
LOVE ONE ANOTHER AS I HAVE LOVED YOU
Sermon for the 5th Sunday after Pentecost, 2022
Luke 10:25-37

The grace of the Lord Jesus Christ, and the love of God, and the fellowship of the Holy Spirit be with you all. Amen.

The text for our sermon today is our Gospel from before, Luke 10:25-37: ²⁵ **On one occasion a certain lawyer stood up to test Jesus. He asked, “Teacher, what should I do to inherit eternal life?”**

²⁶ **Jesus asked him, “What do the Scriptures say in the Law? How do you read it?”**

²⁷ **He answered, “You shall love the Lord, your God, with all your heart, with all your soul, with all your strength and with all your mind,’ and ‘You shall love your neighbour as yourself!”**

²⁸ **Jesus told him, “You have answered correctly. Continue to do this and you will live!”**

²⁹ **However, the lawyer wanted to justify himself. So, he asked Jesus, “Who, then, is my neighbour?”**

³⁰ **Jesus answered: “A certain man was going from Jerusalem down to Jericho and fell into the hands of robbers. They stripped him, struck him blow after blow and went away, leaving him half-dead. ³¹ A priest happened to be going down that road, but, when he saw him, he went past on the other side. ³² When a Levite came to the place he too did the same thing. He looked at him and went past on the other side. ³³ However, as a certain Samaritan was travelling, he came on the man. When he saw him, he felt sorry for him. ³⁴ He went over to him, poured olive-oil and wine on his wounds and bandaged them. Then he put him on his own animal, brought him to an inn and took care of him. ³⁵ On the next day he took out two denarii and gave them to the innkeeper. He said, ‘Take care of him! When I return I shall pay you back for whatever else you spend on him.’**

³⁶ **“Which one of those three, do you think, has been a neighbour to the man who fell into the hands of the robbers?”**

³⁷ **He said, “The one who has shown mercy to him.”**

Jesus told him, “You, too, go and keep doing as he did!”

Lord God, heavenly Father, sanctify us through Your truth, Your Word is truth. Amen.

Dear friends in Christ,

We are all familiar with the words of our text today. Although they are often referred to as the “Parable of the Good Samaritan,” the story itself is not called a parable. It is one of several stories in Luke that *appear* to be parables despite lacking the label. As with some other stories, it is possible that this one is a historical account of events that had actually occurred, but we shall not get hung up on this. Instead, our focus is on what prompted Jesus to tell this particular story and what we can learn from it today.

There was something that happened that caused Jesus to tell this particular story. It’s a little exchange that Jesus had with a lawyer in the crowd after the seventy-two disciples had returned from their mission journey. Luke writes, “²⁵ **On one occasion a certain lawyer stood up to test Jesus. He asked, “Teacher, what should I do to inherit eternal life?”**

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The lawyer in our parable was not as we think of them today – as those who might represent their clients in a court of law, and so on. No, this lawyer was an expert in the Law of Moses. He was someone who was very knowledgeable in all the laws given to Israel through Moses, recorded in the books of Exodus, Leviticus, Numbers, and Deuteronomy - all the civil laws, religious laws, ceremonial laws, and moral laws, and this expert in the Law was trying to test Jesus, to get His take on a very important question. He asked, “**Teacher, what should I do to inherit eternal life?**” No doubt this was a very important question. What could be more important than gaining eternal life? Because, if you don’t have that, then death is the end for you - and maybe something worse.

However, notice what seems to be lurking in the lawyer’s question: What should “***I do***” to inherit eternal life? He seemed to think that *by his doing something, he could earn his way to eternal life*. The truth is, though, there is nothing anyone could do that would ever be good enough to merit eternal life. This lawyer’s works - our works - cannot cut it. This lawyer hadn’t yet grasped that, so Jesus had to straighten him out on this; to get him to realise that there was no way for him to work his way up the ladder to heaven. Maybe we need to get that straight, too.

The lawyer asked Jesus a Law question, so Jesus turned it around to see if the man could come up with a Law answer since the lawyer was assuming that *the way of the Law* was the way of life. Jesus asked him: “**What do the Scriptures say in the Law? How do you read it?**” In other words, “*What would you have to do if you’re going to gain eternal life on the basis of the Law?*”

The lawyer answered: “**You shall love the Lord, your God, with all your heart, with all your soul, with all your strength and with all your mind,’ and ‘You shall love your neighbour as yourself!’**” Now, as far as it goes, that is a brilliant answer. That is an absolutely accurate summary of God’s Ten Commandments: Love God with everything you’ve got and love your neighbour as much as you love yourself. In fact, on another occasion, even Jesus Himself had used that same twofold summary to talk about the Ten Commandments.¹ And so we also, in our theology, talk about “the two tables of the Law,” namely, love God, and love your neighbour.

Jesus commended the lawyer’s answer. He said, “**You have answered correctly. Continue to do this and you will live!**”

“*Do this,*” and you will live. But here is the problem, not only for that lawyer but for us too. Do we “do this”? Do we love God and love our neighbour well enough to merit eternal life? The truthful answer is, “No, we don’t.” None of us loves God as much as we ought to. It’s the same with our love for one another. We are always quick to criticise and slow to love. We have no trouble loving ourselves, but it’s the loving-my-neighbour thing we have trouble with. We always see the speck in our brother’s eye without seeing the plank in our own.²

The lawyer in our text thought he had fulfilled the Law well enough - as long as he could narrow down who qualified as his neighbour. Lawyers are experts at parsing words and looking for loopholes, and this lawyer now scrambled to make himself look good. Think about it: he had just given the correct answer about how to earn eternal life *according to the Law*, but now he has got to be able to meet the criteria he’s already laid down. He thinks that he is good to go on the loving God part - he takes that for granted. Now, if he can limit loving his neighbour to only those people he already likes - well, then perhaps, he is home free. “**...The lawyer wanted to justify himself,**” and so asked a follow-up question of Jesus. “**Who, then, is my neighbour?**” In other words, “*Who qualifies to get my love? If I can eliminate the bad people, and*

¹ Matthew 22:37

² Matthew 7:3

the disgusting people, and the people who would inconvenience me, then I think I just might be able to do this.”

The lawyer had completely missed the point of the commandment. To **“love your neighbour as yourself”** does not put a limit on who your neighbour is, and that’s where Jesus takes it next with the story He now tells.

Jesus answered: “A certain man was going from Jerusalem down to Jericho and fell into the hands of robbers. They stripped him, struck him blow after blow and went away, leaving him half-dead. ³¹ A priest happened to be going down that road, but, when he saw him, he went past on the other side. ³² When a Levite came to the place he too did the same thing. He looked at him and went past on the other side. ³³ However, as a certain Samaritan was travelling, he came on the man. When he saw him, he felt sorry for him. ³⁴ He went over to him, poured olive-oil and wine on his wounds and bandaged them. Then he put him on his own animal, brought him to an inn and took care of him. ³⁵ On the next day he took out two denarii and gave them to the innkeeper. He said, ‘Take care of him! When I return I shall pay you back for whatever else you spend on him.’

Jesus knew that this lawyer, as a Pharisee, would exclude some people, sinners who were ignorant of the Law, from his definition of “neighbour.” He would also exclude Samaritans and any other outsiders, particularly Gentiles. He probably felt that it was God-pleasing to show hatred toward those groups. But at the top of this lawyer’s list of “neighbours” to be loved would be priests and Levites.

That is why Jesus’ story about the Good Samaritan would be sure to shock and offend the lawyer. Jesus had paraded a priest and a Levite as models of the indifferent, unmerciful, and loveless. The third traveller in Jesus’ story was a Samaritan - and he was portrayed as the hero in the story. The last person the lawyer would expect to be held before him as an example of one who fulfils the Law by loving his neighbour as himself is the hated Samaritan, and in the story itself, the Good Samaritan stands at the centre with his compassion, manifest in compassionate actions. He administers first aid, takes the man on his own animal to a place to recuperate, and spends his money to take care of the man. What dominates the parable is this compassion of the Samaritan in contrast to the others who either beat him or left him there beaten. The lawyer clearly understood the story, for he had exactly the right answer to the question put to him by Jesus: **“Which one of those three, do you think, has been a neighbour to the man who fell into the hands of the robbers?”** Of course, the answer is **“The one who has shown mercy to him.”** The lawyer’s answer reemphasised the point of the whole story: compassion and mercy. Loving your neighbour meant actually helping him, not passing by on the other side.

Now we see what loving our neighbour looks like in the story that Jesus tells.

However, the real story is the perfect and true love that Jesus has lived, in the life and death and resurrection with which Jesus loves us. Christ's love is a sacrificial love, like how the Samaritan helped the man in the story. In the same way, Jesus has paid the price, whatever it takes, for us to be saved. And, like the Samaritan supplied the innkeeper, so Christ has given the church the resources we need to extend His love to others until He comes back. This is the church's work of mercy.

Dear friends, you and I cannot gain eternal life by our works. If we're going to have eternal life, we're going to inherit it as a free gift. We must give up on trying to justify ourselves. We must confess our sins and lack of love shown to God and each other and receive the free gift of eternal life through faith in Jesus Christ, our Saviour. Joined to Jesus in Holy Baptism, we have become heirs with Him, and this is how we inherit eternal life - it's the only way. Then, yes, we can take this love we have received from God and show this Good Samaritan love, this Christ-like love, to others, that is, to any person who happens to come across our paths. As Jesus once said, "*love one another as I have loved you*" (John 15:12).

May the Lord continue to bless our work of proclaiming His great love for lost mankind. Amen.

The peace of God which passes all understanding, keep your hearts and minds in Christ Jesus. Amen.

PRAYER FOR THE FIFTH SUNDAY AFTER PENTECOST

Almighty God, eternal Lord and Creator of all things, You are our light and our salvation; You are all we ever need. We, Your children, come before You in prayer, and ask You to place Your hands on us in blessing.

Bless us with sincere faith in Your Son Jesus Christ. Grant that we may believe in Him with all our hearts, trust in Him alone for salvation, and have the assurance of everlasting life through Him. Renew us through our baptism day by day, as we live in hope and wait for our complete salvation in the new creation.

Keep us in Your fatherly care in this world, which has been ruined by sin. Guard us in all times of danger, and protect us in every peril. Keep us safe, by Your grace, that we may never lose our faith because of our sins and frailty. Grant that we may keep growing in faith and spiritual understanding. When death approaches, make us strong by Your sure promises, and finally give us the joy of Your eternal presence, complete redemption of our bodies, and resurrection to life eternal.

Fill Your Church with Your grace and power, O Lord, so that the light of Your truth may shine throughout the world. May all people know Your will and rejoice in Your salvation. Equip our pastors to be Christlike in mercy and love, and true leaders of Your people. Give us true joy as we serve You and one another, living in newness of life.

Hold Your hand of blessing over our land. Preserve us from war, earthquake, destructive storms, famine, disease, violence, tyranny, persecution, treachery, and rebellion. Guide those in government, business, education, and entertainment, so that they may live in the knowledge that You are Lord, and no other god may share Your glory.

Be gracious to all our homes and families. Enable children to grow in body, mind, and spirit, enjoying favour with God and man. By Your Spirit equip all parents with Christian faith and insight, and the constant desire to obey Your will.

Be merciful on all who suffer sickness, sorrow, the weakness of age, the weariness of hard work, separation from loved ones, uncertainty about the future, broken relationships, or any other burden. Give them Your rich peace. Show Yourself to be a God always ready to help, and give faith, trust, courage, and hope to all in need.

We pray for these things to You, heavenly Father, in the name of Jesus Christ, who, together with You and the Holy Spirit, is the one God, to be praised for ever and ever. Amen.

The 5th Sunday after Pentecost

(Proper 10)

Leviticus 18:1-5; 19:9-18

¹ The LORD told Moses: ² “Speak to the Israelites and tell them: ‘I am the LORD, your God! ³ You shall not do what the people do in the land of Egypt, where you lived! You shall also not do what the people do in the land of Canaan, where I am taking you! You shall not follow their statutes! ⁴ You shall observe My Decisions! You shall keep My Statutes and walk in them! I am the LORD, your God. ⁵ You shall keep My Statutes and My Decisions! If a man

practises them, he will live by them. I am the LORD...

^{19:9} “When you harvest the grain on your land, you shall not finish harvesting the edge of your field or gather the gleanings of your harvest! ¹⁰ You shall not pick your vineyard a second time or pick up the fallen grapes in your vineyard! You shall leave them for the poor man and the stranger! I am the LORD, your God.

¹¹ “You shall not steal! You shall not tell lies and shall not deal falsely with one another! ¹² You shall not swear by My name to deceive anyone or profane

the name of your God! I am the LORD.

¹³ “You shall not oppress your neighbour or rob him! You shall not keep the wages of your hired labourer with you overnight until morning! ¹⁴ You shall not curse a deaf person or place an obstacle in front of a blind person to make him stumble but shall fear your God! I am the LORD.

¹⁵ “You shall not deliver unjust verdicts! You shall not show partiality to poor people or give preference to important people! You shall judge your neighbour fairly! ¹⁶ You shall not go about spreading slander among your people! You shall not do anything that endangers your neighbour’s life! I am the LORD.

¹⁷ “You shall not hate your brother in your heart! You shall be sure to correct your neighbour, that you may not be guilty of sin because of him! ¹⁸ You shall not take revenge! You shall not hold a grudge against any of your own people! Instead, you shall love your neighbour as yourself! I am the LORD”

Colossians 1:1-14

¹ Paul, an apostle of Christ Jesus by the will of God and our fellow-Christian, Timothy, ² to the holy and faithful brothers in Christ at Colossae: Grace to you and peace from God our Father!

³ We are always thanking God, the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, when we pray for you, ⁴ because we have heard about your faith in Christ Jesus and about the love that you have for all God’s holy people, ⁵ because of the hope that has been stored up for you in heaven. You have already heard about it in the truthful Word of the Good News, ⁶ which continues to come to you. As it is producing fruit and growing all over the world, it has also been doing this among you from the day when you heard it and came to know the grace of God in truth. ⁷ It is the same Gospel as you have learned from Epaphras, our dear fellow-servant, who is a faithful minister of Christ on your behalf. ⁸ He is also the one who has informed us about your love in the Spirit. ⁹ That is why, since the day when we heard about you, we also have not ceased to pray for you and to ask God to fill you with the clear knowledge of His will in all wisdom and spiritual understanding. ¹⁰ We ask that you may live in a way that is worthy of the Lord and that you may please Him in every way, as you are fruitful in every good work and grow in the clear knowledge of God. ¹¹ We ask Him to strengthen you with all power according to His glorious might, that you may be completely enduring and patient, as you joyfully ¹² give thanks to the Father, who has qualified you to share

in the inheritance of God's holy people in the light.

¹³ He has rescued us from the authority of darkness and has transferred us into the kingdom of the Son, whom He loves, ¹⁴ in whom we have redemption, the forgiveness of sins.

Luke 10:25-37

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