**“GO AND DO LIKEWISE”**

Luke 10:25-42

Key Verse: 36,37

After taking a month off, we’re back to our study of Luke’s Gospel. Earlier in Chapter 10, Jesus sent out seventy-two of his followers in pairs to go and share with people about “The kingdom of God.” He told them that “’The harvest is plentiful, but the workers are few’” (2). So Jesus sent them out like a farmers into fields—to go and share God’s kingdom with others. Today’s passage is an amazing supplement to the first part of Chapter 10. The message of being a “harvest worker” is an important problem consciousness of the need to go outside of ourselves, into the world around us, and love other people.

But, how do we do that? How do we love someone? Like, *really* love someone. Then there’s the even tougher question—How do we love someone when it’s not easy to love them, when someone has big issues that seem impossible for me to help, or when someone is just not a nice person, or when it requires a lot of sacrifice—how do I love someone then? Today, Jesus teaches us how, in one of his most famous parables—the parable of The Good Samaritan.

Look at verse 25. Jesus is teaching, and there is a crowd sitting down around him listening to what he has to say. Amongst those sitting, there’s an expert in the law. Now, when it says expert in the law, these guys really were. Not only did they have to memorize all of the Pentateuch (first five books of the Bible) from an early age, (something the Pharisees and Sadducees also did), but they had memorized all the famous commentaries on the law, as well as the commentaries on those commentaries. Among many already well read in the law of Moses, these guys were the experts. There were considered to be lawyers of the law, being able to make judgments on meanings and practices based on the law. So this man was known as knowing everything there was to know about the law.

But this man, a lawyer of the law, stands up in the crowd while Jesus is teaching to ask a question. Why? Would such a man need to ask a question? It says in verse 25 that he wanted to test Jesus. And he does so by asking, “’Teacher, what must I do to inherit eternal life?” This specific phrase for “eternal life,” is used in four places in the NT, in Luke and in Acts, all by the author Luke (Lk10:25, 18:18; Act2:37;16:30). And essentially, what the lawyer of the law was asking what he must do to be saved to gain life eternal. But it seems safe to say that he was a bit disingenuous in his question. He didn’t really want to know what Jesus though about this, but wanted to test him.

A challenge. How does Jesus respond? Look at verse . Jesus answers the man’s question by asking him a question back—“What is written in the Law?” he replied, “How do you read it?” If someone interrupted me speaking to challenge me publically, I would be like “Say what? Excuse me?” But Jesus wasn’t frustrated with the man’s obvious arrogance, but rather asks the man what was in the law and what he thought about it. Jesus was respecting this man, as an authority on the law his opinion, and Jesus seems to be showing this man that he was willing to learn from him. Jesus really humble.

And how does the man respond? Look at verse 27. “He answered, ‘‘’Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind”; and ‘Love your neighbor as yourself.’” This lawyer of the law knew his stuff. He recited two commands from the Law that lead obeying would lead towards being saved and gaining life eternal. The first command is from the Pentateuch—Deuteronomy 6:5. It’s called the *shema* and is the first verse that every Jewish child would memorize. Actually it was read aloud by every Jew twice a day. This was something everybody was familiar with. And the repetition of “with all your heart… soul… mind” essentially meant: “Love God with all your being.” It’s to be in love with God. Infatuated with him. Having our thoughts, our longings, our hopes, our will in him. It’s enjoying being with him, caring so much about what he thinks. God spoke this command to the Israelites, saying that if they did this, they would be saved. And the man recited a second command. “Love your neighbor as yourself.” This also comes form the Pentateuch—Leviticus 19:18. And this man was not only saying that to love God with your everything meant salvation, but we have to love our neighbors as ourselves.

This man’s answer was very profound—*Love God, love others, and you’ll be saved.* Being in love with God is not enough to be saved; we have to also love others too. Why? Because if we truly love God, the natural flow from that love is to love others too. Think about it, if we think to ourselves, “Oh yeah, I love God, sure…” yet we’re always upset with others, jealous, malicious, condemning, hateful towards others, then we’re not really loving God at all. How we treat others is actually a litmus test for how we treat God. It says in 1 John, “Whoever claims to love God yet hates a brother or sister is a liar. For whoever does not love their brother and sister, whom they have seen, cannot love God, whom they have not seen. And he has given us this command: Anyone who loves God must also love their brother and sister.”

So this expert really was an expert. Even Jesus was impressed. Look at verse 28a. Jesus says, “’You have answered correctly.” But look at what else Jesus says in verse 28—“Do this and you will live.” Jesus is saying something huge here. It’s one thing to know this—“Yeah, yeah, I know—Love God, love others. Right answer, I got it.” But knowing this doesn’t “save you” or give you eternal life. It’s ***doing it***. Because it’s one thing to know the right thing to do, but that often doesn’t guarantee you’ll do it. If we could all just think about loving God with our whole beings—“Aw, loving God…. That’s nice”—and loving our neighbors as ourselves—“Yeah, I love everyone”—we would all be good. But our good intentions, or knowledge, or even our emotions won’t save us. Jesus says, “Do this and you will live.” You can’t just think about loving God and others, you have to actually do it.

How did the man respond? Look at verse 29. He felt a little threatened and wanted to justify himself. He basically felt a little humiliated. So he asks the question, “And who is my neighbor?” Essentially asking, “Who is it that I should love?”

That’s a good question, right? Who are those we should love in our lives? I mean there are some people I’d say I try to love, but there are some people who I don’t even like. And there’s some people who it seems impossible to love. Who is my neighbor? Jesus answers the man’s question with a story.

Look at verse 30. There’s a man leaving Jerusalem to go to Jericho, a road known to be dangerous. Robbers attack this man. But they didn’t just take his money and run. These men stripped him of his clothes, maybe to steel his clothes, maybe also to humiliate him. Then it says they also beat him, not just a couple of punches, but these robbers beat this man so badly that he’s at the brink of death. A man left by the side of the road, did nothing wrong, but who was robbed, naked and beaten and dying. Now just thinking about that is pretty sad. We feel bad for the guy, right? Imagine that happened to you. That would be horrible. Look at verse 31. A priest was going down the road. Priests were men who were caretakers of the people, and upholders of God’s law and of worshiping him. They were known as those, “set apart,” as holy men. But when this holy man saw the naked, beaten and half dead man, he doesn’t do anything to help him. Rather he physically got away from the man and went on his way. Now look at 32. Levites were of the order of Aaron, and were assistants to priests. They were basically the guys who served at the temple, doing even menial things, to prepare the place for worship. This guy was a man devoted to God, but a blue-collar guy, a humbler man. But the Levite saw the beaten man, and also did nothing to help, moved away from him. Why? Didn’t these men care? Didn’t these men know the law—love God, love others? I’m sure they saw the poor man beaten and half dead, and they felt bad for him—“Aw that sucks.” But why didn’t they do anything? They might have been busy, they might have had somewhere to go and were running late. It could’ve very well been that they thought they would become ritually unclean by touching the body of a man who could be dead, so they wouldn’t risk touching him to find out. Now let’s read verse 33. Look at who stops for the man—a Samaritan. Now, it’s sort of hard for us to get the impact of this word, “Samaritan.” But Jews pretty much despised the Samaritans. They were half-breeds, some of them worshiped idols, and those that did worship God didn’t do so in the temple in Jerusalem but on some mountain. Samaritans were so disgusting to Jews that they wouldn’t even eat food off dishes used by them. Jews called them “dogs.” They were seen as uncouth, and immoral. But, Jesus was speaking to an expert in his religion and tells the story where it wasn’t the religious priest or the religious Levite who stopped to help a man in need, but it was the non-religious Samaritan. To a Jew, it would be a lot like saying it was the pastor or the elder that stayed and helped the man, but the drug dealer. Jesus was reiterating what he said before—“Do this and you will live,” showing that just because you know that you should love, doesn’t mean that when the time comes for you to, that you will. So if knowing isn’t enough, how do we do it—love others? Let’s look at what the Samaritan man does.

**Love is Heartbreak.** Look at verse 33 again. Here, the word “took pity” means to be moved within one’s inner being—to feel pain in oneself for someone else. The Greek word actually appears in the NT a lot and is translated in a variety of ways—pity, tenderness, tender mercy, affection, compassion (Lk 1:78, 7:13, 10:33, 15:20; Php1:8, 2:1; 1Jn3:17; Col3:12). But probably one of the best ways to understand this is to be heartbroken. Look at 33 again. This Samaritan man saw the man on the road, and it says he was heartbroken for this wounded stranger.

Have you ever felt this way for someone else? You saw their situation, and you felt saw bad for them that your inner being—ached, felt like it was breaking within you? I remember for the first time feeling something like this as a kid watching a documentary about starving children in Asia.. But in thinking about this passage, what about those lying right there in our lives, right next to you. Those we see everyday, those we live with, we work with or go to school with. It may not be as obvious as this beaten man or a starving child, but have you noticed someone inwardly in pain, wounded by their past, beaten up by sin or guilt or self-hatred, these people who are near us all the time, who are dying spiritually, do we feel heartbroken for them? See it’s easy to demonize the Priest and Levite, but would we stop and actually look to see others around us, or would we rather continue walking, thinking about ourselves and our own lives? Then there’s the question, if I see spiritual pain and wounds in others, what can I do?

**Love is Action.** The Samaritan man did not just stand there, feeling heartbroken. Look at 34 and 35. The man actually doesn’t say much at all in these verses. Jesus tells of the man’s actions. This step loving others is huge. Some of us may be really into understanding others, seeing others wounds and issues, even feeling empathy for them. We might even talk about it with others, about others and their issues. But this man doesn’t talk. He acts.

I remember there was a girl I liked a lot in Elementary School. I thought about her, wrote poems about her, talked to others about her, but never actually had a conversation with her. Finally, my friend told me to do something. I didn’t know what to do, so during gym class, I stood at the three-point line and tried to hit a three-pointer. After about 15 tries, the ball finally went in. Then I yelled across the gym to where this girl was and said, “Hey, I like you!” Didn’t work out so well.

Talk is cheap. Even feeling things or understanding others isn’t enough. We need to act. You know, it’s said that Jesus himself never actually said, “I love you.” But multitudes of people flocked to him because he was known by his actions—how he treated the poor and the forgotten, how he welcomed and embraced the most sinful, them and how he healed. But if love is action, what do I do? Let’s look back at what the Samaritan man did.

**Love is Sacrifice.** There beside the man, the Samaritan poured his own oil and wine on the man’s wounds, to soothe him and to disinfect them. He made bandages, probably from his own clothing, to bind up the wounds and stop the bleeding so he wouldn’t bleed out. He hoisted this full-grown man he’d never met before onto his own donkey, and took him with him as he himself probably walked. He took him to an inn to nurse him back from the brink of death. Who knows what this man’s plans were before, but it didn’t matter, he stayed there himself with the wounded man into the night and until the next day. He paid for this man’s room and even gave the inn-keeper some extra money to keep on watching the man until he was fully recovered, and promised to come back pay any extra expenses. This man did everything he could, no matter the cost or the inconvenience, until this wounded man could be healed. Look again at verses 34-35. This man sacrificed two things here—his **time** and his **money.** The amount of time this man spent on him is simply amazing. He could’ve just helped him there on the road, bound up his wounds and gave him some water and then continued on to wherever he needed to go, but he slowed his pace and took the man with him. He didn’t have to stay the night at the inn with him., but the man stayed with the stranger. And he would even come back and make time to check up on the man. I like my personal time. When I get home from doing something or with being with people all day or am just tired I need my own time. So I put on my headphones, put on some comfortable pants, check my email, and just chill. And we’re all like that, we guard our personal time and space like mother lions protecting her cubs. I might pray with you 2 by 2 on Sunday and pray for you, but please leave me alone during my chill time. But to sacrifice our time, our plans, whatever we’re doing for someone else is how we can love others. If we’re not willing to sacrifice our time and stop whatever we’re doing for someone in need, then we can’t really love others

Look again at 34-35. The man sacrificed his money. His own wine and oil, his clothes, the inn, the innkeeper, those things required him to give money that he would probably never get back. If we guard anything more than our time, it’s probably our finances. I mean, no one is gushing with money here. And even if we are, we guard our bank accounts and our possessions, all of that as much as we can. Because that’s mine, I earned it. Giving my money away to someone else who might need it, and never getting it back? Yeah, probably not. But here is where it gets real—if we’re not willing to give up our money, our things, for other people too, we can’t really love them as we love ourselves. My dad used to always say that there’s an invisible string attached from the heart to the wallet, and that’s true. Now I don’t think we should be irresponsible with our money with others, but there is something to be said about willing to give up our things when others really are in need.

The Samaritan man loved in **heartbreak**, in **action**, and through **sacrifice.** After telling the parable, Jesus comes back to the man’s question that prompted it—“Who is my neighbor?”

This question, we ask ourselves all the time, “Who is it I should allow to be close to me?” And we make these distinctions in our lives—our friends we like, our close friends we like more, our family we might like, we might love, some we may hate. And we’ll be nice to people who are nice to us, and if it makes us feel good or is convenient to my schedule and plans, I’ll occasionally be nice to someone else. But after talking about the Samaritan, Jesus asks the man a slightly different question than, “Who is my neighbor?” Look at verse 36. Jesus asks. “Which of these three do you think was a neighbor to the man who fell into the hands of robbers?” And of course the smart religious man knew the answer. Let’s read verse 37. The expert interestingly doesn’t say, “The Samaritan,” which would be like saying a bad word, but he says, “The one who had mercy on him.” Jesus then says, “Go and do likewise. “ What Jesus is saying here to that asking who is my neighbor is the wrong way of seeing it. It’s rather asking, “Am I a neighbor to others?” It’s the same principle as saying that to have friends, you have to be a friend.

Look at verse 37 again. Jesus says, “Go and do likewise.” Once again, we see the theme of this passage—when it comes to loving others, talk is cheap. To really love is to love in action. And this love is not just when it’s easy or convenient, but when it’s hard, when it’s inconvenient, when it takes even great sacrifice on our parts. The Samaritan man was a great example of love. But Jesus is actually an even greater example. He saw us with such heartbreak, sacrificed the holiness of heaven, his own life, endured pain and suffering and loneliness and torture, all so that we could be saved and healed. As it says in 1 John 3:16,”This is how we know what love is: Jesus Christ laid down his life for us. And we ought to lay down our lives for our brothers and sisters.” If you want to know how to love others, get to know Jesus. Look at him. When we do, his love for us becomes ingrained in us. We begin to love and act as he did. We don’t really need to think much about it much, it becomes a natural part of who we are. You know the early Christianity, a lot of historians are perplexed about how quickly and vibrantly Christianity spread in the early centuries. There are a lot of theories, but it was dangerous to be a Christian then, Christians were gathered and hunted and killed. But for some reason, even with widespread persecution, so many people, from all walks of life around the world, began following Jesus. Why? There are a couple of historical accounts of how Christians lived then—“They love all men and are persecuted by all” (*Epistle to Diagnosis,* AD 160). They loved everybody, even those who persecuted them, because they knew Jesus. And this crazy love of action is why Christianity spread.

In thinking about this passage—Am I a neighbor? Am I close to those around me? Do I take the time out of my day to even think about what others are going through, what issues or wounds others might have, or do I only think and obsess about myself? Am I willing to act when it comes to loving others, sacrificing my time, my money, anything it takes to love others? Who are the people in my life God wants me to love?

The last part of this passage is a great compliment to the first part. Jesus went to visit the home of Martha and Mary. Martha opens her home to Jesus and his posse. She worked really hard, she served them all, she cooked and cleaned and got bedding ready for at least 13 men—similar sacrifices of time and money of the Samaritan man. But in contrast there’s Mary her sister. She wasn’t helping. She sat listening to Jesus’ words. So Martha blows up at Jesus for letting Mary sit there! But look at verses 41 and 42. Jesus says that Mary had chosen what’s better. Mary chose to listen to Jesus rather than try to do a lot of good works. Mary just wanted to learn from Jesus. I’m sure Jesus wasn’t unthankful to Martha, but he was teaching her something that we can all learn as we try and love others. When we can, it’s important to spend time with Jesus and not get all caught up in what we’re doing in loving others. Being with Jesus, especially listening to his words, is what sustains us and gives us sustenance. He’s our example, and his words are what heals and sustains us. This also shows us what we can do to spiritually help others. Jesus’ words. The Bible. These words themselves the Bible describes as cutting deep into us, as being living and active words.

You know, when we serve and love we can easily get worn out and annoyed and feel used and bitter. And may have our own issues, our own problems and wounds we need to worry about. “Who’s going to help and love me?” But remember what the expert of the law said at the beginning of the passage? Love God and love others. When we’re in love with God and we find all our worth and affection and affirmation in being with him and loving him, when we try to listen to him and learn from him, when he occupies our thoughts and affections, then we’re free and have strength to love others. That’s what Mary was doing here first, she was loving God with her everything. That’s the source of it all, loving God. When we do, we find that his love for us overflows from within. It says in 1 John, “We love because he first loved us” (1Jn4:19). And when we love God and love others, as Jesus says in this passage, “Do this and you will live.” This “life” Jesus speaks of is inner life, it’s fullness and happiness. If you’re depressed, or lonely, or just feel meaningless, love God with all your being and love others as you love yourself in action, and when you do, even though it requires sacrifice and is at times hard, you’ll find your so full of life and joy.

Scene from *Band of Brothers*.

Prayer of St. Francis of Assisi

*Lord, make me an instrument of Your peace;*

*Where there is hatred, let me sow love;*

*Where there is injury, pardon;*

*Where there is error, truth;*

*Where there is doubt, faith;*

*Where there is despair, hope;*

*Where there is darkness, light;*

*And where there is sadness, joy.*

*O Divine Master, Grant that I may not so much seek*

*To be consoled as to console;*

*To be understood as to understand;*

*To be loved as to love.*

*For it is in giving that we receive;*

*It is in pardoning that we are pardoned;*

*And it is in dying that we are born to eternal life.*