

Text: Luke 10:25-37

²⁵On one occasion an expert in the law stood up to test Jesus. “Teacher,” he asked, “what must I do to inherit eternal life?” ²⁶“What is written in the Law?” he replied. “How do you read it?” ²⁷He answered: “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, ‘Love your neighbor as yourself.’ ²⁸“You have answered correctly,” Jesus replied. “Do this and you will live.” ²⁹But he wanted to justify himself, so he asked Jesus, “And who is my neighbor?” ³⁰In reply



Jesus said: “A man was going down from Jerusalem to Jericho, when he fell into the hands of robbers. They stripped him of his clothes, beat him and went away, leaving him half dead. ³¹A priest happened to be going down the same road, and when he saw the man, he passed by on the other side. ³²So too, a Levite, when he came to the place and saw him, passed by on the other side. ³³But a Samaritan, as he traveled, came where the man was; and when he saw him, he took pity on him. ³⁴He went to him and bandaged his wounds, pouring on oil and wine. Then he put the man on his own donkey, took him to an inn and took care of him. ³⁵The next day he took out two silver coins and gave them to the innkeeper. ‘Look after him,’ he said, ‘and when I return, I will reimburse you for any extra expense you may have.’ ³⁶“Which of these three do you think was a neighbor to the man who fell into the hands of robbers?” ³⁷The expert in the law replied, “The one who had mercy on him.” Jesus told him, “Go and do likewise.”

Theme: Who Needs a Good Neighbor?

Some of the strangest commercials on tv right now are insurance commercials. One company tries to sell insurance using a Gecko. In another recent ad a woman is annoyed at the new boat that her kids have. Then you have the State Farm ads in which the people say, “Like a good neighbor St. Farm is there.” Suddenly the agent appears to save young men from buffalos, assure a young woman that she has enough money to buy an expensive purse or give a group of guys a hot tub.

The teacher of the Law in our text asked Jesus, “And who is my neighbor?” Jesus told the parable of the Good Samaritan to show who needs a good neighbor.

I. The first thing that we learn is that we all need a good neighbor.

The Teacher of the Law needed to learn this. He asked a question of our Lord in order to test Him, “*What must I do to inherit eternal life?*” Even though the man wanted to test Jesus, there is some good in his question. He was concerned about eternity. Today there are so many people who give no thought to tomorrow, let alone eternity. We are not all that different from my dog who is concerned about her next treat or belly rub and gives no thought to tomorrow at all. So often we are simply concerned with the pleasures and cares of this world, that eternity is the last thing on our minds. But this man had given thought as to how we can inherit eternal life.

The problem is that he thought that he could do something to inherit eternal life. The question itself is preposterous. It would be like asking our parent what we must do to have an inheritance from

them. There is nothing that we can do. Generally, if we are the children, we will have an inheritance because we are children. It is easier to get ourselves disinherited, than to earn an inheritance. An inheritance is not something that you earn. It is a gift.

But this man thought that he had done all that is necessary to inherit eternal life. He thought that he loved God with all of his being and his neighbor as himself. The point of the parable of the Good Samaritan was to show this man, that he could do nothing to inherit eternal life. He needed a good neighbor.

Jesus told the parable of the man who was robbed and beaten so badly, that he was almost dead on the road. At first a priest and Levite passed by on the other side when they saw the man. At this point the Teacher of the Law might have thought, "Well, that's just like those people! They are so heartless!" This man was a pharisee, and they and the priests were bitter enemies. He probably thought, "Give it to them Jesus!" But then came the shocking part of the parable. A Samaritan, one of the bitter enemies of all Jews, saw the man. He was filled with compassion and showed mercy to the poor man in several ways. He bound the man's wounds, set him on his own animal, brought him to an inn, and took care of him for the rest of the day. The next day he gave the innkeeper two silver coins, which were worth two months wages and promised to pay any extra expenses that the man would have. The teacher of the Law should have thought back to times when he passed by someone in need. When he did help someone, was he always and giving and generous as the Good Samaritan? Jesus was showing him that he was not as good and loving as he thought that he was.

In truth, we are all like the man who was lying half-dead on the road. Think about it when was there someone in need, and you passed by or didn't give the help and support that they needed. If you did help, did you find yourself complaining? Few of us have been like the robbers who almost beat the man to death. Most of us have been more like those who passed by. None of us have been as compassionate and merciful as that Samaritan. Have you ever hardened your heart against someone in need? Have you ever failed to give someone the help that they needed? Then you have failed to love God above all things and your neighbor as yourself.

Our own selfishness and greed have beaten us up and robbed us of the gift of eternal life. But the good news is that our Good Samaritan has come. He is someone whom the world rejected, just as the Jews hated the Samaritans. Christ came into this world, but the world did not receive Him. We rejected Him and nailed Him to a cross. However, it was there that He bore our griefs and carried our sorrows. His compassion for us brought Him to this world to save us. In mercy He heals our wounds, bore our burden, and brings us into the shelter of His church. As the Samaritan paid the entire price for this man's healing, Christ paid for our sins in full. He has changed us from sinners who were dying into beloved children of God with the sure hope of everlasting life. We cry out to Him for mercy, and He fills our lives with goodness and mercy until we will dwell in the house of the Lord forever. We needed a good neighbor to save us. Thanks be to God, that Jesus is that good neighbor.

II. Whom do you know, who needs a good neighbor?

The Lord makes our lives cross paths with many people who need our compassion and mercy.

Some of them are obvious, our spouse, children, and other family members. The Scriptures are clear that we are to care for the members of our family who need help. Today's Old Testament lesson mentions the poor, the immigrant, the handicapped, and laborers. In increasing measure, we have poor all around us. In our congregation we have the opportunity to help immigrants from several nations. There are people with all kinds of handicaps in our midst. We are called to have compassion on them and to show mercy as Christ has been merciful to us. There are also people who need our help who are very far away from here. With our gifts and offerings to our missions of the month, LCMS Human Care, and other agencies, we help to bring God's mercy to people whom we never meet in this life. Jesus also tells us to "*Go and do likewise.*" He calls us to be as compassionate and merciful to others in need as He has been toward us.

So who needs a good neighbor? The answer is we do. We were so beaten up by our sins, that we were dead in them, but in His compassion and mercy for us, Christ came and raised us to a new life in Him with the blessed hope of everlasting life. The answer is also that many people around us need a good neighbor, and God's Spirit fills our hearts with that same compassion and mercy to love them as Christ has loved us. May God's give us that peace that Christ is our good neighbor in every need, and make us into good neighbors for those who need our compassion and mercy in Christ.

Amen.

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