

RECEIVE MERCY - THE GOOD SAMARITAN LUKE 10:25-37
LENT MIDWEEK 2 MAR 11, 2015

²⁵ And behold, a lawyer stood up to put him to the test, saying, "Teacher, what shall I do to inherit eternal life?" ²⁶ He said to him, "What is written in the Law? How do you read it?" ²⁷ 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." ²⁸ And he said to him, "You have answered correctly; do this, and you will live."

²⁹ But he, desiring to justify himself, said to Jesus, "And who is my neighbor?" ³⁰ Jesus replied, "A man was going down from Jerusalem to Jericho, and he fell among robbers, who stripped him and beat him and departed, leaving him half dead. ³¹ Now by chance a priest was going down that road, and when he saw him he passed by on the other side. ³² So likewise a Levite, when he came to the place and saw him, passed by on the other side. ³³ But a Samaritan, as he journeyed, came to where he was, and when he saw him, he had compassion. ³⁴ He went to him and bound up his wounds, pouring on oil and wine. Then he set him on his own animal and brought him to an inn and took care of him. ³⁵ And the next day he took out two denarii and gave them to the innkeeper, saying, 'Take care of him, and whatever more you spend, I will repay you when I come back.' ³⁶ Which of these three, do you think, proved to be a neighbor to the man who fell among the robbers?" ³⁷ He said, "The one who showed him mercy." And Jesus said to him, "You go, and do likewise."

Sometimes when you look at an old photograph
you may have hard time recognizing what it is picture of.
You may have to look carefully at the background
for hints about when or where it was and who is in it.
This parable of Jesus is a picture like that.
It helps to remember, as I said last time,
Every parable includes a picture of what God is like
and a picture of what we are like.
Jesus told parables for different purposes.
Sometimes they were plain pictures, like object lesson.
Sometimes they were memorable puzzles
for the disciples to think about & understand later.
Sometimes they were like inside jokes
his disciples understood but his enemies didn't.
Sometimes they were like political cartoons
that his enemies realized were pointing at them.
It can help to look at context and why the parable is told.
These things help us see in this parable how...

AN ATTEMPT TO BE RIGHTEOUS GOES WRONG
EFFORTS TO RESCUE GO TO AN EXTREME
WE INHERIT LIFE WHEN JESUS COMES TO OUR AID

AN ATTEMPT TO BE RIGHTEOUS GOES WRONG

²⁵ And behold, a lawyer stood up to put him to the test, saying, “Teacher, what shall I do to inherit eternal life?” ²⁶ He said to him, “What is written in the Law? How do you read it?” ²⁷ 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.” ²⁸ And he said to him, “You have answered correctly; do this, and you will live.”

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To understand what parable is about, let’s first see why it is told.

It is answer to question by a lawyer, i.e. a religious lawyer,
an expert on the fine print of religious rules.

His question is what *he should do* to inherit eternal life.

You may notice already what is wrong with this question.

Is why Jesus often doesn’t answer the question asked

But in this case he answers the question as asked,
just as he does for the rich young man who asked,

“What *good deed must I do* to have eternal life?”

Answer is: keep whole law perfectly. They agree on what it is:

First is relationship with God: love & obey him above all.

Second is relationship with others: love them as self.

Again v. 29 points out lawyer’s goal is to *justify himself*.

If there is any way to keep such an all-encompassing law
it must be in the exceptions listed in the fine print:

“Who is my neighbor?”

So, in this parable the first ones to come upon the victim
are a priest and a Levite. Who could be more holy?

This lawyer knows just as well as Jesus

that according to O.T. law, touching a dead body
made a person ceremonially unclean and so
temporarily unable to participate in worship.

This is why the Jews were eager for those on the cross
to be dead & dealt with before the Sabbath started.

Contact with Gentiles also made one unclean,
which is why those who accused Jesus
were careful not to go into Pilate's headquarters,
so they could still celebrate the Passover.

But Priests and Levites had to lead the worship.

So, O.T. law forbade their touching dead bodies at all.

Here a Priest and Levite find a man stripped and half dead.

Without his clothes, how can they tell he isn't gentile?

How can they be sure he isn't already dead?

If they touch him, they could be breaking first part of law
about relationship with God and being holy to him,
they could make selves unclean & unable to do job.

Why do they go by on the other side?

It is not just because they are in a hurry
or because they are cold hearted or afraid.

It is because they are trying to keep the law to the letter,
yet in doing so they break the second half of the law.

So, the point is, trying to be righteous by keeping the whole law
is impossible - even for Priests.

but now, EFFORTS TO RESCUE GO TO AN EXTREME

³³ But a Samaritan, as he journeyed, came to where he was, and when
he saw him, he had compassion. ³⁴ He went to him and bound up his
wounds, pouring on oil and wine. Then he set him on his own animal
and brought him to an inn and took care of him. ³⁵ And the next day he
took out two denarii and gave them to the innkeeper, saying, 'Take
care of him, and whatever more you spend, I will repay you when I
come back.' ³⁶ Which of these three, do you think, proved to be a
neighbor to the man who fell among the robbers?" ³⁷ He said, "The
one who showed him mercy."

It is no coincidence this happens to a man
going from Jerusalem to Jericho.

Main reasons Jews took this desolate dangerous route
was to get around going through Samaria

Jews hated Samaritans. They also were unclean.

Ever since they were brought here by Assyrians
to replace Israelites carried off in captivity,

They mixed corrupted worship of God with worship of idols.
Samaritans certainly didn't keep the first table of the law.

Why did this Samaritan dare be on this road in the first place?

And even more shocking to those who listened to Jesus,
he has compassion on this man who hates him,
And who, if not half dead, likely would have run from him,
thinking he was one of robbers, back to finish him off.

Bible scholar Kenneth Bailey says, when he took him to inn,
he was like an Indian in the wild west
walking into town with a scalped cowboy on his horse
and checking into a room above the saloon.

He would be lucky to get out of Dodge alive.

Not only does he take care of the man, but he pays inn keeper
two days wages to take care of him after he is gone,
and then promises to come back and repay even more.

Jesus loves to tell parables that go to ridiculous extremes.

If you want to be saved by being good,
love not just your neighbor but your enemy like that.

So, is this Samaritan truly good and righteous? Of course not.

No matter how well he keeps the second table of the law,
he still totally fails to the first, most important part.

When Jesus says to the lawyer, "Go and do likewise."

He probably goes away in despair,
like the rich young man who asked a similar question,
causing the disciples to wonder, "Who then can be saved?"
to which Jesus replies, "With man this is impossible,
but with God all things are possible."

WE INHERIT LIFE WHEN JESUS COMES TO OUR AID

The lawyer asks "Teacher, what shall I do to inherit eternal life?"

As a lawyer, he should have known better.

You don't inherit anything by what you yourself do.

You inherit things when one who cares about you dies.

And this is answer to question that should have been asked:

How can I have eternal life?

As I mentioned, every parable includes a picture
of what God is like and picture of what we are like.

The one who is like us is the half dead man.

Even though we are still physically alive,
our sinful nature was left spiritually dead.

when we were ambushed and attacked by Satan,
who robs us of the value God has given us and leaves us
naked & ashamed like Adam & Eve hiding from God.

and like the bloodied criminals on crosses next to Jesus.
The one who is like God is the Samaritan.
Jesus pictures himself as this heathen Samaritan
just as he literally takes on the form of sinful humans.
Although he is hated, counted as an enemy & avoided
by those who think they are better than he is,
He says of his enemies, "Father, forgive them."
He deliberately risks coming into our territory, our world,
at just the right time to help us.
even though he know it means walking the road to the cross.
He comes to us, willing to take our uncleanness
and our death itself on himself.
He compassionately binds up our wounds,
he lifts us up and carries us.
He clothes our nakedness with his own righteousness.
He pays for us to be healed of sin and saved from death,
not with two denarii, but with his suffering and death.
At his altar he pours out wine for our wounds
that is the blood he shed for the forgiveness of our sins.
And he is coming back to complete our salvation
by taking us to be with him in heaven.

So, how should we respond to this parable?
By asking myself, "who is my neighbor"
and seeing that it includes even my enemies
and, as Jesus said, going and doing likewise.
But certainly not thinking that I can do it well enough
that I can justify myself.
But I respond especially by asking the question
as Jesus put it: Who was a neighbor to me?
and so being like the man who was graciously helped
and saved from death.

AN ATTEMPT TO BE RIGHTEOUS GOES WRONG
as every attempt to be righteous by our own keeping the law
goes wrong and fails.
EFFORTS TO RESCUE GO TO AN EXTREME,
giving an example of how perfectly God's law must be kept
but also showing how it has been kept for us by Jesus.
WE INHERIT LIFE WHEN JESUS COMES TO OUR AID
taking our uncleanness and death on himself
and paying for all it takes for us to be healed and live.

Perfect Neighbor to those in need, **show us your mercy**

God, who is the perfect neighbor, we praise you for seeing and knowing all our needs. We thank you for lovingly caring for us in spite of our brokenness, and for providing what we need for this day and for your promise to provide for us in the future as well

Perfect Neighbor to those in need, **show us your mercy**

God, who is the perfect neighbor, we confess that we have we fail to help those in need, whether in body, soul or spirit. We have neglected them, when we know their needs we have cared more about ourselves and we have been selective in helping those we believe also care about us. Heal our damaged souls with your forgiveness and make us ever better neighbors to our family, friends and co-workers, so that they can see Jesus in and through us.

Perfect Neighbor to those in need, **show us your mercy**

God, who is the perfect neighbor, we thank you for the comfort and healing you give us through Jesus, for his taking our uncleanness and death on himself, for his paying for our sins and for his promised return. Use your church to share his compassion and rescue with the neighbors around us who are attacked and left for dead by the devil.

Perfect Neighbor to those in need, **show us your mercy**

God, who is the perfect neighbor, make your Church the place where people grow in their ability to be neighbors not only to one another but also to outsiders and all those in need. Work with your healing power to help and heal those among us who are ill, weak or in need of strength.

Perfect Neighbor to those in need, **show us your mercy**

Amen.