

## Series: *The Parables of Jesus*

# The Parable of the Good Samaritan

Racial Reconciliation Sunday

### Luke 10:25-37 (ESV)

Reading by Jerome Garciano

**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.”

### Introduction: The Question (25-28)

The parable of the Good Samaritan does not begin in verse thirty. It begins in verse 25. This parable is told as a result of a series of questions put to Jesus by a lawyer. He is not a lawyer in the same sense that we would think of a lawyer today. This man was not an attorney. He was an expert in the Mosaic Law, or what Jews call the Torah, what we call the Pentateuch. We have to have the context in order to understand the meaning of this parable.

### To Put Him To The Test

We are told (v.25) that this **lawyer stood up to put him to the test**. In Jesus’ day it was customary for the teacher to be seated and those who were being taught would stand out of respect for the teacher. We saw this in our text last week.

### Matthew 13:2

*And great crowds gathered about him, so that he got into a boat and sat down. And the whole crowd stood on the beach.*

We see this lawyer stands in keeping with the traditional sign of respect.<sup>1</sup> However, Luke offers us insight into his motive. Outwardly he is showing respect, but inwardly he does not respect Jesus. His motive is to examine Jesus and **to put him to the test**. This is the same phrase that was used by Jesus (**Luke 4:12**) when was tempted by Satan. At that time, Jesus quoted **Deut. 6:16**, “You shall not put the Lord your God to the test.” He’s trying to catch Jesus in His own words. He’s trying to trap Jesus.

### Outline of the Dialogue

The lawyer asks Jesus a question. Jesus responds with a question of His own. The lawyer then answers Jesus’ question. Jesus commends the lawyer’s answer and gives the lawyer a command. The lawyer then retorts with a second question. Jesus then tells the parable of the Good Samaritan in response to the lawyer’s second question. Jesus concludes the parable with His own second question. He then follows the lawyer’s response with a second command.

Lawyer:	Question 1	“How do I inherit eternal life?”	v.25
Jesus:	answers with question 1	“What is written in the law?”	v.26
Lawyer:	Answered Jesus	“Love God... love neighbor”	v.27
Jesus:	Affirmed lawyer’s answer	Gave command 1: “do this & you will live”	v.28
Lawyer:	Question 2	“who is my neighbor?”	v.29
Jesus:	Answered with parable		v.29-35
	Question 2	“Who was neighbor?”	v.36
Lawyer:	Answer:	“the one who showed mercy”	v.37
Jesus:	2 <sup>nd</sup> command:	“Go and do likewise”	v.38

### What Must I Do?

The lawyer asks Jesus a question, “Teacher, what must I do to inherit eternal life?” “Literally, the text reads, ‘By doing what shall I inherit eternal life?’ (ποιησας ζωην αιωνιου κληρονομησω).”<sup>2</sup> Notice that the emphasis is clearly on his own ‘doing.’

It’s an interesting question isn’t it? An inheritance is what you receive as a gift from someone else. You do not have to ‘do’ anything to receive an inheritance, do you? Here’s the definition of ‘inherit:’

- To receive money, property, or a title, as an heir at the death of the previous holder

<sup>1</sup>Kenneth E. Bailey, *Jesus Through Middle Eastern Eyes* (Downers Grove: Intervarsity Press, 2008) p. 286.

<sup>2</sup> A.T. Robertson, *Robertson’s Word Pictures In The New Testament*, Vol. 6 (Nashville: Broadman Press, 1932) in digital Bible study software MacSword ver. 1.4.3.

- To derive genetically from one's parents or ancestors
- To come into possession of (belongings) from someone else
- To come into possession of as a right (amazingly this very verse 10:25 was quoted in the dictionary that came installed on my computer<sup>3</sup>).

### **Dad, What About My Inheritance?**

Imagine asking your father this question. "Dad, what do I have to do to receive my inheritance?" Dad then replies, "Well, first, you have to be my son. Second, I have to include you in my will. I have to write your name down as one who will receive some of my possessions after I die. Third, I have to actually die for the will to be executed and my possessions disbursed."

Receiving an inheritance does not depend on you to do anything. It ultimately depends upon someone's doings and not at all on your doings. "Inheritance is not payment for services rendered."<sup>4</sup> Someone else must decide that he wants to give you something and then that someone must write it down in a legal document. And then there must be the death of that person. This is a curious way to phrase the question, but then again his putting Jesus to the test.

### **What Is Written In the Law?**

Jesus knows exactly what is going on. He responds by asking a question of His own and thus **putting the lawyer to the test**. He asks, "*What is written in the law? How do you read it?*" This man is a lawyer, so Jesus takes him right back to the law. God's word tells us how to have eternal life. The question is have we rightly understood it.

#### **Luke 10:27-28**

*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.*"*

Jesus tells him that he got it right. He answered correctly. The lawyer quoted two Old Testament passages. And he got them in the right order. First, he quoted **Deut 6:4** which says that we should love God with the entirety of our being. Then he quoted **Lev 19:18** in which we find the command to "love your neighbor as yourself." The lawyer rightly put the obligation to love God before the obligation to love neighbor even though the book of Deuteronomy follows the book of Leviticus.

### **Do This And You Will Live**

This lawyer already knew the answer to his own question. And Jesus answered him by quoting **Lev 18:5** which he sums up by saying, "*Do this, and you will live.*" Jesus has now answered the lawyer's original question, "By doing what, shall I inherit eternal life?" Loving God with the whole of ones being and loving neighbor would result in eternal life. Eternal life comes not by 'doing' but by loving.

### **The Lawyer's Second Question:**

We might assume that the conversation would be over. He now had his answer. But the conversation is not over because the lawyer already knew the answer. The lawyer has a second question.

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<sup>3</sup> Apple Dictionary, Version 2.1.1 (80.1) Copyright © 2005–2009 Apple Inc.

<sup>4</sup> Bailey, p. 286.

## Luke 10:29

29 But he, desiring to justify himself, said to Jesus, “And who is my neighbor?”

### He Desired to Justify Himself

Luke tells us that he **desired to justify himself**. To be justified means to be accepted by God. It means to be found righteous and acceptable in God’s presence. It means you are considered worthy of eternal life with God. *This man wanted the basis of his acceptance by God to be grounded in what he himself had done.* He wanted to be justified by his own ‘doings.’ He wanted his own works to be the ground of his justification.

### And Who Is My Neighbor?

And so he asks the question, “**And who is my neighbor?**” He wants a list to keep. He’s asking for a checklist so he can keep track of his religious progress. A list would enable him to take pride in his own accomplishments. “So how about it Jesus, tell me exactly who is my neighbor?” He is asking the question in order to limit the list. His goal is to narrow down the potential candidates for neighbor. This lawyer would most certainly know what was written in the Law.

## Leviticus 19:18

*You shall not take vengeance or bear a grudge against the sons of your own people, but you shall love your neighbor as yourself: I am the LORD.*

So certainly he knows that neighbor includes **the sons of your own people**. And he probably has in mind the people of his own village, but how far does this law extend? “He saw that it meant more than the man next door, but how much more?”<sup>5</sup> There is no doubt that this was a hot topic among the rabbis at the local synagogue. There were many opinions and interpretations about what exactly this meant. Add to this the other commands in the law that includes foreigners living among the Jews.

## Leviticus 19:33-34

33 “When a stranger sojourns with you in your land, you shall not do him wrong. 34 You shall treat the stranger who sojourns with you as the native among you, and you shall love him as yourself, for you were strangers in the land of Egypt: I am the LORD your God.”

God wanted His children to love the foreign strangers who lived among them just as much as they themselves and loved their own families. This is amazing!! They were not to treat anyone like a stranger or a foreigner because they themselves had once been strangers. God did not want them to forget where they came from. He wanted them to remember what it was like to be a foreigner so that they would then in turn have compassion on foreigners.

So at best this lawyer would have limited ‘neighbor’ to **the sons of your own people** and **the stranger who sojourns with you in your land**. Yet he was curious to know where Jesus would draw the line.

### Why No Question About Loving God?

What is incredibly puzzling to me is why didn’t he ask for more clarity on the first issue – loving God?

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<sup>5</sup> Leon Morris. *Luke*, in *The Tyndale New Testament Commentary*, Vol. 3. (Downers Grove: Intervarsity Press, 1988), p. 207.

Why did he not ask, what does it mean to love God with all my heart and soul? Or how am I to love God with all my strength? Does that mean every time I use my muscles I'm to thank God for giving them to me or tell people I got them from God? Or how do I love God with all my mind? Does that mean I can only think about Jewish things or only about religious things?

But he does not ask for any clarifying questions related to loving God. *Are we to then conclude that he thinks he's already got that one under control? Does he think that he is already obeying that command?* This is shocking. I wonder, are you inclined to think you're obeying that command when you read it? Look at it one more time.

#### **Luke 10:27**

*"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."*

God expects this command to be kept at all times because He is worthy of this command at all times. Can anyone honestly say that you are presently loving God with all your heart? All of it? And with all of your soul? All of it? And with all of our strength? All of it? And with all of your mind? All of it? Right now in the past 10 minutes has all of your mind been lovingly directed toward God the Father? Or have you been mentally striving to keep focused on this passage of Scripture. Have you not been fighting the temptation to be thinking, "how long's this service going to last? Or I wonder how the kids are doing? Or I wonder what's for lunch? Or I wonder what's happening in the Olympics? Or what is happening in Afghanistan?

The standard that God expects is that we will always be doing that command, loving Him with all heart, soul, strength, and mind. And if we will be honest, **we cannot keep this command?** Who can stand before the Holy LORD of the universe and with confidence say, "I have obeyed this command?" Yet this command expresses how worthy and valuable God truly is and therefore He deserves the whole of our being. Yet again and again we fail to give do this.

This lawyer passes over the first command and moves on to the second command to love neighbor. He wants more clarity on exactly who neighbor is. He thinks he's already got the first command down, now he can focus on the second command by specifically identifying exactly who qualifies as 'neighbor.' This lawyer thinks he can justify himself, so he's looking for Jesus to give him a list of who qualifies as neighbor so that he can keep it and in his own efforts attain eternal life.

### **The Parable: The Story (29-36)**

In response to the lawyer's second question, Jesus tells him a story. He tells this parable in answer to the question 'who is my neighbor?' not in answer to the question 'what must I do to inherit eternal life?'

#### **A Man Was Going Down From Jerusalem to Jericho (v.30)**

Jesus tells the story of man who was traveling from Jerusalem to Jericho. It is assumed that this man is a Jew. Jesus says he was going down because the 17-mile journey from Jerusalem to Jericho descends more than 3,000 feet.<sup>6</sup> The barren road is lined with steep rocky walls, cliffs, and caves which provide excellent hiding places for thieves and robbers.

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<sup>6</sup> Morris, p. 207.

The term **fell among robbers** carries the idea of landing in the middle of and being surrounded by robbers. They beat him (i.e. repeated blows) half to death. This beating went on for a little while. This was a horribly violent scene. Then they took everything he owned including his clothes. He's left unconscious, naked, bleeding, and dying at the side of the road.

## The Priest

Luke 11:31

*Now by chance a priest was going down that road, and when he saw him he passed by on the other side.*

Three classes of people, priests, Levites, and laymen served the temple in Jerusalem.<sup>7</sup> Priests were assisted by the Levites and Jewish laymen in turn assisted the Levites.

Jesus said, by chance a priest came to where this unfortunate man had fallen. If you listening to this story, this is good news. Help is on the way. Surely a priest, a man of God will provide some help.

The priest was **going down** which means he was headed in the same direction as the man who had been robbed. He was leaving Jerusalem and making the descent down toward Jericho. The Middle Eastern listeners would probably assumed that he had just completed his priestly service rotation and was now heading home.

Priests were the descendants of Aaron. They were responsible for knowing and doing the law. They were responsible for conducting the sacrifices and performing all the duties of the required rituals involved in temple worship. Priests were very influential men and highly esteemed by their fellow Jews. They were among the upper class and were wealthy. This priest would not have been walking. "A Middle Eastern listener to the story would have assumed that the rich priest was riding"<sup>8</sup> on a donkey or a mule.

However, this priest steers his mount **on the other side** and **passed by** the wounded man. The word means he went nowhere near the man. He went to the opposite side of the road. He moved as far away from him as he possibly could and the passed the man by. He chose not to touch the man or offer any kind of assistance whatsoever. He simply chose not to get involved.

This priest knew the law. He knew what the law said about helping people in need. He knew what the law commanded about caring for neighbor and yet he did not help. Why not?

The law also said that priests were not to touch anything unclean.<sup>9</sup> If this man was dead and the priest touched him, then he would have been ceremonially unclean and the process of purification was a week long. This would have forced him to turn around and go back to Jerusalem for cleansing. This would have seriously broken into any travel plans and delayed his return to his family.

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<sup>7</sup> Bailey, p. 292. See footnote 8: "The Greek word *hyperetes* means 'servant, helper, assistant.' This word often appears in connection with the Temple and is translated 'officer,' 'guard,' or 'servant' (Mt 26:58; Mk 14:54; Jn 7:32; 18:3, 18)."

<sup>8</sup> Ibid.

<sup>9</sup> Leviticus 21:1ff.

## No Clothes & No Words

In making his decision, the priest faced another difficulty. This man is naked and unconscious. There is no way of identifying this man. He has no cloths so it is impossible to determine where he is from and what his social status is. If he was a foreigner who lived outside Israel then the priest had no legal obligation to care for him. Furthermore, he cannot speak so language and accent provide no help in identifying him either. So the priest decides he should not touch the man.

We are left wondering, ‘what will happen to the man now.’ We are disappointed that the priest did not help. Jesus continues telling the story.

## The Levite

**Luke 10:32**

*So likewise a Levite, when he came to the place and saw him, passed by on the other side.*

The hearts of the listeners are again lifted. Here comes someone else to help this man. A Levite. Surely he will help?

Sadly, the Levite follows in the footsteps of the priest. He sees the man and then crosses to the opposite side of the road, getting as far away from him as he could, and then passes him by. One wonders, how far behind the priest was the Levite? Did the Levite know that the priest was ahead of him? Remember the Levites were assistants to the priests. It is conceivable that these two had been serving in the Temple together.

Perhaps the Levite chose not to help because he’s simply following the example of the priest. The priest knows the law and if he chose not to touch the guy, then, says the Levite, ‘neither will I.’ So he passes by the wounded man and leaves him still bleeding lying naked and unconscious in the dirt.

The disappointment returns, as the listeners are again let down. No one will help this man. Yet Jesus is not finished. He continues the story.

**Luke 10:33**

*33 But a Samaritan, as he journeyed, came to where he was, and when he saw him, he had compassion.*

This statement is a shock. Jesus’ interjection here of a Samaritan would not have been expected. One commentator said the idea of a Samaritan being next would have been “devastating”<sup>10</sup> to Jewish listeners. They would have expected the next man down the road to be a Jewish layman. Jesus had mentioned a priest and then a Levite, now a Jewish layman was the natural expectation. Yet Jesus utterly throws a curveball.

## A Priest, A Rabbi, and an Orangutan

We do this when we tell jokes like, “Three clerics get on a plane, a priest, a rabbi, and a preacher ...” We expect this. However Jesus shocks the system. A modern equivalent may be something like, “Three guys get on a plane, a priest, a rabbi, and an orangutan.” We don’t expect the orangutan!

The mention of a Samaritan would have been like having a bucket of icy cold water thrown on you while you’re taking a hot, steamy shower. It takes your breath away. The mention of a Samaritan as

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<sup>10</sup> Morris, p. 208.

the one having compassion when the priest and the Levite didn't would have had the same effect.

### The Historical Hatred Between Jews and Samaritans

Samaritans were absolutely hated by Jews. John tells us that in Jesus' day "*Jews have no dealings with Samaritans*" (John 4:9). None. No dealings whatsoever. The hatred went back to 722 B.C. when the northern kingdom of Israel, of which Samaria had become the capital<sup>11</sup>, fell to the Assyrians. Most of the Jewish inhabitants were carried into exile. The Assyrians then moved into to rule and govern. Eventually the Jews who remained in Samaria intermarried with the Gentile Assyrians and embraced their pagan idolatry.

In 586 B.C. Jerusalem and the southern kingdom fell to the Babylonians and once again most Jews were carried away into exile. The Babylonians were conquered by Cyrus in 539 B.C. The following year Cyrus allowed the exiled Jews to return to Jerusalem and rebuild the Temple. As the rebuilding of the Temple and later the walls of Jerusalem began, the Samaritans offered to help. Their help was rejected since in the eyes of the returning exiles they had become both racially and religiously impure. The shunned Samaritans then built their own temple on Mt. Gerizim.

The tensions continued rise throughout the generations. In 128 B.C. Jewish leader John Hyrcanus destroyed the Samaritan's temple.<sup>12</sup> The Samaritans then defiled the Jewish temple by scattering dead men's bones in it during Passover somewhere between A.D. 6 to 9.<sup>13</sup> This would have taken place when Jesus was little boy.

The hatred was so deep that Jews traveling from Judea to Galilee would not the quicker route through Samaria but would instead would chose to add a day to the journey by passing completely around the city which necessitated crossing the Jordan River.<sup>14</sup> Jews viewed Samaritans "to be in a continual state of uncleanness."<sup>15</sup> Jews so detested the Samaritans they didn't even want the dust of Samaria to touch their shoes. The most offensive name you could call any Jew was to be called a Samaritan. This is what Jesus' opponents called him.

### John 8:48

*The Jews answered him, Are we not right in saying that you are a Samaritan and have a demon?*

### Shocking Compassion

So perhaps now you may have a feel for how shocking it was for those hearing this story to be expecting Jesus to mention a Jewish laymen, but instead to have him insert a Samaritan. The priest and the Levite had no compassion for this wounded, broken, and beaten man. But this Samaritan did. When he saw the man, **he had compassion on him**. He was moved in his heart for this dying Jew who, under normal circumstances, most likely would not have even wanted to be on the same road as this Samaritan. When he saw this man, he went to him. He had compassion on him because it just as easily could have been him who had been robbed an beaten.

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<sup>11</sup> Following the division of the united kingdom under Solomon's son, Rehoboam, his successor, Omri fortified Samaria making it the capitol of the northern kingdom (1 Kings 16:24ff).

<sup>12</sup> Colin G. Kruse *John*, in *The Tyndale New Testament Commentary*, Vol. 4. (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2003), p. 137.

<sup>13</sup> Ibid.

<sup>14</sup> *The ESV Study Bible*, (Wheaton: Crossway Bibles, 2008) p. 2027.

<sup>15</sup> *The ESV Study Bible*, (Wheaton: Crossway Bibles, 2008) p. 2027.



### **Luke 10:34-35**

*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.'*

### **He Cared for His Wounds**

The Samaritan went to him and cared for his wounds. He used whatever he had, oil and wine and he anointed his wounds. He most likely did not have a first aid kit filled with bandages with him. He probably took out some of his own clothes and tore them up to use as bandages. He then would have had to dress the man.

### **He Took Him to an Inn**

Still unconscious, he laid the man on his donkey while he himself walked. He walked the man down to Jericho and found an inn. Inns were located in villages.<sup>16</sup> Kenneth Bailey who lived for 60 years in the Middle East wrote, "The Samaritan then risks his life by transporting the wounded man to a inn within Jewish territory. A Samaritan would not have been safe in a Jewish town with a wounded Jew over the back of his riding animal. Community vengeance may be enacted against the Samaritan, even if he had saved the life of the Jew. I have read of and personally witnessed these grim realities in the Middle East."<sup>17</sup>

Bailey likens this to a scene from the 1830's. Imagine a Native American finding a cowboy with two arrows in his back, putting the wounded man on his horse, and then riding into Dodge City and checking into a room over the saloon. The Indian would have been blamed even if he were innocent.

We might see the same thing for the 1930's. Imagine a black man finding a battered and beaten white man along a deserted road in Alabama. Do you think the black man would have been praised when he carried the white man into the local hospital staffed by white doctors and white nurses? The black man would have been blamed even if he were innocent.

### **He Took Care of Him Over Night**

The Samaritan not only transports the man to an inn, but he spends the night caring for him. Notice verse 35. **And on the next day...** That means he watched over him all night long. The next day he gave the innkeeper two *denarii* and tells him to care for him while he heals. Estimates vary on what this amount would equate to in today's currency but the minimum is two weeks and the maximum is two months. That is amazingly generous. Have you every paid for a stranger's hotel bill for two weeks???

### **When I Return**

The Samaritan then tells the innkeeper to care for the man and whatever more it costs, he will repay it when he returns. No one would have expected the Samaritan to stay the whole night caring for the man. No one would have expected the Samaritan to then pay for the man's lodging. And no one would have expected the Samaritan to cover the additional costs much less return to make sure he

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<sup>16</sup> Bailey, p. 295.

<sup>17</sup> Ibid.

was well!!! This story is unimaginable. Only Jesus could come up with a story like this. No story since has equaled it, except the story of Jesus death and resurrection!

The robbers stole everything this man owned. The Samaritan clothed him and paid for his care out of his own pocket. The priest came by riding on a donkey but refused to have compassion on this man. The Samaritan offered his own donkey to transport this wounded man while walked along beside him. The Levite refused to heal the man's wounds, while the Samaritan used his own supplies to anoint and bandage his wounds. The priest and the Levite passed by the man leaving him to die. The Samaritan took him to an inn and spent the night caring for the man and even paying for additional cost of care. The priest and the Levite refused to even touch the man, while the Samaritan was even planning to return to visit the man.

### Go & Do Likewise (37)

Jesus then turns to the lawyer and asks His second question. "*Which of these three do you think proved to be neighbor to the man who fell among thieves?*" Jesus altered the question, didn't He? The lawyer had asked, "And who is my neighbor?" Jesus turns the tables on the lawyer and asks, "Who became like a neighbor to the wounded man?"

Remember to get at the meaning of a parable we must ask what is being compared. What is being compared in this parable? Answer: the responses of the three on the road to the sight of a dying man. The question is not "Who is my neighbor?" The real question is, "To whom will I become a neighbor?"

Notice what the lawyer's answer reveals. The lawyer so detests Samaritans that **he can't even say the name 'Samaritan.'** Look at his answer to Jesus' question.

#### Luke 10:37

He said, "The one who showed him mercy." And Jesus said to him, "*You go and do likewise.*"

He does not even refer to him by name. He does not say, "The Samaritan." He says, "the one who showed him mercy." He so hates Samaritans he doesn't even want the word on his lips!

This lawyer was quite convinced that he had the command to love God with all of his heart, soul, strength, and mind down pat. He thought he was obeying that command. He was seeking to limit the number of neighbors he had to love. Jesus tells this parable and exposes this lawyer's hatred of Samaritans. This lawyer could **NOT** justify himself! He couldn't even be nice to his distant cousins.

No one can love God at all times with all your heart, soul, strength, and mind. And no one can love neighbor like this Samaritan did. You might do this everyone once in a while, but no one loves like this all the time. Have you ever paid for a complete stranger's two-week hotel or hospital bill?

The point of the parable is to show that no one loves his neighbor as him self. Nobody does that! But that is the standard that God requires. **And if you can't love your neighbor like you should, what on earth makes you think you can love God like you should?** This is what Jesus was saying to this lawyer. He was saying in the most humbly loving way, "Son, you are completely unable to justify yourself before God."

**1 John 4:20**

*If anyone says, I love God, and hates his brother, he is a liar; for he who does not love his brother whom he has seen cannot love God whom he has not seen.*

The only person who can love God the way He deserves to be loved is His Son, Jesus. This is why our faith needs to be in Jesus. He is the only way any of us will ever be justified before God. And we are justified by God when we put our faith in His Son.

Eternal life is a gift we receive by putting our faith in Jesus. Eternal life is not the wages we earn for doing good deeds. Because in ourselves we are completely unable to do even two commands. We are unable to love God as He deserves and as we should and we are unable to love our neighbor as we should. And neighbor is anyone who is in need. Anyone no matter what color their skin or where they are from or who they are.

We are commanded to love our neighbor and we are commanded to love our enemies. Every human being has been created in the image of God no matter the color of the skin

**Genesis 1:27**

*So God created man in his own image, in the image of God He created him; male and female he created them.*

**Acts 17:26**

*[God] made from one man every nation of mankind to live on all the face of the earth...*

This little parable cuts to the heart of the racism that existed between Jews and Samaritans and blows it apart.

We don't inherit eternal life by being nice to neighbor. We receive eternal life as a gift when we love Jesus (i.e. sent by God) and what He DID (i.e. faith in Him). We are commanded to love neighbors & enemies because we were once enemies of God. We once were strangers, but now we are sons. So now we must love strangers so we can teach them how to become sons of the most high God.

**Romans 5:10**

*... while we were enemies we were reconciled to God by the death of His Son...*

The only way to live is to keep God's commandments. We will NEVER be able to keep all of His commandments. However, thanks be to God that Jesus DID keep all of the commandments. He perfectly obeyed His Father. He is the only One who deserves to live. Therefore, if we are to have life, our faith must be in Jesus.

Oh, come to Jesus and be reconciled to God. Be reconciled to your neighbor and allow the Love of Jesus to transform your life.