

Stories that Change the World

“On Love: The Parable of the Good Samaritan”

Luke 10:25-37

~ Delivered at Central Baptist Church on June 11, 2017 by Pastor Barton Priebe

INTRODUCTION

- **(SHOW SLIDE 1)** Please open your Bibles to Luke 10.
- The parable of the good Samaritan is probably the best known parable inside and outside the church but I submit to you that most people have no idea what it is really about. This is not simply a lighthearted story inviting you to bake cookies for your grandma or lend some eggs to your neighbour.
 - No, this parable encompasses your entire life. It is about the eternal state of your soul, the extent of your sin, the boundless grace of God toward you in Christ, and the way this grace transforms you to act in areas like poverty relief, sex trafficking, slavery, domestic abuse, and helping the disabled, elderly, and unborn.
 - Is that a small enough subject for you?
- Today I am going to divide this message into two parts. In part 1 I am going to explain the parable and then in part 2 I will apply the parable by drawing out three implications for life.

THE TWO MATCHING DIALOGUES

- **(SHOW SLIDE 2)** So let's begin in part 1 then by explaining the parable. The reason most people do not understand this parable is because they only know the parable itself without seeing why Jesus spoke it.
 - What you must see is that this passage is made up of two matching dialogues. In both dialogues the lawyer asks Jesus a question, Jesus responds with a question, the lawyer answers, and then Jesus concludes by answer the first question that was asked.
 - So you must see that the parable is given in the midst of this back and forth dialogue. Let's walk through it now beginning with the first dialogue.

DIALOGUE #1 – HOW DO I INHERIT ETERNAL LIFE?

- It all begins in verse 25. **READ 25a** - *And behold, a lawyer stood up to put him to the test. This Bible scholar is seeking to trap Jesus by disguising his test as a question in need of advice. **READ 25b** - *Teacher, what shall I do to inherit eternal life?**
 - This is the most important question you can ask. How can I be right with God? How can I know that God accepts me? But the very way the lawyer words his question reveals that something is wrong with him. He combines two things that cannot be combined: 'doing' and 'inheriting.' Do you work for an inheritance? No. An inheritance is freely given. You get it by being part of the right family, not by earning it.
 - But this man thinks just like most people do today. He believes that if he works hard and lives a really good life then God will accept him.
- Jesus immediately detects that something is wrong with the man's way of thinking and so in order to force this man to rethink his categories Jesus turns around and asks him a question.
 - You see, the lawyer is out to trap Jesus but Jesus plans to trap the lawyer. Jesus does not do this to harm or embarrass the man. He wants to trap him like Heather and I once trapped a small injured bird who was being attacked by crows.
 - Jesus seeks to trap all of us so that He can rescue us. It is a trap of love.
- So Jesus asks His question in verse 26. **READ 26-28** - *He said to him, “What is written in the Law? How do you read it?” 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.” And he said to him, “You have answered correctly; do this, and you will live.”* Jesus agrees with the man that all of the law can be summarized under one word: love. The whole law is about love for God and love for one's neighbour.

- Jesus is saying to the man, ***“You are correct. Love is what you need and if you do it perfectly God will accept you.”*** But this is a trap. Jesus is trying to get the man to see how far short he has fallen from this love.
 - He is trying to get us all to see that if we try to *earn* God’s favour we will never get it. Why? Because the law demands perfect love.
- And yet these two laws are good and fair are they not? If God created you, do you not owe Him your absolute love and devotion? And yet do we love God with our whole being?
 - To love God means nothing has greater preeminence in your life than Him. How are you doing at earning eternal life so far? If you are honest, not very well.
- The second law is also very fair. God simply commands you to love other people as you would want to be loved. We all believe society would work better if this happen and yet no one does it. Oh there are of course moments when you love others. You help out a soup kitchen or rake your neighbour’s leaves but love them all the time? Who does that?
 - So Jesus is saying, ***“You are correct. If you love God perfectly and love others perfectly you do not need forgiveness. You do not need grace. You will have God’s favour because you have earned it.”***
- Now what should have happened at this point? The lawyer should have fallen on the ground before Jesus like the Philippian jailor did before Paul and said, ***“Sir, what must I do to be saved?”*** He should have said, ***“Jesus have mercy on me. I thought I had loved but now I see how loveless I actually am.”***
 - Then in a great act of divine love Jesus could have said, ***“your sins are forgiven.”*** This great act of love would have flooded his heart with a love for God that would then have spilled out of his life in concrete actions of love toward other people. But the lawyer is not there yet.

DIALOGUE #2 – WHO IS MY NEIGHBOUR?

- We are now ready for dialogue #2. We read in verse 29, **READ 29** - ***But he, desiring to justify himself, said to Jesus, “And who is my neighbor?”*** This is the key to the whole text. This verse is the key to unlocking what Jesus is getting at in the parable of the good Samaritan and why many miss its whole point.
 - The lawyer does not see how much he fails to keep the first command probably because he thought loving God just meant keeping a list of rules about food laws and feasts but he does feel some guilt over the second command.
 - We know he is beginning to feel Jesus’ trap because he seeks to justify himself by asking who his neighbour actually is. In Eugene Peterson’s words ***“the examiner has become the examinee.”***¹ He feels his old categories breaking down and it scares him. If he has not loved others as well as he thought then it follows that he has not earned eternal life.
- To escape the feelings of guilt that are coming over him he wants Jesus to define ‘neighbour’ more clearly; to narrow it down to a specific list. Surely it cannot be that broad and therefore once he knows he has to love and who he does not have to love he is confident that he will pass the test and gain eternal life.
 - Eugene Peterson says, ***“Even as he is asking the question he must have been congratulating himself – ‘brilliant recovery!’”***²
 - But once again Jesus detects false categories and so once again Jesus is going to ask a question that will shatter this man’s categories. But in order to set up the question Jesus tells the parable.

THE PARABLE OF THE GOOD SAMARITAN

- **READ 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. Jericho was 29km and***

¹ Eugene Peterson, *Tell it Slant*, 38.

² Ibid, 40.

3200 feet below Jerusalem. The road was winding and rocky making it a perfect place to surprise and rob a traveler. This man was beaten within an inch of his life, left bleeding, and totally naked on the side of the road. This man is unable to help himself.

- **READ 31** - *Now by chance a priest was going down that road, and when he saw him he passed by on the other side.* Surely the priest was scared. The robbers were probably still nearby. Besides, if a priest touched a dead body he would have to go through ritual purification and this would mess up his schedule of serving at the temple.
 - He passes by and evidently the Levite, who were assistants to the priests, thought the same and did the same. **READ 32** - *So likewise a Levite, when he came to the place and saw him, passed by on the other side.*
- Jesus' hearers would have been fine with this because, like today, people enjoy pointing out the faults of religious leaders. They would have expected Jesus to now bring a normal everyday Jewish man in to save the day. But what Jesus says next sends shockwaves through the crowd.
 - **READ 33-35** - *But a Samaritan, as he journeyed, came to where he was, and when he saw him, he had compassion. 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. 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.'*
- Jews hated Samaritans and Samaritans hated Jews. Samaritans were ethnically different. They were Jews who had intermarried with foreigners. They had different religious views than Jews. They rejected all the Old Testament except for the first five books. They also rejected the temple in Jerusalem and built their own in Samaria.
 - Only 25 years before Jesus spoke this parable some Samaritans got into the temple in Jerusalem at night and scattered human bones everywhere making it unclean.
 - In John 8 the Jews show their hatred for Jesus by calling him demon possessed and a Samaritan.
- Yet Jesus makes the Samaritan the hero of the story. The Samaritan also sees the man on the road but puts his life at risk to stop and help him. He throws out whatever was on his schedule. He gets his hands dirty bandaging the man's wounds and disinfecting them with wine.
 - He gives up his own comfort putting the man on his donkey and walking alongside. He gives up his money paying the innkeeper enough money to cover food, shelter, and care for a few weeks and promises to pay any unforeseen costs that may be incurred.
 - And to top it all off, the Samaritan does this for an enemy who is ethnically and religiously different than himself.
- With such an extreme example of love, Jesus is now ready to ask His question. **READ 36-37** - *Which of these three, do you think, proved to be a neighbor to the man who fell among the robbers?" He said, "The one who showed him mercy." And Jesus said to him, "You go, and do likewise."*
 - Do you see what has happened here? Notice that Jesus has turned the question completely around. The lawyer wanted a definition so he could justify himself but in telling him to go and love like this Jesus is saying, *"The question is not 'who is my neighbour?' The question is 'am I a neighbour to the one in need?' or 'does my life prove that I love others like this?'"*
 - Jesus is saying, *"can you really love like this? Have you loved like this? Have you given up your time, your money, your comfort, and put your life at risk to help people who cannot help themselves? Do you really want to try justify yourself before God by what you do?"*
- This parable of extreme love is not first of all meant to be an example that we are to follow. In the first place this parable is meant to crush the self-justifying pride in all of us that makes us think we are good people who deserve God's favour because we have loved enough. It forces us to fall on our faces and confess, *"I have not loved like this."*

- It breaks down the pride we have in thinking we are loving people. Jesus wants to break us in order to make us whole. We will never seek a Saviour who can transform our hearts until we see our need for Him.
 - **(SHOW SLIDE 3)** Now that we understand the parable, let's turn to apply the parable. Let me show you three implications from all this.

IMPLICATION #1 – GOD'S LOVE IS INHERITED NOT EARNED

- Implication #1: **(SHOW SLIDE 4)** A Christian is one who trusts that God's love is inherited not earned.
 - An inheritance cannot be earned. You must belong to the right family. Jesus is saying that you must give up this idea that if you are really loving then you will earn God's acceptance. Jesus has tried to show you that you have utterly failed. But here is the glory of the gospel: you are more wicked than you ever thought but you are more loved than you ever imagined.
 - What you could not do for yourself, namely, love enough to earn eternal life, God has done for you in Jesus. Jesus lived the perfect life loving God and others. At the cross Jesus took your sin and in exchange God gave you Jesus' perfect record of love.
 - It is an inheritance that He freely bestows upon all who see and confess their need for it.
 - A Christian is one who trusts that God's love is inherited not earned.

IMPLICATION #2 – LOVE THROUGH SACRIFICIAL DEEDS

- Implication #2: **(SHOW SLIDE 5)** A Christian is one who sacrificially loves anyone who cannot help him or her self.
 - To paraphrase commentator Michael Wilcox keeping the law is not the way *to* life but it is the way *of* life. We do not love in order to earn God's favour but we are called to love.
- Look right at me now: Jesus says that every Christian and every church is called to do acts of mercy on behalf of those who cannot help themselves. As we see needs, we are called to intentionally give up comfort and get our hands dirty.
 - We are called to sacrificially give up our finances on behalf of those who cannot help themselves. We are called to cross boundaries of race, religion, and class. We are called to act in concrete ways.
 - I John 3:17 says, *"If anyone has material possessions and sees his brother in need but has no pity on him, how can the love of God be in him?"*
- This parable has really gotten my attention. I remember a few years ago when I was really studying it I got to attend a benefit dinner for International Justice Mission, which is a human rights agency that secures justice for victims of modern day slavery, sexual exploitation, and other forms of oppression.
 - IJM founder Gary Haugen told us about Lisa who, at 13 years old, was abducted off the streets of Cambodia and sold into the sex trade to a wealthy Russian businessman. This man has pimps who ensure that he has a regular supply of young girls like Lisa at his villa whom he binds and rapes. Lisa cannot help herself.
 - Sadly, Lisa is one of 30,000 girls from Cambodia who are ensnared in the sex trade.
- Haugen told us about 12 year old Shalinee who is a slave in a salt mine in India. She stands under the blazing sun in five inches of water. Her job is to drag a salt rake across the ground under the water to break up the salt for harvest. Even worse, she is forced to go barefoot. Have you ever accidentally gotten salt water in an open wound? It hurts. Shalinee's feet are always bleeding and she is forced to work in those five inches of salt water 12 hours a day, 7 days a week,
 - When she asked why she had to do this her captors said, *"Because you are a dog."* Shalinee cannot help herself and neither can the other 27 million people around the globe who are held illegally in slavery.

- And what about 100,104 unborn children who lost their lives to abortion in Canada in 2015?³ Are they not the supreme example of those who cannot help themselves? How can I be a neighbour to them? Oh let us at least pray and sound the trumpet on their behalf.
 - Many elderly cannot help themselves, many disabled cannot help themselves, many mentally challenged cannot help themselves, refugees cannot help themselves, orphans cannot help themselves, the drug addict and alcoholic often cannot help themselves,
 - You may say of drug addicts, *“but they put themselves there.”* Maybe, but maybe not. Whether someone threw them in the ditch or they threw themselves in, the point is that they are in the ditch and need help.
- When I consider such need I feel overwhelmed. So what can we do? The first thing I would say is, *“do not let the overwhelming need make you withdraw into passivity.”* Listen, Jesus did not feed every poor person he saw or heal every sick person he encountered but he did act.
 - So what can we do? Let me offer two suggestions.
- **(SHOW SLIDE 6)** First, love through deeds that are reactionary.
 - By reactionary I mean things that you do not plan. It is responding to people in need who just come across your path. Do not ask, *“who should I help?”* When you see a need ask, *“How can I help? How can I be a neighbour?”*
 - Look for need and when you see it act on it. This can be as small as helping a blind man find the bus stop or lending jumper cables to someone who does not have them.
- **(SHOW SLIDE 7)** Second, love through deeds that are proactive.
 - It is far wiser and more effective to be proactive than reactive. I want to call every person in this church to have an ongoing commitment in one fashion or another to supporting ministries that help people who cannot help themselves. Here at Central two of our main partnerships are with Compassion and with IJM. Also join up with Serve Our City or Street Teams. Talk with Pastor Kevin if you need ideas.
 - I am talking about involvement that goes beyond just giving money. What kind of impact would there be if everyone in this church had one cause that they devoted themselves to? This takes an intentional choice to move out of comfort, to sacrifice your schedule, and get your hands dirty.
 - A Christian then is one who trusts that God’s love is inherited not earned and a Christian is one who sacrificially loves anyone who cannot help him or her self.

WHERE CAN WE GET A LOVE THAT WILL ACT?

- But we cannot stop here because I will only leave you with guilt. Guilt is a very poor motivator. It works for a while but you will not act long term out of guilt. You will begrudge having to give up time, money, and comfort. This will feel like one more busy thing in your life.
 - The final implication then joins the first two implications together. It is the power you need to send you out to joyful and sacrificial action. What we need is the heart of love that acts. We need the heart that the good Samaritan had as described in verse 33 where it says that he took ‘pity’ on Him.
 - This same word is used in the parable of the prodigal son when the father saw his son a long way off and took pity on him. This same word is used in the parable of the unforgiving servant when the king *“out of pity for him”* cancelled his six billion dollar debt and let him go.
- So what will melt your heart for those who cannot help themselves? What will joyfully move you to not just talk about being a neighbour but to act as a neighbour? Where can you get this love?

³ <http://www.arcc-cdac.ca/backrounders/statistics-abortion-in-canada.pdf>

IMPLICATION #3 – A CHRISTIAN’S LOVE GROWS FROM GOD’S LOVE

- Implication #3 is that **(SHOW SLIDE 8)** A Christian’s love grows from an increasing sense of God’s love for us in Jesus.
 - You gain and maintain a heart of love by remembering that you were the man lying on the side of the road, robbed of all you own by the evil one and your own sin. You could not help yourself but Jesus, the true and better good Samaritan, saw you and took pity on you.
 - Out of love for you God sent Jesus down the road to you. Jesus gave up all the comforts of being God to become a man and rescued you at great cost to Himself. He did not just risk his life, he gave up his life so that you might have life.
- The reason you do not have a heart for those who cannot help themselves and act on it is because you have not grasped or are not currently grasping the great love that God has for you.
 - When you see that God, out of love, did for you what you could not do for yourself at great cost to Him it melts your heart with love.
- How can you gain and maintain a loving heart to be a neighbour to the poor? By remembering that because of your sin you were utterly impoverished before God but, out of love, Jesus impoverished Himself so that you could become rich.
 - How can you gain and maintain a loving heart that acts as a neighbour on behalf of those in slavery? By remembering that because of your sin you were a slave to the evil one and totally unable to free yourself. But out of love for you, Jesus stormed the gates of hell and rescued you. This rescue operation cost him His life.
 - How can you gain and maintain a loving heart to be a neighbour to refugees? By remembering that because of your sin you were cast out of God’s house but out of love for you God sent Jesus to adopt you into his family and give you the full rights as children.
- How can you gain and maintain a loving heart to be a neighbour to the unborn who are dead because of abortion? By remembering that you were dead in your sins and totally unable to bring yourself to life but that God, out of love for you made you alive in Christ. He gave you the new birth and it cost Jesus his life.

CONCLUSION

- Do you see it all then? Jesus wants you to know the joy and freedom of love. But to get there you must first give up your pride and confess that you are not the loving person that you thought you were. You must see first that you are more wicked than you ever imagined.
 - Once you see that you are guilty, lacking in love, and therefore not good enough to earn God’s approval you can only fall on your face and say, ***“God is there any mercy for me? Is there any hope?”***
 - When you do that you find a God who takes pity on the humble. You find a God who out of love for you has given his Son’s life so that you might have life. You find a God whose love melts your entire being. You are more wicked than you ever thought but more loved than you ever imagined. Once this love floods your heart you cannot help but turn around and be a neighbour to those in need.
- Humble yourself. Admit your lack of love for God and neighbour. Receive the free gift of God’s love and then go and do likewise.