

Luke 10: 25-37; Mt. 9:10-13; Who is my Neighbor I. The Telling Question II. The Convenient Avoidance III. The Expensive Compassion

Congregation of our Lord Jesus Christ, this morning we return to our beloved physician Luke. We remember that Luke set out to write a dependable account of all that Jesus said and did- so that we might be certain concerning what we believe. Last week we consider the Law of God in LD 2- specifically the summary of the Law which is to love God and to love our neighbor. Really our passage from Luke 10 could be considered part 2 of that sermon. Today we see an example of this love in action. The love of others is something that is easy to profess- but when people have real faces and hardships this love becomes much harder to show- and more expensive to give. It is easy to love in the abstract- like you can love the people in China- people you will never meet. But what about someone in need who lives down the street- someone you pass every day. It is when love has a face- when people are real- that is when love becomes expensive. Today we see that Jesus Christ instructs us to love those whom He has placed in our path.

I. The Telling Question

We start by considering these questions raised by this lawyer introduced in v. 25. As Jesus has been teaching in their midst, an expert in the law stands up to question- really to challenge Jesus Christ. As a Jewish lawyer, his expertise was the things of the temple and the intricacies of the Law! He was a professional OT Law man- who answered question about the Law as a full-time job! He tests Jesus- trying to prove that he knew more than Jesus. Now you may have met a person like this before – one who is an expert in their field. Like a proud doctor that belittles others- one who has all the answers and scoffs at the ignorance of others. Well- that is the kind of guy this is. He is an expert in the OT Law. He is going to test Jesus- assuming that he knows the law better than Jesus does. What must I do to inherit eternal life- he says. The questions shows his ignorance- what is demanded is something that no mere man can do! No one by obedience to the Law can gain or purchase eternal life because all have fallen into sin. But the question is turned back on this lawyer- what do you think- Jesus says. Well- this lawyer rightly summarizes the Law as Jesus did in Mt. 22 as we saw last week.

Loving God and loving your neighbor. A faithful summary of the Law. But instead of pondering the depth of the Law- the deep need for love as we did last week- and instead of confessing his sinful failure to love- this Lawyer pushes on in v. 29. Seeking to justify himself- in order to make himself look and feel good- to vindicate himself in his own eyes- he asks. Who then is my neighbor? Wanting a manageable list of people- to justify himself- he expects Jesus to tell him what he already knew. Your neighbor is your fellow Israelite- or someone who is from your own clan and class he was thinking. But that is not how Jesus would answer. What is striking here is first of all what is missing from this lawyer. This lawyer is missing both humility and obedience as we will see in moment! A true follower of Christ knows his sin- acknowledges his need and misery in humility- crying out to God for salvation. And being justified by faith in Jesus Christ, this one will walk in a manner worthy of his calling. But instead of a humble trust in Jesus- and looking to Jesus to teach him the way that he should go, this proud lawyer boasts in himself and tries to exalt himself over Jesus! This is not the mark of godliness, but the mark of pride and rebellion! He does not have the soft heart of true love- and he has failed to love God above all and his neighbor as himself.

II. The Convenient Avoidance

So to prove the point to this man- Jesus tells one of the best known parables- the parable of the Good Samaritan. Now this parable is going to teach us not- how we might be saved- but rather how we are to love! In other words- eternal life is not gained by loving people; but rather those who have been saved by grace through faith will as a consequence learn to love as Jesus taught! So the parable starts in v. 30 with a man traveling from Jericho to Jerusalem. This 15-mile hike was one that passes through a narrow ravine. This ravine was lined with caved- which made convenient dens for robbers which was still taking place in the 1800's. Well, this poor soul falls into the hands of robbers and is robbed, beaten and left for dead. The story takes a turn for the better when in God's providence two men come walking by. The first is a priest in v. 31. Likely on the way to the temple to serve in his role a priest- he was ceremonially clean and, on his way to perform important work. He was holy to God- and consecrated for service. A high privilege- and being on an important

task this priest pretends not to see this poor man. So he passes by on the other side. Don't you know that this half-dead guy would get my garments dirty- and possibly make me ceremonially unclean? It is not my fault nor is it my job to help! Next we have a Levite in v. 32. From the holy tribe of Levi- set apart by God for the sacred work of protecting the temple and carrying the holy things. Like the priest, he passes by on the other side. Both men would have known the law- they are both heavily involved in the religious duties of the day. To put in today's context- it would be like having both a pastor and an elder of the church see someone from the community mugged and shot- and both men would look the other way. Both had no true love- and no understanding of what a neighbor was! What we find here is that both of these men are proving this self-righteous attitude of the lawyer. This better than others mentality- to ignore the wounded because I am too busy. Jewish scholars during that day restricted neighbors to those of the same tribe and religion. Well know- you know that it is easy to love your family and those who are like you. We look after our own- is in fact a worldly proverb. But what about the outsiders? Those who are both in need and who are not like you- that is where the concept of neighbor comes in! As we read in Mt. 9- Jesus desires mercy and not sacrifice! Religion that is pure is to visit those who need and to minister to the afflicted as James 1 says.

III. The Expensive Compassion

So we come to the last traveler in v. 33. And to the first listeners, it is shockingly a Samaritan. They were likely expecting a Israelite layman- but a Samaritan- that was not expected! Samaritans as you know were hated by the Jews- as the Samaritan woman in John 4 testifies to. They were a lower class- viewed as members of a heresy. It would be similar to how many Christians view Mormons today. Disgust because of their religion- right? Well, this despised Samaritans ends up being the only one who shows mercy- it is this one that has compassion on the injured man. We have kinda forgot about him, haven't we? What has happened to this guy- almost dead- lying in the gutter? That is human nature- to overlook or ignore the needs of others! The fact is- congregation- we have to wake up our senses to see how desperate the need is! We need to recognize how broken and hurting our neighbors are! Do we see their true need? Do our hearts hurt when we see their

affliction and pain? Lord, give us a heart for the lost and the afflicted! To truly love as you have loved us! Really loving people means that we will get our hands dirty- that we will get in the trench and meet people where they are. People do not have everything figured out- they are hurting and in need! This Samaritan exemplifies the heart of the Law- which is love made evident in action! He sacrifices himself to help those in need! He takes up the cause of the injured. He has compassion on him, seeks to heal and restore him- and even pays extra for his long-term recovery and v. 35. Listen to what James 1:22- do not be hearers but doers of the word! Love your enemies- and do good to those who persecute you! It is costly to have true compassion! It is easy to say- I feel your pain. It is expensive to do something about it! It cost both time and money- as you open your heart to those who are hurting! But that is what true love is!

What is missing from this Lawyer is the same thing that we are missing by nature- because by nature we hate instead of loving! But when we come to trust in Jesus Christ by faith- and when He fills us with His Spirit- we can and do begin to love rightly! Out of a grateful heart we will be like this Samaritan! One of the works which are acceptable for the Lord's Day- are the works of mercy! The church- we as God's people- are called to show God's mercy and love to our sin-enslaved world! The deacons can be leaders in this area- encouraging us to give and to use our strength in this regard! In works of mercy- showing us opportunities for loving service even in our community! Would that our hearts would truly seek to love and serve those who are in need- to serve like the Son! The Son shows us true love- He gave His all for us- to save and heal us in His love! For Jesus and those who follow Jesus- love is always compassion in action!

To conclude we ask- who have you been a neighbor to? May we never have a love-less orthodoxy! For without love- without compassion and mercy made evident in our actions- we are and have nothing! Who is our neighbor? One who is in need and who has been placed in our path! The Bible teaches a universal neighborhood- that all men are to be viewed through our loving eyes! Lord, give us eyes to see and hearts to love those You have put in our path! Blessed are the merciful, for they will be shown mercy. Jesus Christ instructs us to love those whom He has placed in our path. So how are you planning on showing mercy and

compassion this week? Will you act when you see an opportunity, or will you pass on by- crossing over to the other side of the road?