

A Sermon for the 1st Sunday of Lent
Everything [in] between – Stranger & Neighbor
Luke 10:25-37
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The Good Samaritan

The phrase "Good Samaritan" is commonly used today, often referring to someone who helps a stranger in distress. But Jesus' parable in Luke 10 carries a much deeper, more transformative message.

The Lawyer's Question (Luke 10:25-29)

A lawyer, an expert in the Jewish Law, asks Jesus, "What must I do to inherit eternal life?"

Jesus, knowing the man's expertise, redirects the question: **"What does the Law say?"**

The lawyer responds correctly: **"Love the Lord with all your heart, soul, strength, and mind, and love your neighbor as yourself."**

Jesus affirms him: **"Do this, and you will live."**

But the lawyer, seeking a loophole, asks, **"Who is my neighbor?"**

This is the turning point of the passage. The lawyer doesn't ask about loving God—perhaps because he assumed he already did. Instead, he focuses on defining "neighbor," possibly seeking to narrow the scope of his responsibility.

Jesus' Story is a Radical Example of Mercy (Luke 10:30-37)

The story begins, A Jewish man is traveling from Jerusalem to Jericho, a treacherous 17-mile route notorious for bandits. He is attacked, beaten, stripped, and left for dead.

- **A Jewish priest** sees him but crosses to the other side. Jewish priests were spiritual leaders who knew the Law's requirement to help those in need. Yet, he does nothing.
- **A Levite**, another religious leader, also avoids the man. Levites assisted priests in temple duties and also knew the Law's call to mercy. Yet, he too refuses to act.
- **A Samaritan**, someone despised by Jews, stops.

The Samaritan **bandages the man's wounds, lifts him onto his animal, takes him to an inn, and pays for his care.**

Why is this shocking? Jews and Samaritans harbored deep animosity. The Samaritans were a mixed people, part Jewish, part Gentile, from centuries of intermarriage. Jews saw them as religious apostates and political enemies. Yet, **this Samaritan shows more compassion than the Jewish leaders.**

Jesus then asks the lawyer, **"Who was the true neighbor?"**

The lawyer responds, **"The one who showed mercy."** (Interestingly, he avoids saying "Samaritan.")

Jesus' command is clear: **"Go and do likewise."**

The True Message of Salvation

At first glance, Jesus' response—"Do this and you will live"—might seem like salvation by works. But Jesus is revealing something deeper.

To **love God with all our heart** means total devotion, trust, surrender—**this is faith.**

The essence of faith has always been love-driven obedience. Abraham "believed God, and it was credited to him as righteousness" (Gen. 15:6). Salvation has always been by grace through faith, resulting in a life of love and mercy.

This lawyer wanted to **justify himself** by limiting his duty to love. Jesus exposed the flaw in that thinking. Love for God is inseparable from love for others—even enemies.

Application: Living as True Neighbors

We are called to be like the Samaritan—compassionate, selfless, sacrificial. But how can we prepare ourselves for this kind of radical love?

1. Prepare Your Heart

Genuine love for others flows from experiencing **God's love first**. Abiding in Christ through daily prayer and Scripture fuels our ability to love others.

1 John 4:19 says, "**We love because He first loved us.**"

As we walk with Jesus daily, our hearts are transformed, enabling us to reflect His love even to those we find difficult to love.

2. Prepare in Prayer

Ask God daily, "**Lord, where will you have me show mercy today?**" Stay open to His divine appointments.

The Samaritan was **ready** to help because his heart was right before God. If our hearts are cold, we will miss opportunities God places in our path.

3. Prepare Your Schedule

If we are too busy, we miss opportunities to love. **Jesus was never hurried.** Is our agenda so packed that we have no room to respond to needs?

Ephesians 2:10 says, "**For we are God's handiwork, created in Christ Jesus to do good works, which God prepared in advance for us to do.**"

Are our schedules aligned with **God's** agenda, or only our own?

4. Prepare Your Finances

The Samaritan used his resources generously. **Do we budget for acts of mercy?** Do we view our money as belonging to God?

Perhaps we need to rethink our financial priorities—**setting aside resources specifically to meet others' needs.**

Conclusion: Go and Do Likewise

Loving our neighbor—even **our enemy**—isn't optional. It's the natural outflow of a life anchored in God's love.

Jesus wasn't giving the lawyer a mere lesson in kindness. He was calling him—and us—to a **radical, self-sacrificial love** that reflects **God's mercy to us.**

The Apostle John says it well:

1 John 3:1: "**See what great love the Father has lavished on us, that we should be called children of God!**"

As **recipients** of God's mercy, we are now **messengers** of it. Let us live out that love, showing mercy to all whom God places in our path. **Go and do likewise.**

AFFIRMATION OF FAITH

Church, if God asked you, “Who is your neighbor?”
what would you say?

**We would say,
every child, every person,
every weeping willow,
and every morning lark.**

**Every freckled face,
every wrinkled pair of hands,
every tail-wagging dog,
and every crisp ripe apple.**

**We would say,
we are connected—
to one another, to all of God’s creation.
There are no strangers in God’s house.
We are all family here.**

I think God would delight in that answer. For it is said,
“You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart,
with all your soul,
with all your strength,
with all your mind,
and you shall love your neighbor as yourself.”

We believe. Help our unbelief. Amen. (Used with permission, © A Sanctified Art)