

The Good Neighbor

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[0 : 01] Today, Tobin teaches from Luke chapter 10, verses 25 to 37, the story of the Good Samaritan, and addresses the question, who is my neighbor? As we continue to prepare our hearts, please join me in this reading found on the screens above.

Holy God, we thank you for the promise of renewal that Christ brings. Lord, our hearts are heavy for the broken lives and hurting homes of Hong Kong. Through the mediating blood of our merciful Savior, Jesus, hear our cries.

For the poor and homeless of our city, Lord, extend your mercy. For the lonely and forgotten of our city, Lord, extend your love. For the abused and the oppressed of our city, Lord, extend your justice. For those that do not know the good news of the gospel, Lord, make yourself known. For our neighbors, those we work with, those we see every day, Lord, open our eyes to see the people you've put in our path.

May your justice roll like a river and your righteousness like a never-ending stream. Help us to love you and to love our neighbors. In the name of Jesus Christ, heal our broken city.

[1 : 13] Amen. Please be seated. Today's scripture reading comes from the gospel of Luke, chapter 10. Please follow along in your bulletin. And the lawyer stood up and put him to the test, saying, Teacher, what shall I do to inherit eternal life?

And he said to him, What is written in the law? How does it read to you? 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 wishing to justify himself, he said to Jesus, And who is my neighbor? Jesus replied and said, A man was going down from Jerusalem to Jericho and fell among robbers.

And they stripped him and beat him and went away, leaving him half dead. And by chance, a priest was going down on that road. And when he saw him, he passed by on the other side.

Likewise, a Levite also, when he came to the place and saw him, passed by on the other side. But a Samaritan who was on a journey came upon him.

[2 : 31] And when he saw him, he felt compassion and came to him and bandaged up his wounds, pouring oil and wine on them. And he put him in his own beast and brought him to an inn and took care of him.

On the next day, he took out two denarii and gave them to the innkeeper and said, Take care of him. And whatever more you spend, when I return, I will repay you. Which of these three do you think proved to be the neighbor to the man who fell into the robber's hands?

And he said, The one who showed mercy toward him. Then Jesus said to him, Go and do the same. This is God's word. Amen.

Thanks, guys. Worship was great. How you guys doing? Good. Great. That's great. You know, this has been a crazy week for our family.

Tuesday night, I was awakened to the thing that no parent wants to be awakened to. Your little five-year-old standing beside your bed saying, Dad, Mom, I think I'm about to get sick.

[3 : 46] What happens next? You turn up and right on you. And you're like, No. Don't tell us.

Go to the bathroom and do it. Please. Which began a journey for us as a family this whole week. We've all been sick with some kind of stomach flu or something going on. First we thought it was some kind of food poisoning.

Then we said, Okay, maybe it's a flu. Or we find out that everybody else has had flu. And I've had it for the last couple days. And I've been fighting Christina for the bathroom. And even this morning, Kip goes, You think you're going to throw up when you preach?

And I'm like, I don't know. He goes, That would be really cool. So the mind of a nine-year-old, right? So you can pray for us and pray for me as we bring God's word today.

And we are on a journey. We're on a journey. And we're looking at the book of Luke. We're in chapter 10. And we're about to come to this point where Jesus encounters some very smart and intelligent and wise people in his world.

[4 : 53] And you're going to realize really quickly that being wise and intelligent and smart and well-connected and popular have very little to do with getting life right or correct.

I think some of you probably already know that, that some of the smartest people you know or some of the most popular people you know don't really get it when it comes to life. And Jesus is going to approach these people who are the leaders of his culture.

And he's going to talk to them about what it means to walk with God and what it means to live with God. And he's trying to persuade and encourage these brilliant people, the most learned of the gospel.

When I thought of this, I was reminded of a story I'd heard a long time ago of four people. They were going on a fishing trip to Alaska, and they were getting in a little airplane. It was an NBA star, a guy who had won a Nobel Prize as a physicist, a granddad.

Taking his eight-year-old grandson. And so they were on this little puddle jumper airplane flying to the fishing location. And about halfway through, the airplane started to shake and shimmy, and the pilot came out, and he said, we're not going to make it.

[6 : 08] And he grabbed the parachute, and he jumped out, and he said, save yourselves. Well, the four passengers stood up, and they looked at each other. There was only three parachutes. What did they do?

The NBA player, the basketball player, stood up, and he goes, I'm the greatest athlete in the world. The world needs great athletes. And so he grabbed the parachute, and he jumped out.

The three are looking at each other, and also the Nobel physicist stood up, and he goes, I am the smartest man in the world. The world needs smart people.

And he grabbed the bag, and he jumped out. Well, there's only one parachute, and granddad and grandson together. And the granddad thought about it.

He said, son, I've lived a long and fruitful life, and you're just beginning your life. Why don't you take the parachute? And the son looked at the granddad and said, dad, I don't think we need to worry, because the smartest man in the world just jumped out with my backpack.

[7 : 11] You think about that. You get it? Get it? Get it? You think about that sometimes, because sometimes having intelligence and knowing what to do doesn't necessarily make us wise or smart.

Sometimes the smartest people try to justify themselves, and they say the dumbest things, and we do the dumbest things. And so we get to this passage in Luke 10, and Jesus is on his way to Jerusalem, and he's teaching.

You know that because everybody's seated down, and he's teaching them a lesson. And the passage says that a lawyer, a Pharisee, someone who knew the law perfectly, a lawyer wasn't like what we thought today of litigation.

A lawyer was a guy who knew God's word back and forth, and so that whenever the priest had a question, they would come to the lawyer and say, well, what does this really mean? And the lawyer's job were to parse the words and the sentences and try to bring meaning and understanding to what the law really meant.

And so Jesus is in there teaching, and in verse 25 it says, a lawyer stood up, and he put him to the test. So this lawyer, he stands up, and he's going to ask Jesus a question.

[8 : 25] Now, normally this would be seen as a good thing because you stand up in respect to your teachers, but we know right away the passage that it's not a good thing. In the Greek, the word test means to bring before, to show flaws, to shame, to prove that you're wrong.

It's the same word that we read about later on when Jesus is tempted by the devil, and he takes him up to this pinnacle, and he says, jump off, and God will catch you. And Jesus says, Scripture says you're not to put the Lord your God to the test.

And so the lawyer stands up, and he asks this question of him to prove that Jesus is wrong, and it's a very interesting question because if you read the Scriptures and you read Luke and you've been following us, you realize that he already knows the answer because Jesus was giving the answer for the last 10 chapters.

So over and over, Jesus has been saying this is the answer, but the lawyer has something else in mind, and he wants to trick Jesus and make him look foolish. And he says, teacher, what shall I do to inherit eternal life?

That's a very interesting question. I think it's probably the most important question we ask in our lives every day. And he says there, look at what he says. He says, what shall I do? What can I do? [9 : 40] What do I need to do? How do I prove myself to inherit eternal life? When you think about that sentence, inherit, what do you do to inherit? You don't do anything.

You're just born into a family, and you inherit things. And so the question is kind of awkwardly placed. And Jesus said to him, what is written in the law?

How does it read to you? The Greek actually means recite it to me. So it's like he's talking to a seven-year-old boy, and he says, okay, recite it to me. You're a lawyer. You know the law. You've been reciting this since you're seven years old.

Any seven-year-old Jewish child can stand up and recite this to me. And so he recites it to him in verse 27. So whenever you see capital letters throughout the whole New Testament, you realize that this is a quote taken from the Old Testament.

And the lawyer comes, and he recites it. And he says, you shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, with all your soul, with all your strength, and with all your mind, and your neighbor as yourself.

[10 : 43] And that word all there means completely, fully, all the time. That if you want to inherit eternal life, you're basically living a perfect life.

Because God is perfect. Jesus said in verse 28, he said to him, you've answered correctly. Actually, the word is orthodox. You're right on track. Actually, if we were teaching today, you would give two thumbs up.

My kids say, give me two thumbs up. Or Jesus would have put a little smiley face by his paper. And he would have said, you're right. You're correct. You've answered perfectly. And Jesus says, do this, and you will live.

Basically, Jesus is saying, if you live perfectly, if you've never had a fault, if you've given all your life to God, if you've given all your mind to God, if you've given all your resources to God, if every waking thought is about God and how you can honor him and we with him, then you're without sin. And you don't need a savior. Now, how would you feel if you're asking me these questions and you say to me, how can I get to heaven?

[11 : 49] And I say, well, it's really easy. Just be perfect. What would your response be? Well, hopefully you'd be saying, well, man, I already blew it.

I can't be perfect. But look what the lawyer says. It's very interesting. But wishing to justify himself, verse 29. The word justify means to make righteous, to save, to perfect, to earn salvation.

Wishing to earn his salvation by himself, he said to Jesus, who is my neighbor? So we have here, how do I enter into eternal life? You love God with all your heart, mind, soul, and body, and love your neighbor as yourself.

Now, this love your neighbor is a big discussion that was going on in Jesus' day. I mean, you read the historical documents and you realize that the rabbis were going back and forth. What does it mean to love your neighbor?

Who is your neighbor? And they finally came to the decision that a neighbor was any Jew that was walking with God. Now, if he was apostate or he hadn't been to the temple or he wasn't purified, then he wasn't your neighbor.

[12 : 54] And that was the final decision. This is what our neighbor is. And so this guy, he's trapped. Jesus says, be perfect. And this guy goes, well, maybe with, I don't know, you can't really determine if I'm perfect with God because that's internally, but maybe you can determine if I'm perfect with people.

So who is my neighbor? It's kind of the thing that happens to us sometimes. When we read something in the passage and it says, do this, and we walk away from church and we go, what does that really mean?

I mean, does it really mean do this? Or does it mean do part of it? And how much part of it can I do? I mean, how much do I need to do to make God happy?

How much do I need to do to please God? But wishing to make himself righteous and earn his salvation, he said to Jesus, who is my neighbor?

Jesus replies to him, and it's very interesting because whenever Jesus asks you a question or whenever he tells a parable, you know you're in trouble. You're going to see it throughout the whole gospel of Luke.

[14:02] And so he tells this parable of this guy. And he replied and he said, a man, verse 30, a certain man in Greek, was going down to Jerusalem, to Jericho.

And he fell among robbers and he was stripped him. And they beat him. And they went away, leaving him half dead. Now there was also a discussion in Hebrew culture, what is death? And there was gradations of death.

And half dead wasn't dead dead. Half dead was almost dead. So I know it sounds like some kind of comedy or something like that. But there was actually a discussion. What is dead? What is half dead? What is nearly dead? There was like five different variations of death.

And so this guy is walking down the road. And all of Jesus' readers would have assumed that he is a Jewish person. Now the road from Jerusalem, way up here in the north, down to Jericho in the south, is about 17 miles.

And it's a very windy, difficult, treacherous road. It notoriously was a place where bandits lived. It was 17 miles. You always went up to Jerusalem from wherever you were in Israel.

[15:08] Because Jerusalem was on a mountain 2,500 feet square, 2,500 feet high. And Jericho was one of the lowest places on earth. Jericho was about 800 feet below sea level. And so you would go on this passage back and forth, back and forth.

And it was notorious for having robbers and difficulties. And really, it was a bad area. Actually, the Romans tried to subdue it, and they couldn't subdue it. And Jericho was the first place that Joshua came in, and he conquered the New Land.

And it became a town for priests and Levites. So on Jesus' day, most of the priests and the Levites lived in Jericho. Whenever they had to come serve in the temple for their two weeks, they would take this trip.

And they'd usually travel in a caravan, and they'd go to the temple. They would serve in the temple, then they would come back. And so that's where they lived. And so this man is there. He's beaten. He's half dead. He has no clothes on him. Okay, now picture this, because clothes are important. They identify you, and you can tell what race people are and what culture they're from. And so he has no clothes on him.

[16:10] So when you see him, you don't know who he is. You don't know if he's a Jew or a Samaritan or a Persian or a Phoenician. You have no idea. All you know is he's butt naked in the road. Now, chances are he's probably face down, because if he was face up, you'd know what culture he's from.

You can figure that out later. But he's face down, and no one knows. And he's beat up, and he's almost dead. He's half dead. Verse 31. And by chance, just by coincidence, a priest was going down on that road.

And when he saw him, now priests are very interesting. Priests were probably the most educated and connected people in society. They were the elite of the society. They were wealthy.

They were well-to-do. They were connected. They traveled back and forth from Jericho to Jerusalem all the time. They served God. They were God's man in the land.

When everybody looked at a priest, they realized that he was the man. I mean, they were the upper class. Everybody in here, if you were alive in Jesus' day and you were a follower of Judaism, everybody in here, you'd probably either be a priest or a Levite, because you're well-connected.

[17:22] You have money. You have relationships. Your parents would have paid for you to go to school, because remember, the top of the food chain is priest. No one wants to be a banker. No one wants to be a lawyer.

Everybody wants to be a priest or a scribe or a Pharisee or a rabbi. And so this priest comes down, and he sees him. What do you think this priest does? He's God's man.

What does he do? It says in verse 31, he saw him, and he passed by on the other side. So he passes by on the other side. He doesn't come anywhere near him.

Now, this priest has a problem, and I'm going to lay it out for you. I've tried to study the law, and I've tried to give you some ideas of what he's facing here, and so I'm just going to talk through him.

Now, if this guy is a Jew, he should stop.

But the guy is half naked. I mean, he's naked. He doesn't know if he's a Jew or a Samaritan. He has no idea. He's naked. He's unconscious. He can't talk. Maybe he's dead.

[18 : 21] So the priest who is holy is looking at this, and culturally, he's supposed to stop if he's a Jew. If he's not a Jew, he has no responsibility.

He wants to fulfill his duty, but he doesn't know what his duty is. You see the problem here? I mean, if he stops, the place is dangerous. Maybe he gets robbed like this other guy.

Maybe it's a trap. Maybe they're tricking him. It's notoriously the bandits would lay somebody out like they got beat up. So when you came to stop, you got beat up. So the priest doesn't know. He says, maybe it's dangerous. Maybe I shouldn't stop.

The priest is a holy man. I mean, he's seriously religious. He goes to the temple. He handles the money. He handles the tithe. He handles the sacrifices. I mean, he leads worship in the temple. I mean, he has to be clean. He has to be pure. He cannot be defiled. I mean, people expect that of him.

[19 : 24] You don't want a dirty priest. You don't want an unclean priest. So he has to remain pure because he's a symbol of love and devotion for God.

Now, if he touches the dead body, he becomes impure and he becomes defiled. He can't serve in the temple. He can't do his job. He has to actually walk back to Jerusalem.

He goes through this one-week cleansing process. It's called the process of the red heifer sacrifice. He loses his job for one week. He doesn't earn any money. He can't receive the food or the tithe from the temple because he's not officially working.

And so for one week, he's without a job. He's stripped down and he's actually humiliated because people who were unclean were pushed to the side of the temple and they had to say, I'm unclean, I'm unclean, and I'm unclean.

And culturally, it was a very bad thing. It was humiliating. And so if he touches this guy and this guy is dead, he has to go through all these things.

[20 : 24] He loses standing in the community. He's humiliated. He loses honor. He loses money. He loses all these things. Now, if the guy is not a Jew, he has no obligation to him. I mean, he wastes his time.

And you know you're not supposed to waste your time. You're supposed to make the most of your time. He can't come more than 12 feet towards the dead body. The law says that a holy man, a priest, could not get within 12 feet of death.

If he gets him within 12 feet of death, he becomes contaminated. So he's sitting there. He's looking at this dead person, butt naked, laying down, not moving, half dead, almost dead. And he's wondering, what should I do?

What should I do? I mean, if the guy dies eventually and he touches him, he has to tear his clothes. And that's very expensive because clothes are a sign of wealth.

And so he loses wealth and he wastes money. I mean, the guy is wounded and he's unrighteous, which is probably true because only unrighteous people get hurt. Only bad things happen to bad people, right?

[21 : 27] That's what he believes. So if he touches the guy and the guy's unrighteous, then he becomes unrighteous. And if he goes to the temple or if some of the other priests think that he touched an unrighteous man, they'll kill him immediately.

If he walks into the temple to do his duty and he's not purified, everyone will drag him out and stone him to death. You see the problem this guy has? I mean, he's wanting to do the right thing, but he doesn't know what the right thing is.

And so he's in a quandary. So after measuring everything, the priest decides purity is the most important command. That we're all called to be undefiled.

To be undefiled is unconditional in his day. And the command to love your neighbor is conditional. Because I don't even know who he is.

And so after thinking through all these things, he measures everything. And he says, I choose purity. I choose holiness.

[22 : 33] I choose my community. And for him, the most important thing was to maintain his status in his community. Instead of reaching out to the hurt person. We're told in verse 32, Likewise, a Levite also.

He came to the place and he saw him. And what do you think he did? Now, Levites were assistants to the priest. The Levite came alongside the priest and he helped the priest do everything that the priest needed done.

He helped with the sacrifice. He helped with the atonement. He helped with the money. He helped with feeding. He did all of these things. Now, he didn't have all the measurements that the priest had to measure up to. I mean, he wasn't as connected as the priest either.

He was probably a middle class person. That's why I'd say all of us in here would be priests or middle class people or Levites. And so, what does the Levite do? Well, you read in the passage. The Levite came to the place. And actually, he said it came to the place. And so, there might even be an idea that he came to the body nearer to it and he looked at it. But he couldn't tell if it was a Jew or not.

[23 : 40] And so, it says he came to the place and he did what? What's it say? Verse 32. He came to the place and he saw him and he what?

Passed by him on the other side. Now, this is an interesting story here because the Levite, he had problems. I mean, chances are that he was following this rabbi or the priest.

You always watched on this road to see who was ahead of you because you're looking for danger. He probably saw this priest look at this guy or go around this guy and not stop. Well, the Levite's problem is this.

If my boss didn't stop, should I stop? I mean, here's the guy who represents our country and our culture, the holy man.

And he didn't stop. What if I stop? I mean, what if he sees me stop? Will I get rebuked?

[24 : 44] Will I get in trouble? I mean, should I question the priest's judgment? Is the priest ever wrong? I mean, what happens if I show up in Jericho with this wounded person on the back of my horse that the priest didn't even pay attention to?

Do I make the priest look bad? Will I get in trouble? Will I get stoned? Will I get killed? Will I get killed? And so the Levite, he basically does the same thing that the priest does.

He does nothing. Now, it's up to this point when Jesus is telling his story. It's really important. Everyone is listening to him and they're going. Because they all know that priests and Levites are like that.

They all know that the holy people treat the unholy people really poorly. They all know that the sacrificial system, the temple and the priesthood was corrupt.

The people were just in it for money. Just to take care of themselves. And so everybody listening to this story would have understood and would have been so sympathetic to this story. Now, if you were telling this story in Jesus' day, what you would do is you always tell a part of a three-part story.

[25 : 57] You tell the first part with the priest. You tell the second part with the Levite. This is culturally. And then you tell the third part with a blue-collar Jew. Now, the holy people wouldn't do the right thing.

But the blue-collar worker, he would do the right thing. And so in almost every story that we read from this day, the blue-collar guy would come in and he would save the day. He would save the man. He would be the hero. But when Jesus says to them, a Samaritan shows up, that changes everything.

I mean, people would have been in shock. They would have been incredibly offended. They would have been angry. I remember one time I was telling this story to my group of my students in China, and I was trying to teach them about love and compassion and reaching out sacrificially.

And I said, one day, there was a Nanjing businessman. And he was on the road from Nanjing to Shanghai. And on this road, some robbers beat him and robbed him and stripped him and left him there.

And then a Chinese government official walked by, looked at the guy, shook his head, and went around him. A little while later, a policeman came by, looked all around the guy, shook his head, and went around him.

[27 : 13] And then a Japanese soldier came. And the Japanese soldier saw the man. He had compassion and love for him.

And he reached down and he picked that guy up. And when I told that, my students became angry. One of the students actually left the classroom. He said, I can't hear that.

The hero of the story cannot be my enemy. Make a Chinese person a hero of the story. And the Japanese person be the dead person. But the hero of the story cannot be a Japanese person. The hero can't be the bad person. But Jesus uses a Samaritan. Now, it's interesting in verse 33, it said a Samaritan was on a journey.

He came upon him, and when he saw him, he felt compassion. The Greek word is about that long, and it means this inner feeling from your gut. Not unlike what I've been experiencing the last couple days, but in a good sense.

[28 : 20] And he came to them, and he bandaged up his wounds, pouring oil and wine on them. Now, you've got to understand that Samaritans are hated by the Jews. In about 750 B.C., the Syrian race came in, and they wiped out the northern part of Israel.

The ten tribes are gone. They took away 30,000 prisoners, and in their place, they brought their own people. And these people started to intermingle and intermarry with the Israelites that were left there.

And you had the Samaritan race. And they were seen as half-breeds. They were seen as no good. They were seen as counterfeit to the Jewish faith. They had their own temple, their own set of laws. They read the Torah, but they only took parts of it. And everyone hated the Samaritans. What did the Samaritan do? He comes, he sees, and he does.

Now, before this point, the two Jewish guys, all they do is they come, and they see, and they leave. But the Samaritan comes, and he sees, and he does.

[29 : 25] It's told that he has compassion on the man. Actually, if you read verses 33 through 35, you see that he does five or nine things that are amazing. He binds the wounds.

He pours oil and wine, and oil and wine would have been symbolic of the temple. It would have been a holy thing. And the word actually pouring in Greek is a word for worship. So what Jesus is saying is, as this guy is fixing this guy up, he's worshiping God.

As he's serving, as he's helping, he's worshiping. It says here that he took care of him, he put him on his own beast, and he brought him to an inn and took care of him.

On the next day, he took out two denarii, and he gave him to the innkeeper, and said, take care of him. And whatever you spend, when I return, I will repay you. Now, you don't understand what's happening here, because it's amazing, because this Samaritan is reaching out to his enemy, and he's using all his resources to help him.

He's using oil. He's using wine. He's using cloth wrappings. He's letting the guy ride on his horse. He's using his time. He's using his energy. And he's at a great, great cost of his life.

[30 : 35] Because remember, the Samaritan is in Jewish territory. If the Jews find him, they're going to kill him, because he's a dog. And so he's doing all of this at an incredible cost of his own life, and his life is at risk.

It says that he doesn't just drop the guy off and fix him, but he takes him to Jericho to find an inn, because there are no inns on this road. Archaeologically, there are no inns. And so he takes him to the enemy's territory.

He takes him into an inn, and he takes care of them. I mean, all scholars who read this passage, Middle Eastern, American, Western, Asian, anybody who reads this passage says, this guy was doing all of these things at an incredibly high cost.

An incredibly high risk to himself. And he'd be like you. He'd be like this.

He'd be like an American Indian walking through the wilderness and finding a cowboy with three arrows stuck out of his back. And he picks the cowboy up, and he puts him on his horse.

[31 : 45] And he takes the cowboy into Dodge City, or Cowboy City. What do you think everybody's going to think when that guy walks in like that?

Come on. You're going to think he's good? I mean, even if they don't think he shot him, some of his people shot him. And the law of retribution, especially in the Middle Eastern culture, was revenge, revenge, revenge.

And so this guy brings, he has three arrows sticking out of his back. Hey, hey, I just found this guy. Yeah, I know I'm an Indian, but I love this guy, even though he's trying to kill me, and you guys are going to kill me afterwards, and that's okay.

I just want to take care of this guy. And so that's what it would have been like. We're told the next day, he goes to the innkeeper, he takes out enough money, two denarii. Denarii is one day's wage. To give one denarii would be enough to survive in a hotel for seven days for food and board.

So he gives this innkeeper 14 days to take care of this guy. And he says to him, hey, verse 35, when I return, I'll repay you. Now he doesn't even know if he's going to get out alive.

[32 : 57] But he says, I'll come back. And that's really important because it's notorious, the innkeepers, whenever somebody raised up a debt and they couldn't pay it off, the innkeepers would sell him as a slave. And so what this guy is saying is, I'm going to come back.

And I'm going to pay off all his debts and I'm going to take care of him. And he's not entering into slavery. And the next day, the Samaritan has to get out of town without getting killed. Now when Jesus told this story, it was very counter-cultural.

Very few people could understand it. Very few people wanted to listen to it. He says in verse 36, which of these three do you think was proved to be a neighbor to the man who fell into the robber's hands?

Verse 37, the man said, and I don't understand it's the lawyer, he hates the Samaritan so much, he can't even say the Samaritan.

But he says, the one who showed him mercy. That Jesus said to him, go and do the same. Go and do the same. There's three things that God has been teaching me this week and I want us to learn together as a church family.

[34 : 23] And I just want to share them with you. The first thing that sticks out in this passage is that God takes that question, who is my neighbor? And he reshapes it.

And how Jesus brings that question back to you and me, he says, to whom shall you become a neighbor? The answer is everyone.

Everyone in need. Even your enemy. Now the priest, the Levite, and the lawyer, they couldn't handle this because they were living under the law and they tried to perform and to earn their salvation.

And the law is very specific because it says that it demands compassion above all else, but the guys were so busy trying to do and to be that they miss grace and they miss compassion.

The scripture says that we can't understand compassion unless we understand grace, unless we understand what God has done for us and how merciful and gracious he's been to us, we can't be that way to other people.

[35 : 32] So Jesus takes the question and he doesn't say, who is my neighbor? But he says, who must I become a neighbor?

Who must you become a neighbor to? Everyone in need, even your enemy. Who must we become a neighbor to?

Who? Who must we become a neighbor to? You know, we've been praying about this as a church, like who are our neighbors?

In April, there's Easter and the week after Easter, we're gonna have our first gathering of members at our AGM and one of the things that we've been proposing is that we want to set up what I call is a neighborhood watch fund.

It's a good Samaritan fund. So as we give money to the church every week, we give a certain percentage to missions, to building up our church planning fund and we give a certain percentage to our neighborhood watch fund.

[36 : 39] So as God sends us on this journey and we see people who need fixing, we see places that we can redeem, we have the availability to make that happen. Who's your neighbor?

Everyone in need. Everyone in need. Even your enemy. The parable shows us that for Jesus, love is something we feel but it's also something that we do.

I don't know if you guys have ever tried this. It's really hard because sometimes people are broken and they're mean and they're angry and it's really hard to love people well. I mean, it's easy as you look at the passage to shirk off our responsibility and say, well, you know, I have a lot of good reasons why I shouldn't do that.

I mean, the priests and the Levites, they had good reasons. Sometimes we do often too. I mean, it's easy to come up with reasons but the passage here says and what Jesus is trying to teach us is that love is costly.

I mean, the Samaritan spent his time, he spent his money, he spent his resources, he risked his life, he was hugely inconvenienced, he lost two days of work, he had overcome hatred from everybody in his culture because he was reaching out to people all around him.

[37 : 59] They hated love cost. Sometimes we're just so busy doing. We don't have time to love.

I remember at my seminary, we tried to study, actually the professors did, they took 20 students and they gave them a sermon to preach, it was this sermon. And all of a sudden, they added a sense of urgency to it, they called the guys up in the dorms and said, we need you to come over right away because we're going to film this right now and we need you to come because you're prepared.

So the 20 guys went at different times. And on the pathway to the seminary to where they were going to record, they had this homeless person who was beat up and bleeding and hurting.

Wondering what seminary students are going to do as they cross past this guy.

How many of the 20 students do you think stopped to help him? Because they were busy. I mean, they're about to give God's word on how to be a neighbor.

However, how many students stopped? One. They did a study later at Yale, no one stopped.

[39 : 23] And they came to this conclusion that the more hurried we are, the more busy we are, the less likely we are to stop. They said, if you live a hurried and busy life, you're 600% less likely to see people in need.

That if you live a hurried and busy life, you're 600% less likely to be a neighbor. And Jesus says here that this is what we're called to do.

We're called to do this. We're called to practice these things. We're called to do these good works. We're called to show compassion. Sometimes it's hard.

Christina and I were living in China and we were trying to reach out to our neighbors next door who were actually our landlords. We hadn't had a lot of interaction with them. And I says, oh, I've got a good idea.

Let's do this. And she said, okay, what? I said, let's bake them some cookies. And so we baked them some cookies and we brought it to their house and said, hey, we're just happy to be here.

We're glad. We want to get to know you.

[40 : 23] Here's some cookies. We're just cooking. We want to give them some cookies. And they were happy and we talked for a little while and went home and the next day, we had this plate of eggs outside of our door that they gave us.

We're like, wow, that's kind of interesting. So let's try this again. So Christina cooked some banana bread. And the next day, we went there and we said, hey, we're just cooking and we have some extra left over and we want to give you this banana bread.

The next day, we had this chicken. Outside our door. We're like, man, these people aren't going to let us be friends to them, are they? Because they don't want to owe us anything.

They don't want to be beholden to anybody. And I realized, man, how hard it is to understand the gospel in grace if it's all about giving back and works.

I wanted the next day to take my son and say, hey, I'll give you my son for a week. Just, he's your indentured servant and see what they would return back to me.

[41 : 36] But we didn't do that. But God calls us in this passage to be a church that does and to be people that do. When we first started the church, we had a lot of families come and they're checking it out and some of them got really involved and then all of a sudden, I noticed one of them disappeared.

And I saw them the other day in the shopping area and I said, hey, we miss you. And they said, yeah, we decided to stop coming. I said, okay. I said, you know, and I'm just, so why did you decide to stop coming?

And they said, well, we realized that if we stayed in your church, that we'd have to serve, we realized if we stayed in your church, we'd have to do things.

And we might even have to tithe. And we don't want to do that. We just want to come, sit in the back, and when it's over, leave really quickly. And I thought about that.

I didn't say anything. I just prayed. But if I had courage, and the next time I see them, the next time I had this conversation, I would say, no, the Christian life is about doing.

[42 : 52] God made you to be a servant. You don't do to get salvation. That's legalism. That's religion. But you do because you are saved.

And that's what this passage is saying. Christ is saying, what are you doing? The final thing that sticks out to me here is just this idea of this first question because this is the question that this whole passage is about.

And it's a question in verse 25. Teacher, what shall I do to inherit eternal life? What must I do? And what Jesus shows us in this passage is that it's impossible. That if you're here today, and you're trying to earn your way to heaven, Jesus says it's impossible.

This parable says it's impossible. Because if you go home today, or you lead children's ministry next week, or you talk to your kids, or you talk to somebody, and you tell the story of the parable, and they ask you, which person are you?

Are you the lawyer? Are you the priest? Are you the Levite? Or are you the guy? Which one are you?

[44 : 12] You realize that when Jesus ever, always starts a parable, and he says a certain man, in Greek, what he's telling you to do, in Aramaic, what he's telling you to do, is to put your name there.

Now, Tobin was on a journey, and he was robbed, and he was stripped down.

He was beaten, and he was left for dead. Then all the things in his world passed around him. He couldn't do anything. He couldn't even cry out. And then a true good Samaritan came.

His name is Jesus. He was forsaken by the culture. He was forsaken by the world. He saw Tobin laying on the road. He felt compassion.

He moved towards him. It's the same in Virginia he does when he comes and he touches the dead person. He moves towards him. He picks him up. He heals him.

[45 : 15] He takes care of him. He puts him in a home. And he says, you wait for me because one day I'm going to come back for you, take care of you.

That's the message of this parable. You put your name there because that's what Jesus wanted you to do. What he wanted us to understand is that Christ paid this incredible sacrifice for us.

And if we don't understand this, if we don't put ourselves in that person's place, we'll never understand mercy. We'll never understand grace. Because we'll think people owe us.

God owes us. The passage says, no. You're dead. And when we understand this, we can go to verse 37 and we can go and do the same.

But until we understand that, we're never going to serve. Until we understand that, we'll never tithe. Until we understand that, we'll never be the hands and feet that God wants us to be in the community.

[46 : 33] Because we'll always expect something from him. We're the people that we serve. Now, I don't know what this looks like for you today. Verse 37, go and do the same. As a pastor, for me, it scares the bejesus out of me.

Because I don't want to say, here's the five things you need to do. Because if you're like me, you do them all by Tuesday and you go, okay, I'm done. But the passage comes to each one of us, wherever you're at right now in your journey, and it asks you to remember what Christ has done for you.

To remember that the neighbor is anybody that you can serve. That love isn't just a feeling, but it's an action and putting those things into work. And that you go and do the same.

For some of us, it might mean just finding people to bless who are around you. For some of us, it might mean getting involved in an outreach that we've been doing at nursing homes and other places in our community. For some of us, it might just mean praying for people in your office.

For some of us, it might be looking for opportunities to come alongside people who are enemies and to serve them and to bless them. I think for all of us, it might mean just praying and asking God to show us who our neighbor really is and what he wants us to do to him.

[47 : 49] But a Samaritan who was on a journey came upon him and then saw him and built compassion.

Let's pray. Father, we just thank you for this day. We thank you for this passage which is amazing that it speaks to us in our condition where we're at right now.

Father, we thank you that we have a big brother, a true good Samaritan who could have passed beside us just as everybody else has done in our culture.

But he didn't. He came into our lives and your word says that we were dead, dead. We were dead to sin.

And he picked us up and he felt compassion on us and he cleaned our wounds and he bound our hearts in our brokenness.

[48 : 59] He poured his spirit on us to heal us and to change us and to make us different. That he put us in his position and his place and took us to a place of rest. And that he promised that he

would take care of everything and provide for everything if we would trust him.

That he promised one day soon he would come back. Father, we thank you that you are the Samaritan. We thank you that you saved us by grace and mercy.

Help us as individuals and as a church to understand that in a deeper way today. Help us to look around and to see who we can be a neighbor to. Help us to understand why you have us at our work and our homes and our neighborhoods.

and help us to be used by you to redeem broken and fallen people all around us. Father, we we are humbled by your mercy and grace and we love you.

We pray all these things in your son Jesus' name. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen.