Luke 10:25-37; I John 3:16-18; The Parable of the Good Samaritan I. The Pressing Questions II. Those who Pass By III. The One who Helps

Congregation of our Lord Jesus Christ, people ask questions for all sorts of reasons. Students ask teachers questions hoping to get the teacher sidetracked. While some questions are genuine- others are not. Have you ever been asked a loaded question- one that you knew was asked to trap or entangle you. You have likely been asked a question before that was not asked with pure intentions. In fact, many of us have been asked questioned as a form of persecution. Loaded or biased questions that are asked to trap or to embarrass Christians. In a similar way today, we find Jesus undergoing a series of questions that do not come from a pure heart. As we return to our parables this morning, we find that this parable is not a “kingdom” parable, but rather it is an “example” parable. This parable is used to teach and correct. Jesus sees that this lawyer is looking for a loophole. He is not coming to Jesus with a humble heart that is ready to learn, but rather he is looking for the fine print in order to excuse his own actions. So this morning as we come to the parable of the Good Samaritan, we consider this theme: Jesus Christ commands us to show mercy like the Samaritan to those who need mercy.

**I. The Pressing Questions**

In our first point, we are going to dive into these questions that our lawyer friend asks of Jesus in Luke 10. Starting in 10:25, we find that this lawyer’s first question is- what shall I do to inherit eternal life? This is a salvation question as this man wants to know what he can do to earn or inherit the blessings of everlasting life. But verse 10 also reveals his motivation- he was putting Jesus to the test! This was not a genuine question that he wanted an answer to, rather this lawyer was coming to Jesus in pride. The lawyer thought that he knew the Law better than Jesus- that he was a better teacher with more insight than Jesus was. He was asking Jesus this question in order to prove his own wisdom- in order to trap or expose Jesus as a fraud in his own mind. But Jesus turns the question around with another question- what do you find in the Law? Note that Jesus does not first directly answer the question but rather turns the Lawyer back to the Law. It is interesting that Jesus does not say- “believe in Me and you shall have everlasting life!” Rather, Jesus takes this Lawyer back to Law. Does the Law reveal the way to eternal life? Yes- by perfectly loving God and perfectly loving fellow man! So the way for a man to inherit eternal life is by perfectly obeying the Law of God in every way! But that leads to an important clarification- can we or anyone perfectly love God and fellow man? Have we kept all the words of the Law from our childhood? Can anyone here say that they have perfectly loved God and man at all times? No- we cannot say that! So the first issue Jesus is dealing with is this- can a man be justified in God’s sight by perfectly obeying God’s Law? Is this possible for a fallen man to do? No- the Law of God exposes my sin and misery- or at least the Law is supposed to expose our sins and misery! Let him who has no sin cast the first stone! Let him who has no sin boast of his own works! But this Lawyer is not getting the point- instead he goes on to ask another question in v. 29. Well then, who exactly is my neighbor? If I have to love God and my neighbor in order to have eternal life- I want you to tell me exactly who is my neighbor! Give me a list! Here again- in v. 29- we find the motivation of this lawyer. He asked this question in order to justify himself! He thought that Jesus was giving him a way out- a possible path in order to gain his own entrance into heaven. So the question is this- what must I do- and who must I love? Well, the Jewish answer of his day would answer this question about the neighbor in a pretty exclusive way. For the pharisees and scribes, the neighbor who must be loved is a devout, fellow Jew. You don’t have to love someone who does not look like you and does not act like you- for these are not your neighbor! Here again we see the fallen, sinful heart. Remember back with Peter when he asked about the number of times that he must forgive his brother- up to 7 times? Well, Jesus blows up that expectation by expanding Peter’s vision of forgiveness. Today with this Lawyer- he has a very limited scope and vision of love for neighbor. Jesus is going to challenge his expectations with this parable. So even before we get to the parable we have been challenged in two ways. First, can anyone say that they have loved all their neighbors at all times and in the correct way? No we cannot- for the Law of God exposes our sin and our need for a savior. So this parable proves that we cannot do anything in ourselves to inherit salvation! And secondly, this parable is going to expand our vision of what it means to be a neighbor. Instead of limiting our love to those who look and act like us, this parable is going to force us to look at neighborly love with broader vision. Although it is true that we cannot help everyone, we can help the needy neighbor that God has placed in our path!

**II. Those who Pass By**

So lets jump into this parable in v. 30. A man was going down from Jerusalem to Jericho one day. This was a 17-mile journey going down in descent- it was well known for its rocky terrain and it has become a prime location for bandits to hide and ambush those who travel by. On this particular day, this man was accosted by a group of robbers who beat him, rob him, strip him and leave him half dead. Left unconscious and without hope on the side of the road, this poor man is languishing. Bleeding and naked, all alone and on the brink of death. Will anyone see and come to his aid? Well, along comes a man in v. 31. Not just any man, a priest who has just finished his duties at the temple in Jerusalem. The hero arrives- right? Likely going home after serving in the holy city. So the priests were the holy men of that day. They would be the most well versed in the Law- serving day after day in the temple. Real men of God- church leaders like the elders of today. But this first man does not aid or offer help. Not wanting to sully his cleanliness- he keeps at a distance. You need to be clean to serve in the temple- and this man would pollute this priest. So in order to avoid getting his hands dirty, he passes by. The beat-up man stays in the road- dying. But along comes another man. Maybe this one will help. The next to come by is the Levite of v. 32. Now Levites were the helpers in the temple- they were the ones who did most of the cleaning and preparing work in the temple day after day. They were the priest’s helpers and as such still connected to the temple. Maybe they were like our present-day deacons- charged with the charitable work of the temple. But this one also refuses to offer any aid. I’m sure he had very good reasons- maybe he was too busy. Maybe his wife was expecting him at home- or maybe it was getting dark and he did not want to be caught in the same situation as this poor man lying here. But whatever the reason was, he also refuses to help. Both these men would see- and both would pass by. The need was not hidden. They have the opportunity to help. But both would go out of their way to avoid helping! Literally walking around the need- crossing over to the other side- keeping the needy at a distance. But as Samuel would say- obedience is better than sacrifice! Is there no one to help this poor man? Would no one love this beaten, robbed and dying man?

**III. The One who Helps**

Sometimes, help comes from the most unlikely places. Like water from a rock, God can use an unlikely source to be the reason His people are blessed. So in our parable, along comes a Samaritan in v. 33. Now as you know, the Jews and the Samaritans did not get along. The Jews considered the Samaritans to be religiously polluted- a half breed if you will. More in common with the Gentiles than the pure, Jewish stock. Jews would go out of their way to avoid Samaria- which was directly North of Jerusalem and is part of the West Bank today. This unclean outsider sees this poor man lying in the road. But more than just seeing him, this Samaritan is moved by compassion and acts upon this mercy. Now this Jewish Lawyer is thinking- I would rather die than be helped by a Samaritan! The only good Samaritan is a dead Samaritan! And yet- this parable is called the “Good” Samaritan! He is a good man because he has compassion- his heart is moved- his heart breaks for this injured man and he does something about it. So the Samaritan helps in v. 34- at great cost to himself, this Samaritan binds the wounds and takes care of the man in need. He shows pity and sympathy- making sure that this naked, beaten and robbed man becomes clothed, healed and fed! The care he receives corresponds to the need he displays! Not everyone needs the same thing- but the pressing need of this man was fully and generously met by the Samaritan. He goes beyond the normal call of duty- rising above to help this poor man who had nothing.

Now there are a few ways to apply this parable- and the first way is to challenge our preconceived notions. Who should we help? We are to do good to all, and especially to those who are of the household of faith as Galatians tells us. But the household of faith is not just our local congregation. In other words, our help is to be extended to those who have needs even if those people do not look like us! This Samaritan loved his neighbor- and the Samaritans are your neighbors! Do you love the Samaritans of today? Don’t let their different looks or language be a reason to withhold kindness! Love is blind in this way- the generosity of the church is for all of God’s people- not just those who are like us. But this generosity is to extend to all. R. C. Sproul coined the term- “universal neighborhood.” We are all neighbors- and if God sends rain and sunshine upon the just and the unjust- so also we should seek to show kindness! So a Christian strives to show love to all- regardless of their background. Jesus did this very thing- and that is why He was not afraid to talk to them and even reveal the source of living water to them! This is the very thing that Jesus did in John 4- offering the living water to the Samaritan woman. So the second way to apply this parable is to see the generosity of Jesus! To say this another way- we are those who are poor, beaten, naked and dying. Jesus comes to us like this Samaritan did- and He heals us, feeds us, and cloths us! So then, we who have receive the mercy and compassion of God must be motivated to show compassion to others! As we found in I John 3:16- he laid down His life for us, so we ought to lay down our lives for the brothers. God’s love abides in us when we share with those in need. Love is what motivates us to bless others. But it also takes wisdom to discern how best to help. So how we help the poor and distressed may not always be the same. We need not enable people to live in sin nor encourage laziness. The Bible also says, if you will not work then don’t expect to eat. So we need not enable people to live in sin. That is not the point of this parable. This guy on the road was beaten, robbed and stripped naked. He did not lose his money by gambling or by spending it all on wine. So it does take discernment to know how to best help. But the fact remains, our hearts must be open and loving! Looking for ways in which we can truly help those who are in need or living in distress. Perhaps the clearest way we can exemplify this parable is the work of RMS or Word and Deed. Disaster relief for those who are suffering- helping them when they have endured great loss. This is pleasing to God and benefits those in need.

To conclude, when we consider the great need that is all around us, we can feel a little bit overwhelmed. The poor we will always have with us. But this parable helps to focus us- who can we help? Who is my neighbor? Anyone whom God has put in my path that I have the ability to help- that is my neighbor! Jesus does not leave us in the abstract- rather He pushes us to deal with concrete issues. Will you love specific people today? How? The question is not- who must I love? But rather, who can I show love to today? Not a list- but a desire that looks for opportunities to serve. Jesus Christ commands us to show mercy like the Samaritan to those who need mercy. Being a good neighbor is more than just the State Farm jingle- rather being a good neighbor is the calling of those who have been shown compassion by Jesus Christ- the perfect neighbor- our Savior and friend!