

Luke 10:25-37 "Serve our World"

Read Luke 10:25-37

At the heart of serving our world is love, a love of neighbour. The parable of the Good Samaritan gives us the opportunity to reflect deeply on the nature of the love the Lord invites us to express. To understand the parable rightly we need to hear it as part of the larger conversation. Our opening questions consider the lens the conversation brings to the parable...

1. What is the lawyer asking by his question and how do you think it is designed to test or trap Jesus?

We often think of this question as asking – how do I get to heaven when I die? But from his own worldview the scribe is not asking this. He is asking – how do I live a life consistent with the age to come. An age where God's will would be done on earth as in heaven. When Messiah, God's anointed, brings a Kingdom of Shalom, peace, full-flourishing in every aspect of life. How do I live a life that is consistent with that future and will go on into that future.

This may be designed to trap Jesus because one of the common complaints of the religious leaders is that they have seen Jesus spending time with sinners and outcasts. They believe the only way he can do that is if he has gone soft on God's law, watered down a biblical worldview. They might expect Jesus to respond – It doesn't matter how you live – God accepts everyone into the Kingdom.

While the question may have been a question to test – the yearning behind the question – for that life of the age to come was indeed a genuine one. It is the yearning for that future that Jesus points him and us toward.

Jesus question in return points the lawyer to return to the heart of God's law – a love of God and others. In light of his answer the lawyer now feels that he needs to justify himself, meaning he is feeling condemned by his own answer.

2. Why do you think he feels condemned by how he answered?

Perhaps his answer has gotten him thinking – Do I really love my neighbour as myself. Do I meet the needs of my neighbour with all the power, speed, drive, and forethought that I meet my needs? Am I filled with as much joy in their successes as I would be in my own? Do I grieve their losses as much as I do my own? Do I really love my neighbour as myself?

To the question "Who is my neighbour?" a question designed to limit the scope of love to make it attainable Jesus tells the parable.

3. After hearing the parable how would you answer the scribe's question – who is my neighbour?

A neighbour is anyone in need, regardless of geography or relationship. A neighbour is even THAT person. The one we loathe. The one who has wronged us. An enemy. A neighbour is even found from THAT group of people whose behavior, or ideology, or political convictions we find reprehensible.

4. Jesus changes the question of definition into an invitation to a way of life – "who proved to be the neighbour?" From the parable what does it mean to be a neighbour?

To be a neighbour is to serve the other with self-sacrifice, compassion, and generosity. To be a neighbour is to lay aside my needs, my agenda, my priorities to serve the other in their time of need. Such love knows no bounds.

If the scribe was feeling condemned by his own answer how do you think he is feeling now? Jesus has wounded him as he is convicted and crushed by the magnitude of love the Lord requires.

5. Put yourself in the place of the scribe - can we in any way live up to the magnitude of love the Lord requires? Why or why not?

I think that this is one of the primary places the parable is meant to bring us. To a place where we are crushed and convicted by the magnitude of love the Lord requires. The parable is meant to wound us. The parable is meant to bring us to repentance. Lord I cannot love the way you call me to love.

Jesus invites us to inhabit the story. The only character who has literally been stripped of all identifying features is the man lying by the road.

6. How can inhabiting this place in the story (being loved by the one who should have rejected us) shape our hearts to love? How can receiving the love of God in Jesus (the true good Samaritan) shape this love in us?

If you have a story where you have been loved by someone who you would never ever expect it from this would be a wonderful place to share it. I know when I have been loved by such a one it softens my heart, it obliterates hatred, it crushes biases, it tears down walls.

Here is a portion of the sermon which I think might help you as you guide the conversation:

You and I are in fact the person in the road – dead in sin – unable to love as the Lord requires – unable to help ourselves. As Paul puts it, we were an enemy of God in our failure to love those whom God has created. But Jesus the true Good Samaritan poured out his riches on you and for you at the cross – rescued you not just at the risk of his life, but at the cost of his life. Impoverished himself for you, laid down everything he had for you. You and I have been lifted up by the one who had every reason to reject us and yet stoops down, takes our flesh, takes our sin to the cross and washes it all away – giving us new life, a new future.

In the Parable Jesus wounds us so he can heal us. Jesus brings us with the scribe to be crushed and convicted by the magnitude of love the Lord requires so that we would be humbled to receive the love he offers. A love that enables us bit by bit to reflect that love – for to love this way is a function of grace.