

Who Is Your Neighbor?

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If you have your Bibles, you can turn to Luke 10, where we [will] finally get to the parable of the Good Samaritan. Last week, [I] did a cliffhanger—I left you hanging. It was fun for me, [but was] probably not real fun for you. We’re going to be looking at this parable [today]. If you weren’t here last week, we looked at the situation [that] gave rise to Jesus giving the parable, [which] we’re going to review in just a second. That incident is why Jesus gives the parable.

Luke, as we [have] learned, [was] writing about the seventy’s return, and Jesus’ words to them, then [he] just kind of switche[d] in verse 25, and [said], “And a lawyer stood up.” We don’t know if [this happened] in [the] situation [with the seventy disciples], or in some other situation. He just stood up, which implies that Jesus was teaching people, everybody was sitting down, and this lawyer pops up to ask Jesus this very good question, which is, “How do I get saved? How do I inherit eternal life?” which is pretty much the best question anybody could ever ask. When he [gives] his [answer], [however], Luke gives us a little insight, and [says that the lawyer] asked [Jesus] this to “put Him to the test” [Luke 10:25]. The word that Luke uses [for “test”] is a very strong, intensive word, which tells us that this lawyer, this expert in the Law of Moses, is trying to get Jesus, [to] humiliate Him, [to] discredit Him in front of the crowds.

As we looked at that, we learned some important lessons in that people can have correct doctrine and even give the right answers, and [still] have evil motives. Because when Jesus then defers back to the guy in front of everybody, and says, “Well, you’re the expert in the law, you tell me, how does the law read?” The guy, amazingly, says, “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.” He gives the great *shama*, which is in Deuteronomy 6—we looked at it last week—and then he also gives the command to love your countryman, your neighbor, as yourself, which is found in Leviticus 19:17–18.

He gives the two great commands [on] which Jesus later says rest the law and the prophets [see Matthew 22:39–40]. That’s a good answer. He gives the right answer, but he’s got these evil motives. What’s happening is [that] once he answers, then Jesus says, “Well, then, go do that” [see Luke 10:28], and that is when we begin to see a little crack appear in this man’s conscience. He must have been feeling a little guilty about his loving his neighbor because he then, Luke says, “wishing to justify himself” [10:29], plunges Jesus into a whole new problem in an attempt to try and get Jesus and soothe his own conscience, when he says, “And who is my neighbor?” [10:29]. At that time, it was the common thought among most of the Jewish leaders, that because Leviticus 19:17–18 says [that] you shall not hate your countryman but you shall love him—that is, your own blood relative, your fellow Jew, is what “countryman” means—because of that, they reasoned by inference, “Well, since you have to love your countryman, you get to hate your non-countryman.” Seems kind of warped, doesn’t it? That was the prevailing Jewish thought, and that is why Jesus, in the Sermon on the Mount [see Matthew 5], addressing the crowds and the Jewish leaders, said, “You have heard that it was said, ‘YOU SHALL LOVE YOUR NEIGHBOR’ and hate your enemy” [Matthew 5:43]. Well, that was the interpretation of the day, [that] “enemy” [meant] all non-Jews. Jesus goes on to say, “But I say to you, love your enemies and pray for those who persecute you”

[Matthew 5:44], and then [He] goes on to give a bunch of examples to support that thought, that correct interpretation.

So the lawyer, wishing to justify himself, thrusts Jesus into this common debate. [The lawyer] is probably thinking, “Well, if Jesus says we need to love everybody, then He is going to instantaneously put Himself at odds with pretty much all the Jewish leaders. And, if He says, ‘Well, you need to love all Jews, but you can hate other people,’ then I’ll be justified and my conscience will feel good for all the widows I’ve swindled.” That’s what’s happening right now, [in Luke 10:25–29], in front of the people. This is where we left off last week.

Before we jump into the parable, I want to just give you some instructions on basic parable interpretation because a lot of people, when they come to the parables, don’t really know what to do with them. They look at them, and yeah, they get the story, but they [wonder], “So what?” How do you get some spiritual nourishment out of a parable? This is how. Whenever you study the Bible, and you read books on biblical interpretation, and I’m sure all of you probably have three or four of those at home... (That was a joke.) If you ever tried it, you would discover that [books on biblical interpretation] talk about interpreting different “genres.” That is not a term that most of you are probably familiar with—a term you even use—but a “genre” is a literary type. For instance, you have parables, narrative, Old Testament narrative, and prophecy. These are different kinds of genres.

Whenever you’re reading books on interpretation, they give you the general rules that apply to every kind of literary type or genre, but they also tell you, “In this specific kind of genre, or literary type, that you find in the Bible, it’s helpful to approach [it] in this way.” Well, the parables are just one such type, and they’re really great teachers of spiritual truth as long as you interpret them correctly. Let me give you a crash course in interpreting parables, and then as we go through the parable of the Good Samaritan, you will see that it is the textbook-case parable. It’s easy to interpret, and you’ll see almost all of these key things in there, and you’ll see why it’s important to look at them as we go through.

The first thing [to do] when we come to a parable, [is to] ask ourselves this: What is the situation, or need, which led to the parable being given? What happened in the preceding context [that] caused Jesus to give the parable? We know [what] that [is for the parable of the Good Samaritan] because we spent all last Sunday on it. [It is the question] “Who is my neighbor?” and then right after that flows the parable.

Second, you want to look for any cultural issues. Now, what I mean by that is you look at things in the text [that] the people who were listening to the parable for the first time would have clearly understood but we might not understand. For instance, maybe [a parable] talks about Jewish weddings. If you don’t know about Jewish weddings, you need to read up on that. Maybe it talks about farming, and if you don’t understand about farming, you need to understand that, so you read up on [it and learn about it]. In our parable today, we’re going to have a mention of Levites, priests, [a Samaritan, and] some geographical stuff, as you will see. These are things [that] the people who heard the parable would instantly understand, but if you don’t instantly understand that as they would instantly understand that, then you need to get to that place, and then a lot of times the interpretation just leaps out at you. It’s like, “Ah!” But if you don’t, then often you’re in a fog, and you’re thinking, “Well, what is this about?” because you don’t understand what they understand.

Third, you [need to] identify the details and interpret them properly. What this means is [that] every parable has detail[s]—people and things—so you need to learn how to identify those details and interpret them properly [without over-spiritualizing them]. In some parables, like the parable of the soils [see Matthew 13:3–9], almost every detail has a secondary meaning, right? There’s the seed, which is the Word of God, the field, which is the world, the Son of Man who is sowing the seed. There are the different soils, which represent the different hearts and the different heart responses. Pretty much everything [in that parable] has a secondary, spiritual meaning.

But remember that parables are different from an allegory. An “allegory” is what is called an “extended metaphor.” A metaphor is something

like, “I am the bread of life” [John 6:48], or “I am the door” [John 10:9], [but we know that] Jesus is not [actually] a loaf of bread [or] a slab of wood. That is a metaphor, and when you string them together into a coherent story, like in Daniel, where you have the tree that springs up, and all the beasts are living in the branches, and then it’s cut down and an iron band is put around it, and then it sprouts back up—that is an allegory [see Daniel 4:10–37]. Or, when you’re reading in Revelation [that] there’s a beast with seven heads and ten horns [see Revelation 12:3; 13:1], [that’s an] allegory, not true to life. OK?

[A] parable is a true-to-life story, and some of the details will have secondary spiritual meaning. So, when you go to the parable, you have to say, “Is the fatted calf in the parable of the prodigal son [see Luke 15:11–32] the crucified Lord?” No. It’s a fatted calf. “Is the oil in the parable of the ten virgins [see Matthew 25:1–13] the Holy Spirit?” No. But you see, sometimes people over-interpret [parables], and when you do that, you obscure the meaning of the parable. The reason people usually over-interpret is because they don’t determine the situation or need.

If the parable appears in another gospel, it’s really good—fourthly—to check that out and to see if there are any goodies you can get from another occurrence. Unfortunately, [the parable of the Good Samaritan] does not [have a parallel account].

Fifth and finally, you look at the punch line of the parable, which always appears at the end or toward the very end of the parable. When you look at the punch line, [it] needs to match up with the situation or need for the parable being given. Now, if you get to the punch line, and you say, “The punch line teaches this spiritual truth,” and then you look at your situation or need and they don’t match up, you either got your situation or need wrong or you got your punch line wrong. They [have] to line up. Once you line them up, then oftentimes the details can be interpreted properly, and you’ll see how they do that.

That’s basically the overview of how you interpret a parable. What we’re going to do now is we’re going to look at Luke 10. I’m going to go

ahead and read the situation that gave rise to the parable, starting in verse 25, and then we're going to examine in more detail verses 30–37. If you have your Bibles, follow along [and] see if you can see the need again—cultural issues—you can see details that represent spiritual truths, and the punch line. See if you can see those [elements].

And a 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; 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 on 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 a neighbor to the man who fell into the robbers' hands?" And he said, "The one who showed mercy toward him." Then Jesus said to him, "Go and do the same."

From this parable, I am going to ask you four questions [that] are going to drive you to one of two conclusions: You're either loving your neighbor or you're not. Hopefully it will move you and motivate you to respond correctly to those in need around you.

The first question we want to answer is: Do you see people in need? Look at verse 30: "Jesus replied and said." Remember that Jesus is replying to the question, "Who is my neighbor?" in the near context of verse 29. That's the situation or need. Look at the middle of verse 30: "A man was going down from Jerusalem to Jericho." Stop there. Here's one of the instances where everybody listening to this parable would instantly [think], "Oh, too bad."

You're thinking, "Why is that?" Well, let me tell you. Jericho is located just slightly north of the Dead Sea, and the Dead Sea is 1,300 feet below sea level—it's the lowest place on earth, unless you go to the ocean and go to one of those big trenches in the bottom of the ocean. You know [how] when you drive up into a mountain as you gain elevation it gets colder and colder? Well, when you go down, it gets hotter and hotter. Death Valley is 300 feet below sea level, and the Dead Sea is 1,300 feet below sea level. I remember when I was there in May, in the spring, when it's cool. We got into our little air-conditioned buses in Jerusalem, drove down to Jericho, and stepped out into 116-degree weather. (It wasn't cool like it's been here lately.) Jerusalem is built on top of a mountain. It is 2,500 feet above sea level, so if you travel from Jerusalem to Jericho, [you descend] 3,800 feet. If you go as the crow flies, it's about fourteen miles, [and] about seventeen or eighteen miles if you take the road. So, it's a down thing.

Now, what happens is [that] as you get to about sea level the vegetation starts disappearing, and from then on down—the last 1,300-foot descent—it's just dry and parched. It's nasty. It's not like around [the] Mojave [desert] or something. It's really nasty. [There are] just rocks. There's no water. As you look at the topography, there are the mountains of Jerusalem and then it descends down into what is called the Jordan Rift, and that's where the

Dead Sea is, so it's very hot, arid, hilly, [and] dry, and basically nothing is there.

Because of that, if you were traveling from Jerusalem to Jericho, it wasn't too bad—you could do it pretty easily in a day because it's all downhill. But you wanted to make sure you started early and you got the journey over because you wouldn't ever want to spend the night on that road because there's no water, nothing to eat, no shelter—no one lived there because it was what was called the “wilderness.” If you were going the other direction, from Jericho to Jerusalem, it would even be worse. You'd have to start *really* early because you're going uphill the whole way through some very hot, arid country. So that is what Jesus means when He says, “A man was going down from Jerusalem to Jericho,” and everybody would instantly say, “Oh, man, that's a bad trek—[a] hot, dry, nasty, seventeen-mile journey.”

Since it was a wilderness and no one lived there, and there [weren't] a bunch of shops along the way, it was a perfect place to be ambushed by robbers. A lot of people *were* ambushed by robbers, and that's why people often traveled in packs. Everybody knew that [was a possibility when they traveled that road]. Look at the middle of [Luke 10:]30, where the text tells us [that] the man “fell among robbers, and they stripped him and beat him, and went away leaving him half dead.” Jesus paints a picture of a man who is in a serious, serious state of need. Think about it. [First], the man has no water [and] is in a very hot desert. Second, the man has serious physical injuries. The text says they beat him and left him “half dead,” which means he's so injured he can't even walk to get himself out of the situation. Third, the man has no transportation. Even if he did [before he was robbed, the robbers] stole it from him. Four[th], the man is lying in the hot sun—without sunscreen, without clothing, and the sun is baking him and burning him. He's just lying on the dirt and rocks alongside the road. [Fifth], because of his predicament, he's going to die if he doesn't get help soon. You can hardly get in more need than that.

When you and I are out and about in the world, we usually don't come across people like that, unless we're firemen, policemen, or work at a hospital. You just don't come [across] people like that. But we do come [across] people with all sorts of needs. We have people in our world who are in varying degrees of need, but in the New Testament when you look at the word "need," it usually refers to something that is absolutely necessary—something you need to survive. So, we're not talking about cars, air conditioning, more than one set of clothing, varieties of foods, things like that, which Americans all think they need but don't. We're talking about those things you absolutely must have or you will die.

In our country, we live in what is called a "welfare state," so we pay a lot of money to help people who are in need. You could be an illegal alien, break the law, sneak across the border, get hurt, and we'll feed you and put you in the hospital, give you free medical treatment, and then ship you back. We're nice to people. That's one of the great things about our country: we spend a lot of money helping people in need. So, in our country, you usually don't run into people who are in life-threatening situations where no one will help them. You just have to call the police, [or the ambulance or whatever], and they come and fix it.

There are people, though, all around us, who have *eternally* life-threatening needs, aren't there? [People] who don't know Jesus. These are the people who are all around us—we work with them, we're driving next to them, we see them at the store, they're in the parking lot, they're everywhere we go. They are in an eternally life-threatening situation because they don't know Christ. Once they come to Christ, they still need to be trained, and equipped with the Word of God. Even if they don't realize it, they need these things more, the Bible says, than their necessary food because they can't live on "bread alone, but everything that proceeds out of the mouth of God" [see Deuteronomy 8:3].

Because of this—the spiritual needs around [you] and the responsibilities God places on you as a member of the local church—you need to be seeing these needs. Again, these needs are things that you see and assess so

that you can render assistance or aid. So, the question is: Do you see them? Sometimes we kind of just walk with blinders on. I was someplace yesterday, and I [needed] some assistance. There were sales people all around me, but none of them would look at me in the face. You know how that is. They're all kind of really busy, and they know that if they stop and they make eye contact with you, then they're going to have to what? Help you. But they're helping other people, so [I was] swarmed with workers, but I [couldn't] get my need met.

Well, that's how some people come to church—they've got little blinders on, [and they think], "I'm going to church, church, church. Hi, how're you doing? How're you doing?" and they [have] their heads down [as] they're going for their pew. They're not entering into the church, [or] driving to the church, thinking, "OK, how am I going to minister to people? How am I going to serve people? How am I going to be a blessing to people? Am I going to invite somebody over for lunch afterwards, or out to lunch? What am I going to do?" [Do you] have the mindset [of], "I am coming to the assembly of believers to be a blessing to them because God has given me resources to be a blessing to them, and I'm coming to be a blessing to them"? Or do you come, saying, "They better have that A/C fixed. I hope nobody's sitting in my pew. The sermon better be good, and I hope they play the songs I like"?

See, a lot of times, we come and we have the mindset, don't we, where we're thinking about us, me, and my, but we aren't thinking about they, them, and theirs? We need to switch that around, and when we enter in, we need to assess people for needs, saying [to ourselves], "That person is standing by himself, he kind of has a frown on his face, obviously he's not too happy. I'm going to go over there and talk to him, encourage him, see if I can get to know him, be a blessing to him." That is how the church is to work. The degree to which the Church has [this] "other" focus is the degree to which it is most like heaven. But the degree [to which] people are looking at themselves is the degree that [the Church] is most like hell. What happens if you have a group of people and twenty percent of the people are

serving, looking, trying to minister, and the rest are sucking, absorbing, and receiving, [is that] then that church is not going to be anywhere near what Christ would want it to be because most of the people are selfish. They aren't serving, they aren't giving, they're coming to receive, and get, and leave. They're like the leech who has two [daughters]: give and give [see Proverbs 30:15].

James says in James [1:27]: "Pure and undefiled religion in the sight of our God and Father is this: to visit orphans and widows in their distress, and to keep oneself unstained by the world." Notice that pure religion, undefiled religion is to be looking out for these people in need. Now, in that [New Testament] culture, there was no welfare state. If people didn't help you, you starved. So the Christians, especially, in that culture, had to keep their eyes out for people who were in distress so that they could help them. As part of the local body, God wants you, He wants me, to be looking out, using our spiritual gifts, serving, being a blessing to others. It's just how the Church is to work. It's pretty scary when you think about what Jesus said in the parable of the sheep and the goats in Matthew 25:41–45, He said this (these are scary words): "Then He will also say to those on His left, 'Depart from Me, accursed ones, into the eternal fire which has been prepared for the devil and his angels.'" That's not good. [Verses 42–45 continue]:

"For I was hungry, and you gave Me nothing to eat; I was thirsty, and you gave Me nothing to drink; I was a stranger, and you did not invite Me in; naked, and you did not clothe Me; sick, and in prison, and you did not visit Me." Then they themselves also will answer, "Lord, when did we see You hungry, or thirsty, or a stranger, or naked, or sick, or in prison, and did not take care of You?" Then He will answer them, "Truly I say to you, to the extent that you did not do it to one of the least of these, you did not do it to Me."

Ouch. When He's talking about "these," if you look at the account, He's talking about "these brothers of mine." He's talking about fellow believers.

You remember when we were in Luke 9—if you were born then—we went to the [verse] where Jesus says, “You’re going to go into the town, and you’re going to offer the gospel to them, and if they don’t receive you and extend hospitality [to] you, [they will receive] woe, judgment, and hell” [see Luke 9:1–5]. Remember that? These people [Jesus is addressing] are the people who went out on behalf of the Lord, doing the Lord’s work. Some of them were cast into prison for preaching the gospel. They were doing good, and these people [in the towns] did not receive these fellow believers, who were there to do them good and give them spiritual help. Jesus judges [those who rejected the believers for doing that].

Proverbs 3:27 says: “Do not withhold good from those to whom it is due, When it is in your power to do it.” That is just everything in a nutshell, isn’t it? It implies that you see the need, you have the power to fulfill the need, and then you do it. Again, we’re talking about needs here, and I think this is kind of a confusion sometimes in our society. You see the guy who’s on the sidewalk and he’s begging—“Will work for food”—and he’s half drunk, or whatever. That guy is in spiritual need, he’s not in physical need. [Or someone has a sign that says], “I’m a veteran,” or whatever. If you’re a veteran, [the government will] give you free education, they’ll take care of you, [give you] medical treatment. Those people need to work. The Scriptures address that quite clearly.

[I’m not referring to those people. Instead], we’re talking about people who, because of circumstances or whatever, get themselves in severe physical need, but apart from that, more commonly in our country, in spiritual need. [In] Galatians 6:10, Paul says, “So then, while we have opportunity, let us do good to all people, and especially to those who are of the household of the faith,” which is to be our priority. You are to take care of each other as a priority. Do you know why? Because you’re brothers and sisters in Christ, because you’re going to spend eternity together, that’s why. You give priority to believers. In 1 [Timothy] 5:8, Paul says: “But if anyone does not provide for his own, and especially for those of his household, he has denied the faith and is worse than an unbeliever.” That’s an interesting

phrase: “worse than an unbeliever.” The guy is just below a pagan if he won’t take care of those of his own household. Believe me, this [church] is your household, this is your body, this is your family, and we need to take care of each other.

When I was pastoring in Idaho, we got a call from the guy who paid the bills, and he said, “Well, I’ve got some good news for you.”

And we said, “Well, what’s that?”

He said, “Some guy...” no, *somebody*, “called up,” we just thought it was a guy, “and said that he would pay for any books that any of the pastors would want to buy.”

I said, “*Really?*” Hey, my name is Jack Hughes, [and] I have a problem: I love books. It was good for a guy [who was] building his library, and so we tried [the person’s offer] out a few times. We’d get one little book here, one little book there. [Then we decided to] try and get something heavy duty and see what happened, and the guy just paid. That was a blessing. I never knew who it [was]. We called him the “book genie.” I’ve seen people give cars anonymously, computers, gift certificates, large sums of money, and help. There was one guy who had cancer, he was in the middle of building his house, and believe me, by the time he got out of the hospital, his house was completely finished. People, they just served the guy. You know what? This is how the Body of Christ is supposed to take care of [itself]. You look for other people [in need, and] you take care of other people. You have your gifts, you have your resources, you have your time, [and] you do it. Sometimes it’s just helping someone move, or fixing a car, or doing some little project for him, or just [sending an] encouraging note, or praying for him, or whatever. But I ask you: Are you seeing the need, because they’re all around you, both in the church and outside the church.

[The] second [question is]: Do you pass by the person in need? Look at [Luke 10:]31: “And by chance a priest was going down on that road.” Now, if you don’t know what a priest is, you need to know. They were kind of like the pastors of Judaism. They instructed people in the law of God, they helped intercede for people on behalf of God. These were the godly people,

the spiritual people, the people who were really close [to God], and [who were supposed to be good] examples. And so, praise God, here comes a priest! [The robbed man is] saved! Look at the middle of verse 31: “And when he,” the priest, “saw him,” the naked, beat-up, half-dead man lying in the dust of the road, “he passed by on the other side.” Oh.

Think about what it would be like if you came upon [a person in this situation]. You’re hiking in the hills of Burbank, or whatever, and all of a sudden you come upon [a guy who is in need]. “Oh.” What do you do? [You think], “Is the man dead? Well, he’s obviously beat up bad[ly]—there’s dried blood smeared all over him. Should I touch him? He doesn’t have any clothes on. He’s sunburned really bad[ly]. There [are] flies on him.” Maybe he’s moaning. Maybe you can see him breathing, maybe he’s kind of coughing, or whatever, maybe he hears you coming, and he’s so weak [that] all he can do is kind of lift up a hand and [moan] to let you know he’s not dead. Would you pass by? Would you pass by, and just say, “Oh, I’m not getting involved in this.”

Look at [Luke 10:]32: “Likewise a Levite also. . . .” Oh, praise God! The Levites, the Lord was their inheritance [see Joshua 18:7], they were taken care of by the other cities, [and] their whole lives were dedicated to serving other people in the temple. They were the servants of God. So, ha! Another godly person, dedicated to service, he’s coming along. This is like, [if your cart breaks down], the tow truck just showing up at the right time. Look at the middle of verse 32: “When he,” the Levite, “came to the place and saw him,” [the robbed man], “he passed by on the other side.” Jesus purposely takes the two most respected/godly people in society, and says, “These two people went by, and didn’t help the guy.”

Why? Why didn’t they help the guy? Well, for the same kinds of reasons we don’t help people who are in need, that’s why. If they stop and help the guy, they may not get out of the wilderness before nightfall. They’d have to spend the night with this guy who was all beat up, bloody, and naked. It just isn’t good. [You can imagine these men thinking], “And besides, there are obviously robbers in the area, and I don’t want to get robbed. And besides,

I'm only carrying a small amount of water and provisions, and if I gave these to that man, then *I* would suffer. And besides, if I gave the man my outer garment so that he wouldn't get burnt, I'd get burnt. And besides, I don't even know what kind of man this is. I mean, he could be a Gentile! He could be unclean. He could be a Jew hater. And besides, the man may die anyway, and I would have to go through all that hassle, and he might just die anyway. Then what good would it do? I mean, he's half dead already. And besides, God is sovereign, and wouldn't have let this happen to the guy, [so] he obviously deserved it. God brought this upon him for a reason. He's probably getting what he deserves." Man, I'm telling you, we are so selfish, and so wicked, we can just churn up a whole truckload of excuses [for] why we can't help people. But what would you do? Would you pass by? Or, have you been passing by?

You [might think], "OK, Christians have spiritual gifts. I need to be exercising my spiritual gift. Am I doing that anywhere for the church—this church or the Church at large? I know I need to be giving. Am I giving or am I passing by—let somebody else, let somebody else, let somebody else?" [If that is the case, then] you're just like the Levite, you're just like the priest in the parable: you're passing by. Again, I'm not talking about giving to the Sun Young Moon guy who shows up, and he's a college student looking for help going to college, and you give money to that guy to support the cult. I'm talking about people [with] legitimate spiritual needs, and physical needs, and emotional needs. Are you passing by? When you look at your life, is that the pattern of your life or not?

Third question: Do you stop and help the person in need? Look at [Luke 10:]33: "But a Samaritan," you just need to stop there. We might read this, in our American mindset, and just say nonchalantly, "Ah, a Samaritan, whoever [they] were—probably [just] another ancient biblical group," and continue on. But believe me, when the crowd is sitting there, and Jesus is sitting teaching them, and the lawyer is standing up in the midst, and Jesus says, "But a Samaritan," it was like Jesus took out a dagger and stabbed the guy right in the chest.

You [might wonder], “Why is that?” Well, let me tell you. Do you remember [at] the end of [Luke 9], when the disciples are going through [the area around Jerusalem], and they’re rejected at a Samaritan village because the Samaritans won’t offer hospitality to them? James and John say, “Lord, do you want us to command fire to come down out of heaven and consume them?” [see Luke 9:54]. They had been rejected by a lot of other people, but they only said that [of] the Samaritans. Why? [It is] because they hated [the Samaritans].

Do you remember when Jesus was talking to the Samaritan woman at the well [see John 4:9]? He says, “Give me a drink.”

Do you remember what the woman said? “How is it that you, being a Jew, ask me, a Samaritan woman, for a drink of water?” Then John puts in parentheses, so we understand what’s going on, “(For Jews,)” he says, “(have no dealings with Samaritans.)” Period. It was shocking. The woman was like, “Whoa! This is radical!” Do you remember when Jesus, in John 8, was exposing the hypocrisy of the Jewish leaders, and in verse 48, the Jewish leaders are so mad because they can’t out-argue Him? I mean, the guy *is* God. They’re so flustered [that] they decide to do some name-calling. So they say, “Do we not say rightly that You are a Samaritan and have a demon?” Those are the two worst things they could call Him. Worst thing number one: “You are a Samaritan.” Think about that. It was the ultimate slam.

What [was] the deal between the Samaritans and the Jews? Well, this is the deal. It started way back, when, after Solomon died, the kingdom was divided into two kingdoms. There was Judah in the south, and the ten tribes of Israel in the north. Jeroboam became the ruler [of the northern tribes], and he instantly adopted a very wicked, half-pagan, mongrel version of Judaism. Those ten northern tribes never had a single good king, [and] they always were pagan in their worship. Finally, in 722 [BC], at the judgment of God, the king of Assyria came down, conquered them, and dispersed the Jews—it’s called the [“Diaspora”]. They were spread out all over the place. That’s what conquerors would do. They would come into a land, and

in order to humiliate the people, they'd take them captive, spread them out, drop them off in other cities, and say, "You live here."

But, the kings would also know [that] you just can't go into a land, [take away the people], and abandon it, because then it becomes desolate and overrun by wild beasts, and it loses its value. So what [they would] do, then, is import new people into the land, and those new people then keep the vineyards, the orchards, the crops, the houses, and the irrigation canals running so that the country works [well] and produces things, and that's good for [the king] ruling it. That's what happened in 722 BC. When the Assyrians brought these groups from other places back, they mixed in and made [the Jews] even more pagan, mongrel, parcel Jews. So they were partly Jew, and a lot of parts of other things—just kind of a big mixed group of slightly Jewish [people influenced by a] lot of paganism. Those were the Samaritans.

God protected Judah, the kingdom in the south, for a few more years, [but] in 605 BC, the Chaldeans, ruled by Nebuchadnezzar, [seized] control. They [had] beat[en] up the Assyrians [and] the Egyptians, and now Nebuchadnezzar [came] to conquer Jerusalem in 605. In three deportations, he took away first the nobles and the officials, and then all the skilled people, and then all the commoners and laborers, and left Jerusalem desolate. [He] burned it, knocked everything down, and didn't even bring people back in. But some people escaped, and the lame, and the drunks, and the outcasts were left behind. Those people, then, intermixed with the Samaritans, and there were just a few of them [who] were in the land.

After the seventy-year Babylonian captivity, Cyrus said to the Jews, "You can go back," and they went back. They were going to rebuild the walls and the temple, and who shows up but the Samaritans? You remember, Sanballat and Tobiah and the like. [The Samaritans say], "Hey! We're partly Jew. We want to help you out."

[The Jews tell them], "No, no, no. You cannot help us out because you're pagans, you're not full Jews, and you can't prove your Jewish heritage" [see Ezra 4:1–3; Nehemiah 2:19–20].

So, [the Samaritans say], “OK,” and that was the beginning of the war. The Samaritans then put a lot of pressure [on the current ruler], wrote a bunch of letters, threatened all this stuff in order to try and get the Jews to stop rebuilding Jerusalem, just out of spite and anger. So the Jews were then mad at the Samaritans, [and] the Samaritans were mad at the Jews. After a while, Alexander the Great came into power, conquered the whole known world, [including] all that area [where the Jews and Samaritans were living], and he began to what is called “Hellenize” the known world. He brought in Greek, and he brought in Greek idolatry.

The Samaritans, who at that time had a temple built on Mount Gerizim, wanted to have favor with the Greek rulers, so they volunteered to have their temple dedicated to Zeus. Well, this didn’t go well with the Jews. Not only were [the Samaritans] mongrel Jews, [now] they were Greek-worshipping mongrel Jews. Later on, in 167 BC, there was this famous revolt called the “Maccabean revolt,” [and after that], John Hyrcanus [the nephew of Judah and Jonathan Maccabee, leaders of the Maccabean revolt] came and conquered that area, and he knocked down and destroyed the temple at Mount Gerizim, which made the Samaritans mad at the Jews.

Right before the time of Jesus, there was another ruler, Herod the Great, [who] was an incredible builder. He was one of the master builders of all time—just [an] incredible building genius. He loved to build. He also fancied himself as the king of the Jews. The Jews didn’t like him because really he was a Hasmonian [one of the Maccabees]. He was forced to convert to Judaism, so he was like the third generation of uncommitted Jews, and they didn’t really like him because he wasn’t fully Jew, and they just didn’t like him. Well, Herod wanted to build some political alliances and favor with the Jews and the Samaritans, so he [wanted to] rebuild the Jewish temple, which took forty-six years to build. He also approached the Samaritans, and said, “Hey, how about I rebuild your temple on Mount Gerizim?” Well, because Herod was partially Jew, and the Samaritans hated the Jews, they said, “OK,” and so he [built their temple], and then they never stepped foot in it. They kept worshipping in their old beat-up one just to spite Herod

because he was *partly* Jew. The Jews, then, were mad at Herod because he would build a temple on the wrong mountain [for] people who were pagans. [The Samaritans] were mad at the Jews because they thought, “Oh, you could help us do our own temple. We don’t need you.”

Now, later on, in AD 6 and AD 9, on two separate occasions, a couple Samaritans got this idea. It was very dastardly. They thought, “OK, the Jews have to obey the law, and in the law it says that if you touch a dead person or get [human] bones on anything, it’s unclean for seven days. So let’s sneak in there, right before one of the pilgrim feasts, when all the Jews have traveled all over the Mediterranean basin and made these huge journeys, and just when they come for those special feasts to worship in the temple, we’ll spread human bones at night all around the temple courtyard, and no one will be able to worship that year.” They did it twice. So, you can imagine, the Jews *hated* the Samaritans, and [the Samaritans] hated the Jews. They were just in a rage at each other. Just the name of [the other group] drove them crazy].

You have to know [all of] that [in order to understand the parable of the Good Samaritan]. Look at the middle of [Luke 10:]33: “But a Samaritan, who was on a journey, came upon him; and when he saw him, he felt compassion.” Jesus is looking the lawyer in the face, and says, “But a Samaritan came and felt compassion on the guy.” [Jesus was saying that] public enemy number one [was compassionate]. Ah! You [can] just [imagine] the lawyer is there with a clenched jaw, and everybody is looking, [and] he’s trying to be cool. Look at [Luke 10:]34[-35]:

And came to him and bandaged up his wounds, pouring oil and wine on them; and he put him on 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.”

The Samaritan: 1) feels compassion on the guy; [2)] he applies first aid; [3)] he allows the robbed man to ride on his animal [while] he walks; [4)] he brings the man to an inn—he's on a journey, he doesn't even live in the area, [and] can't even bring [the injured man] to his house, [so] he brings [the man] to [an] inn to be fed and cared for; 5) he pays for it all, and then he has some business to attend to, so he tells the innkeeper, "Listen, you just keep taking care of him, and when I come back, I'll pay you." As Jesus is saying all this, the lawyer is certainly churning within because the ultimate bad guy is being nice to the guy who was beaten up. Jesus is just twisting the blade now.

God wants you and [me] to learn from these things, to stop and help those who are in need. Whether it be sharing the gospel with them, or encouraging them, or whatever-ing them, [He wants us] to help those in need. If you look at your life, and you realize, "I'm not that person. I can't even remember [the last time] I helped somebody. I mean, at the office I gave somebody one of my pencils." [If] you just don't see it in your life, I'm telling you, you need to ask yourself if the love of Christ is really in you. Think of the person who shared the gospel with you. Aren't you glad he or she did? [What about] the person who disciplined you, the person who taught you, the persons who have encouraged you—aren't you glad they did?

Jesus said in Matthew 7:12: "In everything, therefore, treat people the same way you want them to treat you, for this is the Law and the Prophets." Both the two great commandments are summed up in what we often refer to as the "golden rule." Do you want people to do good to you, serve you, train you, help you physically and spiritually? I know you do. Well, then, are you doing it to others? It's amazing to me when people can come into a church week after week and not serve, and not give, and just leave, just scoot out the back, and never say, "I'm going to serve in this ministry, or give faithfully." That isn't Christianity, that is self-deception. Then there are those faithful people who come to church every week, who get involved in ministries—often more ministries than they should be involved in. They're feeling guilty about the [other] ministries they could be involved in but

[really] can't [be doing] because they're too committed to serving people in other areas. They walk by [a person in need], and say, "Oh, there's a person in need. Oh, Lord, I can't help him because I'm going to serve other people," but they shoot up a little arrow prayer for him.

When you talk to those people, and you say, "I know you've been serving here for a long time, maybe we could get somebody to relieve you," they look at you, and say, "What? Relieve me of what?"

"Well, I mean, you've been doing this ministry for a while, don't you kind of. . ."

"I *love* doing this ministry."

"Well, don't you think. . ."

"No!"

"Well, you could take a. . ."

"No!"

"But a rest. . ."

"No!" Man, they want to serve Jesus. [They say], "I love serving Jesus! I *love* doing my ministry." That is how Christians feel. The non-Christian can come in and he's just concerned about getting what he wants so he can slip out the back, Jack.

James says in James 2:14–17:

What use is it, my brethren, if someone says he has faith but he has no works? Can that faith save him? If a brother or sister is without clothing and in need of daily food, and one of you says to them, "Go in peace, be warmed and be filled," and yet you do not give them what is necessary for their body, what use is that? Even so faith, if it has no works, is dead, being by itself.

So, if you say, "I have faith, I believe in Jesus," and there is no desire to see needs, and serve those needs, you have a dead faith, is what the Scriptures say. It's an indication that you're lost, you're perishing, you're sucked into self-worship, or, at best, you're a believer who is severely tangled in

sin. It [has] to be one or the other. In a [church] body [the] size [of Calvary Bible Church], there are so many needs that could be met, there are so many more ministries we could do, there are so many things [that are] just waiting for somebody to step forward, and say, "I'll do it." You need to perform your function and serve others. It may be in a little way, it may be in a big way, it may be in a public way, it may be in an obscure way, but you need to do it on a faithful, regular basis.

Outside in the world, you may not encounter people who are beat up alongside the road, but you are going to encounter people with serious spiritual need, and when that happens, get out the bomb—tell them about Jesus, tell them about what God has done in your life, make sure they know the truth. When you look at your life, [and] you see no service, no giving, no gospel sharing, no habit of meeting needs, and you're just a passerby Christian, then you need to come to Jesus because when the Holy Spirit enters into a person's life upon salvation, it makes you want to serve others.

[In] John 13:35, Jesus says: "By this all men will know that you are My disciples, if you have love for one another," and of course "love" is just a huge list of actions, right? [It is] a sense of otherness, looking for others' needs so that you can meet them. John says in 1 John 3:14: "We know that we have passed out of death into life, because we love the brethren. He who does not love abides in death." [In] 1 John 4:20, he says: "If someone says, 'I love God,' and hates his brother, he is a liar; for the one who does not love his brother whom he has seen, cannot love God whom he has not seen." There are just a ton of other verses we could go into [that cover the same thing]. Don't buy into the lie that, "If I give, if I serve, I'm going to be cheated, I'm going to be rooked, I'm going to be robbed from, it's going to be a waste." No! Jesus said, in Acts [20:]35: "It is more blessed to" what? "give than to receive." You just have to trust Jesus about it. Being a Christian is living in this paradoxical realm of, "OK, if I lose my life, I gain it [see Matthew 16:25]. If I become the servant of all, I become the greatest [see Luke 22:24–27]. The more I give, the more I get [see Matthew

25:29].” That’s how it works with God, and He never fails. He wants to bless you. “It is more blessed to give than to receive.”

Maybe you just need to come to Christ and get saved for real this morning. Maybe you’ve always called yourself a Christian, you’ve come to church fairly regularly, you know quite a bit about the Bible, but when you look at your life, you just pass by, you have no desire to serve people, [to] be a help to people, [to] watch for people [in need]. You don’t share your faith, you can’t even remember the last time you shared your faith with somebody. You just need to humble yourself and see yourself as the hopeless, helpless, wretched sinner that all Christians before they get saved realize they are. [You need] to realize that Jesus is the only answer, that you need to turn from your sin, your worship of self, you need to die to yourself, you need to take up your cross, and you need to receive the Lord Jesus Christ, and trust in His death on the cross, in His resurrection to save you, and only that, and not keep deluding yourself. [You may say], “I know these facts,” [but] I’m not talking about *knowing* these facts, I’m talking about *trusting in* these facts, and following Jesus instead of you, letting Jesus rule your life instead of you.

Or maybe you already know Christ, and you’ve made many excuses not to serve, you’ve made many excuses to pass by, and you just need to confess those. God is faithful, and He’ll forgive you and cleanse you from all unrighteousness [see 1 John 1:9]. But don’t just confess them, repent of your old ways and turn to the way you know God wants you to be.

[The final question is]: Do you know who your neighbor is? Now we come to the punch line of the parable, which clearly addresses the situation or need that gave rise to the parable. Remember, the lawyer, wishing to justify himself, said, “And who is my neighbor?” Look at [Luke 10:]36–37, [where] Jesus [says]: “Which of these three do you think proved to be a neighbor to the man who fell into the robbers’ hands? And he,” the lawyer, “said, ‘The one who showed mercy toward him.’” Notice [that the lawyer] can’t even say the word “Samaritan.” He uses [an] obscure term. It’s like [when couples] who are mad at each other say, “Well, that *man*... that

woman”—they don’t even have a name, they don’t even have an identity. [The lawyer] can’t even bring himself to say, “the Samaritan,” so he says, “the one who showed mercy.” This is so brilliant because the guy is [at] first out to get Jesus, and now Jesus has brought [the man] to the place where [he] then asks another question so that Jesus will be put at odds against all the religious establishment, and now, with everybody looking, [Jesus] has made [the man] at odds with the establishment. He just confessed before the crowd, “You [have] to be like the Samaritan.” Ooo. Look at the end of [Luke 10:37]: “Then Jesus said to him, ‘Go and do the same.’” In other words, go act like the Samaritan in the parable. Owie!

We need to volunteer to be inconvenienced, [to] sacrifice time, energy, resources, and money, especially for those in the household of God, and [for] those outside [as well]. The greatest needs outside [the Church] are spiritual. The greatest needs inside [the Church] are spiritual. You [have] to be looking for them. Are you looking and seeing people in need? Are you passing by? If you are, you need to confess and repent of that. Are you helping other people? Is that the habit of your life? Do you know that all humanity is your neighbor and you are to love them like yourself?

It’s a good parable. Was that fun, or what? All right, let’s pray.

Father, we just thank You for this parable. It is so clear and really such a punch in the gut to people who are sinners, like ourselves. Father, we all have passed by at times, for whatever selfish reason or excuse, and, Father, we know that it didn’t pass with You. Father, we do pray that we would be like the Samaritan in the parable, that we would be looking for needs, that we would see those needs, that we would help to meet those needs, and would constantly remind ourselves that all humanity is our neighbor—even our enemies. And, Father, we know that you give grace to help us love others, so help us to do that in a way that would please You. Father, for those here who realize they don’t know You, who just are lost, and they’ve never seen a transformed life, they’ve just called themselves Christians, and lived for themselves, I pray that You would grant them repentance, that they would cry out, confessing their sins, saying, “Lord, help me to turn from

my sin and receive the Lord Jesus Christ as my Savior.” For the rest of us, who maybe have not made it a habit to serve others and meet those needs, may we confess our sin to You, that Calvary Bible Church might become a great light, a great tool in Your hand to impact society, and to impact the lives of those who meet here in this local body of believers. May this be true of us, that You might receive all the glory, honor, and praise. We pray in Christ’s name, Amen.

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