

### *Luke 10:25-37*

Just then a lawyer stood up to test Jesus. “Teacher,” he said, “what must I do to inherit eternal life?” He said to him, “What is written in the law? What do you read there?” 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 given the right answer, do this, and you will live.”

But wanting to justify himself, he asked Jesus, “And who is my neighbor?” Jesus replied, “A man was going down from Jerusalem to Jericho, and fell into the hands of robbers, who stripped him, beat him, and went away, leaving him half dead. Now by chance a priest was going down that road; and when he saw him, he passed by on the other side. So likewise a Levite, when he came to the place and saw him, passed by on the other side. But a Samaritan while traveling came near him; and when he saw him, he was moved with pity. He went to him and bandaged his wounds, having poured oil and wine on them. Then he put him on his own animal, and brought him to an inn, and took care of him. The next day he took out two denarii, gave them to the innkeeper, and said, “Take care of him; and when I come back, I will repay you whatever more you spend.” Which of these three, do you think, was a neighbor to the man who fell into the hands of the robbers?” He said, “The one who showed him mercy.” Jesus said to him, “Go and do likewise.”

*The Gospel of the Lord*

## *Reflection Questions*

- 1) **The Context:** the context for this passage is *Luke 9:51-11:13* where Jesus is continually inviting His followers to deeper forms of discipleship. Jesus has prayed for His disciples and in His prayer, He refers to them as ‘infants’ in the faith but still more earnestly connected to God than ‘the wise and intelligent’ from whom God has ‘hidden these things.’ (10:21). This dramatic contrast of the wise and the simple is played out in the story. Society would place the lawyer and the educated priests in the category of ‘wise’ while the uneducated Samaritan would be considered one of the ‘simple’. Luke highlights the irony that the intellectually ‘simple’ have *deeply intelligent* hearts. This story distills the commandments into two; 1) Love God...2) Love neighbor. The story of the Samaritan tells the reader how to love neighbor. The story of Mary and Martha follows this one and that story tells us how to love God.
  
- 2) This story finds its parallels in Mark 12:28-34 and Matthew 22:34-40. All stories have a lawyer asking Jesus a question. The Jewish lawyer would have had intensive training in the Torah (the first 5 books of scripture containing the law (especially Leviticus and Deuteronomy)). The lawyer would have spent hours discussing such questions with other learned people. He asks, “Teacher....what must I do to inherit eternal life?” In some ways this is a strange question because ‘inheritance’ is in the hands of the giver (in this case God...and not all graces can be earned...for example, God promised Israel the promised land, but not every Israelite entered it.) We can be tempted at times to think that our witness (or reward) depends upon fancy theological answers to difficult questions, when God knows that it depends more upon the quality of our love. When has God challenged you to offer a better quality of love? How has that strengthened your witness?
  
- 3) Jesus answers the challenge with a challenge; “What is written in the law? What do you read there?” (v. 26). Jesus is basically saying, “You have spent your life studying these things. You are the expert. You tell Me!” Jesus’ answer naturally directs the discussion toward the scriptures. And so the lawyer dutifully answers with scripture, “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.” The Pharisee takes his answer from two scriptures (Deuteronomy 6:5) and Leviticus 19:18. The two commandments that the lawyer has sited are so ‘global in nature’ that nobody could honestly claim to have kept them. Jesus responds to him, “do this and you will live;” which of course, implies that the lawyer is not living these commands to the fullest (as nobody is...). In what way do we need to ask for God’s grace to fulfill His commands for our

lives? In what way(s) do we rely on the sacraments, prayer, scripture and community to fulfill His commands for us?

- 4) The 'heart' refers to the emotions, 'soul' - to vitality and consciousness, 'strength' to power and drive, 'mind' to intelligence. When was there a time in your life when you engaged God and loved God with and through the depth of your emotions, vitality/consciousness, power/drive and intelligence? Was that a particularly fruitful time in your life? Why? What is the correlation between giving of yourself to God and fruitfulness in Him?
- 5) These commandments call us to love God, to love our neighbors, but also to love ourselves. If we have a healthy self-love, self-respect in relation to God and others, it makes it much easier to love others. When in your life have you found it difficult to love others? Does that time correspond to a time when you were having difficulty loving yourself? How are the two linked for you?
- 6) "Who is my neighbor?" (almost could be perceived as a snide intellectual remark). The Pharisee might have liked the discussion to stay on an intellectual/philosophical level so that he would not have to reflect upon the fact that God is calling Him to reach out to people beyond his own kind. The question that the Pharisee is *really* asking is "The definition of 'neighbor' is really only the Jewish people, right?" Jesus gives the real answer that our neighbor is anyone in need through the parable. How does Jesus bring the point home in a perfect way to this person? In what ways do we need to revisit such a parable in our own lives? Who is our neighbor?
- 7) What kind of person makes you tempted to walk across the street in order to avoid them? Why? When have you been the Samaritan? When have you been the person 'laying in the ditch'? When have you been the person walking across the road to avoid the person in the ditch? What was your experience of each of those roles?
- 8) This passage opens with the prescriptions that we are all to 1) Love the Lord our God with all that we are, 2) to love our neighbors and 3) to love ourselves. What is your experience of how these 3 kinds of love are connected and reinforce each other? How is our capacity to love God (i.e. adoration) related to our capacity to **allow** ourselves to be loved **by** Him and to pass that love on to others?
- 9) The text tells us that the Samaritan was moved with compassion to reach out to the man laying half-dead in the ditch. Not only did the Samaritan have the courage and the care to get close enough to the man to see that he was still alive and needed help. But he allowed himself to be moved (literally 'moved by the

very deepest bowels of his being') to do something. The Samaritan was in touch with his own humanity to allow God to move the very depths of his being and cause him to reach out. How is being in touch with our own humanity related to our being able to be powerful agents of God's love for others?

- 10) At the end of the text Jesus asks the Pharisee "Who was the neighbor to the man in the ditch?" The Pharisee answers, "The one who showed mercy." This particular word for "mercy" is only used one other time Luke's Gospel (Lk 1:72—during the canticle of Zechariah) where Zechariah is speaking about God's Mercy on all of Israel throughout all the ages. The Pharisee would have been quite aware of his choice of words; he knows that the Samaritan was showing **God's love** and mercy to the man. How are *we* called to allow God's Love to move through us to others? How is being in touch with our own humanity a necessary means to that particular end?
  
- 11) Let us pray that we will always know Jesus as, 1) the One who comes to us in need....2) the Stirrer of our compassion to respond, and 3) as the Powerful Love of God inside of us that He has given us to give to others in need. Amen.