have been empowered by God's Spirit. **The first action is: Love see with compassion,**

³⁰ *"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."*

Again, we must ask the question: Who are we in the story? Many times we put our self in the position of the Good Samaritan, but Jesus' point is we are not there. We often are the priest and the Levite who look past the hurts and the needs of others. This is where Jesus wants this young lawyer to consider himself. Sometimes we are in the position of the robbers and we actually lend more hurt to other people in the world because of our own sinfulness, malice, and bitterness which wage war in our own heart. How far from the Gospel is that when we, as Christians, actually take action to bring about unnecessary hurt upon an already deeply hurting world as a result of our own sin? Let us, first, not be the robber and let us repent, when we acknowledge, "I have been the robber. I have said things to my spouse, my children, my co-workers and I have done things that have hurt them. I am the robber, these wicked people in the story." Let us pursue God's mercy that we would never be in the position of these robbers. How awful it is to be the robber.

This world is full of tragic stories and this is one Jesus tells. This man was beaten to within an inch of his life. His hurt was not his own doing, but it came as a result of the wickedness and the malice of others. Sin brings such unnecessary suffering, pain, and death into this world. If the evil of the heart of man were to be tamed, the majority of man's afflictions would disappear in a stroke. That is why the Gospel is so central to our call as a church of Jesus. It is the only answer to the problem of sin.

The way Jesus begins shaping this story begins to shape the answer to the question: Who is my neighbor? They are people who fall among robbers. They are people who find themselves hurting physically, emotionally, and spiritually. If we find such a person hurting physically, emotionally, or spiritually, and they are all over the place, if God leads us to cross paths with such a one, that person is our neighbor and that is one of the points of the story,

³¹ *Now by chance a priest was going down that road, and when he saw him he passed by on the other side."*

This fellow represents God! He is a mediator between God and man. Imagine, putting our self in this hurt man's condition, naked and bleeding, being beaten to within an inch of his life, and out of a slit of one of his swollen eyes he sees a priest and he thinks, "This is my lucky day!" It was unlucky to fall among the thieves, but here is a priest and there is a ray of hope until the priest looks at him and consciously moves away from this man, walking around him, and continuing his travel down toward Jericho.⁴

This priest understood Micah 6,

⁸ He has told you, O man, what is good; and what does the LORD require of you but to do justice, and to love kindness, and to walk humbly with your God?

Yet, the priest did not obey. Hope faded as the footsteps of the priest moved away from this hurt man and their sounds grew fainter and fainter until he was left in his agonizing silence and aloneness once again,

³² *"So likewise a Levite, when he came to the place and saw him, passed by on the other side."*

A Levite⁵ assisted with the worship in the Temple. They led the music. They helped with security. They cleaned the Temple after the sacrifice and the meetings. They also represented the very best of human righteousness. Jesus chose these two in this fictional story so that we would understand what the best of men do in reference to the Law; they break it,

³³ *"But a Samaritan, as he journeyed, came to where he was, and when he saw him, he had compassion."*

⁴ The walk from Jerusalem to Jericho is a day's walk, but Jerusalem is 2,600 feet above sea level and Jericho is 800 feet below sea level.

⁵ From the Tribe of Levi.

Jesus makes a point to identify this man as a Samaritan. As we know, most of the Samaritan's were hated by the Jews and the Jews were hated by the Samaritans and this has a long history. The very worst thing one could say about a person was, if we were a Jew, "They are a Samaritan." In John 8, Jesus' enemies said,
^{48b} "Are we not right in saying that you are a Samaritan...?"

This was the worst kind of epitaph they could possibly think of to throw at Jesus. But, here we learn God's love overcomes natural barriers that keep us from reaching out to others. Love knocks walls down.

What barriers hinder us from loving another person? It could be like this one and be racial. It could be economic. It could be some emotional wall. There may be a history between that hurting person and us and there is an emotion that says, "I just do not want someone else to love on that person." But, God's love always crosses over these walls our own flesh places in front of us.

Who is our neighbor? It is tempting to narrow that definition to people we kind of like and to people who are close to us, but Jesus explodes the definition of neighbor and of loving our neighbor with this story. A neighbor is any person who has a need whom God brings across our path. God orchestrates who our neighbors are. We do not get to choose our own neighbors. The priest and the Levite wanted to choose their neighbor and that was the problem. The Samaritan did not get to choose whether this man in the road was his neighbor or not. God brought him down this path to be confronted by this particular hurting person, so that person became his neighbor, not by choice but by God's design.

That is what God does with us. The first two men, righteous men, did not see. They were blind to the hurt. They were blind to God's call upon them to meet the hurt of this person. They were focused upon their own agenda. We are not told why they walked by. We were only told they walked by. There may be many reasons why they did not see. Perhaps they were afraid. Perhaps they were busy. Perhaps they did not want to engage in the hassle. But, what happened here is they simply did not "see". How many people do we not see with the eyes of Jesus and in compassion? The Samaritan is the only one who saw with compassion.

Whether it is when we come to church on a Sunday morning, whether it is when we go to the office on Monday, whether it is when we come home from work to our family, our spouse, our brothers, our sisters, our roommate, whether it is when we enter the classroom in grade school, high school, or college, wherever it may be, we must ask: Are my eyes open to see with compassion? I guarantee, all around us, people are hurting and the only issue is: do we see it or are we blind to it?

In the second action of neighborly love: Love risks personal loss. Undoubtedly, there would have been great danger. Let us imagine we are walking through a rough area of a city, maybe an alleyway, and it is dark out. We look over and we hear someone groaning and we discover a person who has just been beat up to within an inch of their life. What is our first thought? Our first thought is going to be, as we look around, "Who is still around? The person who beat this person is likely lurking around the corner." That is self-preservation and this may have been the reason of the priest and Levite. Perhaps they had been on a long journey and they wanted to get home to their family because family time is important to them, "I cannot take time to help this person because my family is really important." There are all kinds of reasons why either of these did not help their neighbor.

When we neglect God's call to love a neighbor we most often give our self some very admirable reason to justify our neglect. Love takes risks.

The third action of neighborly love is: Love invests time and money to help. Money is not always needed to demonstrate a Christ-like love, but it is often needed,

¹⁷ But if anyone has the world's goods and sees his brother in need, yet closes his heart against him, how does God's love abide in him? ¹⁸ Little children, let us not love in word or talk but in deed and in truth.

Consider for a moment how much love cost the Samaritan,

³⁴ "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."

What did the Samaritan use to bind up the wounds? He probably did not have a surgeon's medical kit with a whole bunch of nice bandages. He was a business man; he had an extra pair of clothes. What did he do? He began ripping his clothes up to make bandages. It cost him. Why did he have oil and wine? It was for food and drink; he used his groceries he was going to use on this long trip. The idea of pouring means he lavished as much oil and as much wine as was needed to help this person. He put the wounded person and the Samaritan walked the rest of the way. When they got to Jericho, he set this person up in an inn and he took care of him all night.

The next day the Samaritan went to the innkeeper and said, "I do have to leave today, but here is extra money and if there is anything else, here is my credit card." Do we understand the kind of exposure this Samaritan made for himself. There is exposure to fraud, but Jesus tells us this is what love does; love is exceedingly generous beyond anyone's wildest imaginations.

In the fourth action of neighborly love: Love abounds in generosity. Love motivates ordinary people to help others in extraordinary ways. I can only imagine the innkeeper's questions, "Who is this guy? Is he a friend?" "No." "You are Samaritan and he is a Jew. How did you come about this?" "I just saw him for the first time." "He is not a good friend. He is not a relative?" "No, I just found him on the side of the road." "Why are you doing all of this?" That is the question the world should ask of God's people. They should observe our generous lavish love in such a way that they scratch their head and ask, "Why are you doing all of this?"

Here is the barb and it is a barb which is ultimately intended to heal and bring conviction and bring healing,

³⁶ *"Which of these three, do you think, proved to be a neighbor to the man who fell among the robbers?"*

The question now is: What kind of person are you?

³⁷ He said, "The one who showed him mercy." And Jesus said to him, *"You go, and do likewise."*

There are two application questions. First, who has God placed in my path for me to love? Won't we be a friend and say, "Lord, open my eyes to see with compassion and then work in my heart so Your love would flow through me with rich generosity, that I would not walk on the other side, but that I would love my neighbor as myself." Who does that for anyone? The answer is: we would do that for our self if we found our self beaten and along the road. We would say to the innkeeper, "Whatever I need, please take care of me. Here is my credit card." We would do that for our self, but who does that for a stranger? That is the issue.

God's will comes to us in strange ways and often in the form of incredible interruptions. Just when we believe our duties of love are done for the day and we are settled into a nice quiet evening in our home, suddenly a neighbor pops up. It may be a neighbor living with us, a spouse, a child, a parent, a brother or a sister. It may be a neighbor who does not live with us, but in the house next door or in a house across the street. The best thing we can do, as God leads us to cross paths with hurting people, is to stop looking at these kinds of events as intrusions and interruptions. Instead, we need to consider them as opportunities for God to demonstrate His love, a love He has shown abroad in our heart.

Secondly, what does God want me to give in order to love them? This story began with a great question: What must I do to inherit eternal life? This story drives us to the point where not one of us fulfills the Law's commands. That is where we need to begin and this drives us to this issues of, "Lord, if I cannot do anything to inherit eternal life, how might I obtain eternal life?" The Bible is abundantly clear and it is the Great News!

The Great News of the Gospel is this: Jesus Christ has done, already, everything you and I need in order for us to have a home in Heaven, so believe on Him and give yourself over to Him. Turn from sin and embrace Jesus as Savior and Lord. There is no other question until we answer that question. Have you answered that question?

If you say, "Yes, I receive Jesus as my Savior. Now I am a child of God and a son (or daughter) of the King." God has given to you Spirit and it has a power and a purpose to bring glory by loving Him with all our heart, all our soul, all our mind, and all our strength and by loving our neighbor just as we love our self. May God work in us to make that