

GO AND DO LIKEWISE

Luke 10:25-42

Key Verse: 10:37

“The expert in the law replied, ‘The one who had mercy on him.’ Jesus told him, ‘Go and do likewise.’”

On April 8, 1983 my father passed away by heart attack. I and my mother and siblings went to the hospital chapel to weep and pray. I didn't know the Bible very well then. But I knew one story that reminded me of my father: The Good Samaritan. So I asked the hospital chaplain, “Where is the Good Samaritan story in the Bible?” Unfortunately, he did not know his Bible very well either. He said, “I'm sorry, I don't know.” Please don't make the same mistake if someone asks you where is the Good Samaritan story in the Bible. It is only in one of the gospels: Luke. And it is in chapter 10, like your 10 fingers. Now you will never forget: Luke chapter 10.

The Good Samaritan is perhaps the most famous parable Jesus ever told, or the Prodigal Son, which is in Luke 15, coming up soon. The Good Samaritan story is so simple that even a child can understand it. Yet it is so deep and has us all struggling to practice it. Especially in our busy-busy lives, we have too many excuses not to be like the Good Samaritan. Actually, Jesus doesn't call him “good.” Jesus doesn't give any adjective to describe him. Rather, Jesus only describes nine beautiful things the man did for the wounded man. The expert in the law adds a tenth action description saying, “The one who had mercy on him.” May we, by the grace of God, **“Go and do likewise.”** But we have to be careful about doing many things for Jesus. Sometimes it's best for us to sit at Jesus' feet and delight in his presence, rather than trying to do many things for him. May God help us to do so. May God bring a revival to our nation as we listen and learn the mind and heart of Jesus and practice his love.

I. Help from an unexpected person (25-37)

The last passage ended with Jesus saying in verse 24, **“For I tell you that many prophets and kings wanted to see what you see but did not see it, and to hear what you hear but did not hear it.”** Now we are about to hear one of the most famous short stories ever told.

Look at verse 25. On one occasion an expert in the law stood up to test Jesus. **“Teacher,” he asked, “what must I do to inherit eternal life?”** The

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Pharisees and experts in the law, that is, the religious elite of Jesus' day, were not on good terms with Jesus. They were his top critics and opponents. They were determined not to see Jesus rise to any position of prominence and power, for to do so would mean loss of position and prestige for themselves. It is because Jesus didn't go through the normal channels to aspire to a position of power and influence. Neither did John the Baptist. The authority of John and Jesus came directly from God. That kind of authority and power will always be opposed by people steeped in the ways of the world. It goes against our human nature of the rat race to the top, the survival of the fittest, the conquest of the smartest or strongest or richest.

It was an expert in the law who came to Jesus. He excelled in Bible knowledge, the law of God. He memorized the first five books of the Bible—Genesis, Exodus, Leviticus, Numbers and Deuteronomy, and the 613 laws and commands of Judaism.

He stood up to test Jesus with a question, and he called Jesus “Teacher.” As we know, there are two ways to ask question. One way is to genuinely want to know the answer. The other way is to have an answer already in your mind. We call it a leading question. Usually leading questions are given by those who want to teach something. Preachers and teachers and parents often give leading questions. Jesus often asked questions, not to humiliate people, but to lead people into discovery of truth, grace, beauty, reality, the things of God.

The expert in the law asked, “**Teacher, what must I do to inherit eternal life?**” This is a great question. What does it mean to “inherit eternal life”? The Greek word for inherit has the meaning of “to receive a portion or lot by right of inheritance.” In English, to inherit something requires family ties. But it also includes the notion of deserving something. Of course, children who are in good standing with a rich father all receive a rich inheritance.

But what does it mean to “inherit eternal life”? Similar expressions are to “enter the kingdom of God” and to “be saved from destruction.” This important question about our eternal destination and well-being baffles philosophers, poets, musicians and writers who try to answer or express it.

Jesus could have said many things. Then what did he say? He asked a question back: “**What is written in the Law?**” he replied. “**How do you read it?**” Jesus directed his attention back to the Bible, the law of God, this man's area

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of expertise. Jesus pointed the man to the source of the knowledge of eternal life, the Bible.

Now it was this man's turn to answer Jesus. He 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.’**” The man quoted Deuteronomy 6:5 about loving God with all one's heart, soul, strength and mind, and Leviticus 19:18 about loving your neighbor as yourself.

Jesus taught on another occasion that these are the two greatest and most important commandments in the law. So the man answered quite well and Jesus accepted the answer. **“You have answered correctly,” Jesus replied. “Do this and you will live.”** Loving God and loving people is the essence of the Bible. Jesus said that all the Law and Prophets hang on these two commandments (Mt 22:40).

So far, so good. Love God and love people and inherit eternal life. There's just one problem: how do we know if we love God and people enough? After all, no one really loves God with all their heart, soul, mind and strength. And no one really loves their neighbor as themselves. Do they? Aren't we all too selfish and worldly to live up to these two commandments? Then how much love is love enough, or what does that love look like practically? The rest of the Bible has much to say about that, by way of explanation and articulation.

The man answered his own question, but he wasn't satisfied. He still had a nagging question, or perhaps another leading question. Verse 29 says, **“But he wanted to justify himself, so he asked Jesus, ‘And who is my neighbor?’**” He wanted to know who he was obligated to love as himself. Usually a neighbor is defined as someone who lives near or next to you, or someone you know personally. The man wanted to prove himself right, that he was doing fine in loving his neighbor as himself. This question: **“Who is my neighbor?”** preceded Jesus' famous Parable of the Good Samaritan in verses 30-35:

“In reply Jesus said: ‘A man was going down from Jerusalem to Jericho, when he was attacked by robbers. They stripped him of his clothes, beat him and went away, leaving him half dead. A priest happened to be going down the same road, and when he saw the man, he passed by on the other side. So too, a Levite, when he came to the place and saw him, passed by on the other side. But a Samaritan, as he traveled, came where the man was; and when he saw him, he took pity on him. He went to him and bandaged his wounds,

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pouring on oil and wine. Then he put the man on his own donkey, brought him to an inn and took care of him. The next day he took out two denarii 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.’”

It is a sad truth that we live in a world of tragedies: not just natural ones like hurricanes, floods, earthquakes and tornadoes, but human-made ones like theft, robbery, assault and murder. Justice cries out to protect the innocent and punish the guilty.

A man, presumably Jewish for he was traveling between two Judean cities, was mugged, beaten and left half dead on the roadside. Remember there were no cars or cell phones in Jesus’ day. So to call 9-1-1 was not an option. The shocking sadness is that both a priest and a Levite did not help the dying man, even though they were religious men who would be expected to do something to help him. Rather, they went out of their way to avoid the man. Why might they do so? We don’t for sure. Maybe they were afraid that they too would be robbed and beaten up. Maybe they thought it was a setup. Maybe they thought the man had done something evil and God gave him what he deserved. Maybe, like so many Americans, including myself, they were just too busy to stop and do something that was not on their schedule.

The hero was quite unexpected: a Samaritan. As already said, he is not described by adjectives but by actions: first he came where the wounded man was. He saw him and took pity or “had compassion” on him. He did not avoid him, but went to him and bandaged his wounds, pouring on oil and wine. The man was too wounded to walk so he put him on his donkey, and brought him to a motel and took care of him overnight. The next day he gave 2 days’ wages for the innkeeper to look after him. And he promised to pay any extra expense on his return. The man was a wonderful friend and brother to the wounded man. But as far as we know, they were total strangers to each other. How could he treat the man like that? He could do so when he saw the man as precious. The Samaritan put himself in the wounded man’s place. He loved him as himself. And he was a Samaritan, a foreigner, a man of a different race.

What a beautiful story! We are moved to live like this, to be like this, to have a loving, caring, giving heart and actions like this. But it is our human nature to protect and preserve ourselves, to be selfish and self-centered. A child learns at a young age to scream when they want something and to say, “Mine!” Occasionally we hear and see beautiful things that people do for others.

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A young man was working in an ice cream shop. He saw a blind man drop \$20 on the floor. A woman saw it, picked it up and put it in her purse. The young man asked her to give the money back to the blind man. She refused. So he asked her to leave the store. Then the young man took out of his wallet and gave \$20 to the blind man.

A high school boy saw on the news that an old woman was robbed of several hundred dollars. He saw the photo of the criminal. It was his estranged father and his father had just given him \$250 to go on a school band trip. The boy went to the old woman, and apologized for his father's crime and gave her the money that his dad gave him for the school band trip. She accepted his apology and his payback money. They hugged. Then she gave him back the money and said, "Enjoy your school band trip. Thanks for doing a wonderful thing!"

A man was driving to work on a very long bridge in Louisiana when he saw a car in the water over the rail. He immediately stopped his car, dove over the rail and saved a man from drowning. He stayed with the man until ropes could pull them both up to safety with the help of many other people who stopped.

These are beautiful deeds which we all can do and should do. Still, we have so many excuses not to do so: fear, busyness, limited resources. We are quick to count the cost and with a pragmatic mind we weigh the benefit. No one is perfectly like this Good Samaritan. But there is one, Jesus Christ, who did all this and more. Jesus poured out not oil and wine but his own blood to save us and heal us and give us new life.

After telling the story, Jesus asked the law expert: "**Which of these three do you think was a neighbor to the man who fell into the hands of robbers?**" Even a child could answer correctly. The expert in the law replied, "**The one who had mercy on him.**" Samaritan and Jews were not on good terms in Jesus' day. They did not associate with one another. But this was a wonderful Samaritan with a loving and caring heart. It was help from a very unexpected person. It seems hard to find such a person. But we all have the potential to be like this Good Samaritan, like Jesus, by the love and grace of God.

So Jesus told him, "**Go and do likewise.**" It seems obvious that the expert in the law is being equated with the priest or Levite in the parable. Hopefully, he was convicted of his selfishness and racism and decided to put Jesus' words of truth and love into practice. In Bible study, I heard another profound possibility. Perhaps the expert in the law was really spiritually like the wounded man who was half

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dead and in need of help and healing and the road to recovery. Jesus, as the Good Samaritan, was despised by many, but he still stopped to help him even with this parable. Jesus was so wise in bringing people into the truth and grace that saves.

What if Jesus is the wounded man? Would you stop to help him? What if the person was a family member? I'm sure none of us would hesitate to stop and help, from our hearts. An experiment was done to see if people at a busy city intersection would stop to help someone. A man dressed like a homeless person pretended to have a heart attack and fell slowly to the ground. No one stopped to help. A man dressed in a suit did the same thing, pretending to have a heart attack. People helped him immediately. The experiment showed that people easily attach worth or significance or value to people based on their social status or appearance.

The Bible says that we too were not just dying but dead in our transgressions and sins, and that God made us alive with Christ through faith in him. By his grace, we can participate with him in his healing, saving ministry. By his mercy and help we can go and do likewise, by helping those who are wounded and dying in sin and meaninglessness without Christ and without hope. May we grow in his mind and heart and action for even one wounded, dying soul.

II. Choose what is better (38-42)

Sometimes we just need to do what we already know, as Jesus just taught. But sometimes doing something, even doing something for Jesus, is not the best thing.

Look at verses 38-40. **“As Jesus and his disciples were on their way, he came to a village where a woman named Martha opened her home to him. She had a sister called Mary, who sat at the Lord’s feet listening to what he said. But Martha was distracted by all the preparations that had to be made. She came to him and asked, ‘Lord, don’t you care that my sister has left me to do the work by myself? Tell her to help me!’”**

Martha and Mary were very different sisters in their approaches to Jesus' visit. Martha sounds like the older sister who set the example at home. She was good at cooking and cleaning and welcoming guests. Her love language was Acts of Service. Mary on the other hand was a bit aloof and full of daydreaming. Her love language seems to be Quality Time. While Martha was running around in the kitchen to try to prepare dinner for their guests Jesus and his disciples, Mary just

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sat at Jesus' feet listening to him. Mary was so engrossed in spending time with Jesus that she didn't offer to help her sister Martha in the kitchen.

Martha exploded in a rage, complaining to Jesus about Mary: **“Lord, don't you care that my sister has left me to do the work by myself? Tell her to help me!”** By the sound of her words, she must've expected Jesus to say, “Mary, you heard your sister, go and do what she says.” To Martha's surprise, that is not what Jesus said.

How did Jesus respond? **“Martha, Martha,” the Lord answered, “you are worried and upset about many things, but few things are needed—or indeed only one. Mary has chosen what is better, and it will not be taken away from her.”**

It is not bad to do things for Jesus. Martha's problem was that she was distracted by many things and she got worried and upset. If our spirit or attitude is not right in what we are doing for Jesus, it defeats the purpose of doing something for Jesus in the first place. A complaining or grumpy spirit is not pleasing to God and does not encourage or help others.

Jesus wants us to delight in his word and in his presence like Mary did. Humanly, Mary looked lazy since she was not helping to prepare many things. But he sitting at Jesus' feet and sponging up his word was beautiful and delightful to Jesus.

Mary chose the word of Jesus. That was the better choice. Sometimes we work hard for Jesus, doing many things. But we have to be careful. First we have to check our attitude again and again. Am I worried and upset, or angry or complaining? Then I need to repent and fix my bad attitude. Do I delight in Jesus' word and presence more than doing things for Jesus in an attempt to have a sense of accomplishment? Am I serving him out of love or mere duty? As Jesus taught how loving our neighbor as ourselves looks, is he also showing us here how loving God looks?

Go and do likewise. Listen to Jesus' word and delight in spending time with him. May our Lord help us to do so. May a revival of loving God and loving people sweep across our land, including us.