

A LIFE WORTH LOVING

LUKE 10:25-37

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INTRODUCTION

- We share this world with eight billion strangers, most of whom hold beliefs and convictions vastly different from our own.
- Of these 8 billion people, 340 million of them live here in America, of whom we are all trying to get along and do life with.
- It's clear that our ideologies, politics, morality, and spiritual convictions often stand in stark contrast to those around us.
- It is self-evident that we are not in sync with the culture— which is a good thing.
- God has called church to not resemble the culture.
- Somehow, despite these differences, we are striving to coexist with our fellowman often at times with a very different worldview
- Our values, our understanding of right and wrong, and our vision for how life should be lived are typically at odds with the culture.
- I'm not saying anything that you don't already know.
- If you are under the impression that the culture and the church are in harmony, morally in concert working towards the same things, then you live a very different world than me.
- Despite these differences, the Lord has called us—His church—to be a light, a beacon of hope in the midst of a world that desperately needs Him.
- It is glaringly obvious that the line between the church and culture shines brighter than ever.
- The side effect of this is how easily we can get sucked into a vortex of animosity,

resentment, and disdain toward those who don't share our biblical worldview.

- The divide between ideologies is so vast that I worry about our ability to be a light to darkness.

- The polarizing nature of differing ideologies creates division among people, challenging Christians to deeply consider how to reach them.

- These people are not a lost cause, they are lost souls.

- We must avoid the trap of us-and-them syndrome; the tribal disposition that inevitability dilutes our affection for those who don't share our worldview.

- I will go out on a limb and assume that I am not the only one that gets annoyed with things that I see in the culture?

- If you find yourself in conversation about trans activism, DEI, vaccines, or any other hot topic, it can get combative quick.

- I understand why these differences trouble us, but through it all, compassion and empathy must prevail.

- We tend to rush to anger instead of compassion.

- This evening, I want to offer both encouragement and a reminder of how the Lord has called His church to respond to a lost world.

- If you have your Bibles, please turn with me to the Gospel of Luke.

- In this passage, Jesus directly addresses this matter.

THE PARABLE OF THE GOOD SAMARITAN

- This is the story of the Good Samaritan—a well-known parable in which Jesus defines who is truly deserving of a Christian's love.

LUKE 10:25-37

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.”

- The lawyer asks Jesus a question about eternal life. In response, Jesus answers a question with a question, essentially asking, 'What does Scripture say?'
- The lawyer answers correctly, quoting Deuteronomy 6:5 and Leviticus 19:18: “Love the Lord your God with all your heart” and “Love your neighbor as yourself.”
- Jesus would have fully expected the lawyer to respond this way, lawyers were experts on Jewish Law.
- But it is the lawyer’s question in verse 29, that is most poignant: “And who is my neighbor?”
- If loving my neighbor is the all important task, then I need to know who is on that list.
- If you’re referring to the people that I do life with, then sure, I can figure out how to love these people.
- Loving my brothers and sisters in Christ, my family, etc., that all makes sense.
- But Jesus’ definition of “neighbor” stretches far beyond what feels comfortable.
- In response to the lawyer, Jesus shares a parable that redefines what it means to be a neighbor. Picking up in verse 30.

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."

- We have all heard this parable— it does not lack drama and intensity, there is gang violence, robbery, and an unlikely hero
- The priest is a particularly striking figure in the story because, by all religious and social expectations, he should have been the first to offer aid—but he didn't.
- Aren't priests called to embody grace, love, and selflessness? Yet he chose to walk away.
- The Levite didn't do any better, but that's no surprise. If a priest—one of the highest religious authorities—ignored the suffering man, it's only natural that a Levite would do the same.
- Where the priest and Levite failed, an unlikely individual—a Samaritan—proved to be the most neighborly.
- When we read this story, most of us confidently think, "Oh, I would have done what the Samaritan did."
- Maybe—Let's take a few moments to consider how the lawyer would have contextualized and framed Jesus' parable.

- There are real-life dynamics at play that the lawyer would have understood, adding depth and gravity to the parable.
- First of all, let's consider what the crime scene would have looked like.
- Violent crime such as robbery was not an uncommon event.
- The road from Jerusalem to Jericho that was infamous for robberies, so the lawyer would have vividly understood what Jesus was describing.

- The road to Jericho was a steep, winding, and isolated path—perfect terrain for bandits.
- This 17-mile route descended over 3,000 feet through rocky terrain, providing many hiding places for robbers to ambush travelers.
- Because of the frequent attacks that occurred there, it earned the ominous nickname "Way of Blood."
- There was a real possibility that more robbers were nearby.
- By stopping to help this stranger, the passerby could have put his own life at risk.
- Imagine driving through one of the most dangerous parts of Los Angeles, where violent crime is rampant.
- Would you be willing to pull over and help someone in distress, knowing the potential danger?
- Another noteworthy layer to the story is the nature of the relationship between Jews and Samaritans—the Samaritan would have been justified not to intervene.

THE SAMARITAN WAS JUSTIFIED NOT TO INTERVENE

- Samaritans were regarded as outsiders by the Jewish community; there was often hostility between the two groups.
- The Samaritans were an ethnoreligious group who were neighbors of Judah.
- There is a deep history that fueled the animosity between these two groups.
- The Jews and Samaritans shared a common ancestry with one another but had distinct religious beliefs and practices.
- Moreover, after Assyria conquered the region, many Israelites were exiled, and the Assyrians repopulated Samaria with foreigners who intermarried with the remaining Israelites.
- The backstory of their relationship helps us understand the depth of tension and resentment between them.

- The Samaritan didn't just help a stranger; he helped someone who was politically and theologically opposed to him.
- They were hardly neighborly with one another.
- Given the hostility between Jews and Samaritans, ignoring a dying Jewish man would have been expected.
- This Samaritan would not have to dig too deep into his bag of excuses to disavow the man.
- Not only did he selflessly help the man, but he went above and beyond.
- In today's currency, it is estimated that he spent around \$1,000 on medical supplies—oil and wine—along with lodging, food, and other expenses.
- The Samaritan's attitude towards the Jew exemplify that differences do not justify indifference.
- What about the Levite and the priest? Why were they so reluctant to help?

RELIGIOSITY HINDERED THE PRIEST AND LEVITE FROM HELPING

- What was probably in the lawyer's thinking as Jesus described this event was that Jewish law and tradition precluded a priest touching a potentially dead body.
- Some Jews believed that even touching someone who had been attacked by robbers could make them unclean.
- Ironically, self-interest and religious formalities kept them from an act of love.
- Two of God's people failed to show courage and compassion because of their religious distinctives.
- Is that our inclination? To disassociate ourselves from those who practice behaviors that we find deplorable or an abomination?
- The Levite and the priest were more concerned with the implications of the incident for themselves than with the plight of the one in need.
- When we focus more on the sin than the needs of a person, our compassion is diminished.

- This is a stark reminder that if we are to truly minister to those who need to place their hope for eternal life in Christ, we cannot focus solely on their destructive behavior, political ideology, or any other worldview.
- After sharing the parable, Jesus turns to the lawyer and asks, “Who do you think, proved to be a neighbor to the man who fell among the robbers?” (v36)
- The lawyer rightly answers, “The one who showed him mercy.” And Jesus said to him, “You go, and do likewise.”
- It was the one who showed mercy, the one whose compassion transcended their differences.
- Showing mercy and compassion for another removes the ideological divide.
- The Good Samaritan could have very easily responded with indifference, resentment, or even satisfaction when he found the wounded Jew.
- There were reasons why he too could have followed suit with the priest and Levite.
- Clearly, this individual made a poor decision in choosing to travel this road.
- The Samaritan could have easily thought, “This is your own fault; you got yourself into this mess. This is a result of your own decisions”
- An attitude we can easily adopt when observing those with whom we disagree.
- It is hard to drum up compassion for someone who has abandoned wisdom and has insisted on making decisions that result in difficulty.
- But that was not the Samaritan's response; instead, he chose to love his neighbor, demonstrating both compassion and courage.
- The Samaritan man considered the one he was most separated from a life worth loving.
- Jesus places front and center the command to love those who are ideologically opposed to us.

- The duty to show mercy even to those we find appalling, and the call to extend grace to those suffering from the consequences of their own failures.

- But how do we do that? How do we cultivate the desire to love those from whom we are morally estranged?

- How do we love those who hurt or reject us? What does expressing that love look like?

- I want to share three quick thoughts on how we can show genuine love and grace to those whose affection has waned and close the gap created by ideological differences.

- The first theological truth that shapes how we perceive our fellow man, is to recognize that all human life is sacred.

HOW TO SHOW LOVE AND MERCY TO THOSE WHO OFFEND US?

A) THE SACREDNESS OF HUMAN LIFE

- Every person possesses a uniquely precious quality that sets them apart from the rest of creation, endowing them with worth and significance, and that is a God-given sacredness.

- This sacredness is grounded in the fact that humanity are image-bearers of their creator.

- The theological term for this is “Imago Dei,” which is Latin for “Image of God.”

- This is derived from Genesis 1:26-27, which states that we are made in his likeness.

- God imprinted his image on mankind; each human has the indelible mark of his creator.

- This applies to all of mankind; this is not just true of Christians.

- No matter your race, creed, social status, or age we are all made in the image of God.

- In the creation process, humanity was uniquely set apart from the rest of creation; we were the apex of creation.

- You might recall, that throughout the process, after each stage, God observed what He had made and declared it to be “good.”

- However, after creating mankind, Adam and Eve, God declared them as “very good.”

- While the rest of creation was spoken into existence, man was fashioned from the soil by the Creator's own hands.

- This intimate act underscores the unique significance of humanity in the divine order.

- Despite humanity’s flaws, ugliness, and depraved behavior, we remain the most significant part of creation—set apart and cherished above all else.

- I bring this to your attention because, in moments of conflict, hurt, or frustration with another, it becomes easy to devalue, dishonor, or even dehumanize others.

- Church, one’s behavior and commitment to sin does not diminish that truth.

- Even those who commit disgusting crimes against humanity are made in God’s image and are sacred by virtue of being human.

- Obviously, their wrongful behavior does not reflect God’s image; that is result of one’s fallen nature and sin, not God’s original design.

- However, our fallen nature doesn’t diminish our sacredness.

- That is why in colonial America, the practice of visiting death row inmates to share the gospel was deeply rooted in the Puritan and Christian traditions that shaped much of early American society.

- The belief that every individual, no matter how grave their crime, could find redemption through Christ was by virtue of their sacredness.

- God is the one who assigns dignity to humanity, not man.

- This is important to remember, as it directly shapes how we perceive and treat others, especially those who we are unimpressed with.

- This is what the Good Samaritan understood: despite all differences or personal distaste for the Jews, this man was a sacred being of God.

- The second principle that directly impacts our ability to love those who seem unlovable.

B) LOVING GOD FIRST GIVES US THE CAPACITY TO LOVE OTHERS

- In verse 27, Jesus quotes the Old Covenant, “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 governing principle is that if we love God first and foremost, we find the capacity, the impulse, and affection to love our neighbor more fully.

- It is much like our kids, they tend to adopt the things we care about.

- Your young children cheer for the same football team and support the same politician as you do.

- If we love God, we will love the things he loves and be concerned about the things that concern him.

- As we mature in faith, draw closer to God, and deepen our understanding of His Word, our hearts align with His, and we begin to care about what matters to Him.

- Our affection and regard for others extend beyond our natural instincts and inclinations.

LOVE AND INTOLERANCE ARE NOT MUTUALLY EXCLUSIVE

- A common misconception is that Christian love means never condemning behavior.

- Some people are under the impression that Jesus was inclusive and affirming; implying that his grace accepts everyone the way they are.
- That is not even sort of true—Jesus extended grace yet always called sinners to repentance. He forgave sin, but never affirmed it.

- Let's not make the mistake of thinking that loving our neighbor means we tolerate their behavior; in fact, that is quite unloving.
- Biblical love seeks the highest good for his fellow man, not blind affirmation.
- Ignoring sin isn't love—it's indifference.
- True love restores, just as Jesus did, dining with sinners while calling them to holiness.
- Love isn't tolerance of sin but rejoicing in truth.
- Scripture urges us to speak truth in love correct with gentleness, and restore those who stray.
- Love that leaves people in bondage isn't love—it's neglect.
- The third thing that helps cultivate affection, love, and mercy for others, is to remember that we, too, were once far from God.

C) WE TOO WERE ONCE FAR FROM GOD

- In Romans 5 it says:

ROMANS 5:8

But God shows his love for us in that while we were still sinners, Christ died for us.

- This verse highlights that God loved us even before we turned to Him—and that same love should shape how we treat those who don't yet know Him.
- We all have a journey, and along the way, someone's grace, kindness, and forgiveness drew us to the Lord.

- Just as we have a past, those we feel distant from may yet encounter the wisdom and beauty of biblical truth.

- It's a sobering reminder that we, too, were once separated from the Lord, but by His grace and mercy, He reached across the divide and pulled us from the miry clay.

TITUS 3:3-5

3 For we ourselves were once foolish, disobedient, led astray, slaves to various passions and pleasures, passing our days in malice and envy, hated by others and hating one another. 4 But when the goodness and loving kindness of God our Savior appeared, 5 he saved us, not because of works done by us in righteousness, but according to his own mercy, by the washing of regeneration and renewal of the Holy Spirit.

- It is the goodness of God that led us to repentance.

- For many of us, there was a time when God's mercy was in abundance in our lives.

- I want to close with a final thought. Everything we've discussed tonight applies not only to those who are diametrically opposed to your biblical worldview.

- Although it certainly includes them, we need to display love to every relationship that God has entrusted to you.

WE NEED TO DISPLAY LOVE TO EVERY RELATIONSHIP THAT GOD HAS ENTRUSTED TO US

- We are all surrounded by people for whom we can find reasons to withhold love, mercy, and compassion.

- One of the cruel ironies of close relationships is that they can be both tender and deeply vulnerable to injury.

- There are people in your life that have been demoted as your neighbor, and you live in the same house.

- It's ironic that we sometimes withhold love from love ones, but recognizing this tendency allows us to be more intentional in extending grace, patience, and kindness.
- Each of us would do well to refocus on those immediately around us.
- If time allowed, we could explore practical ways to show love and mercy, but simply put—be an example worth following and treat people well.
- Commit to kindness and forgiveness, which require active engagement.
- Church, let's remain uncompromising, stand for righteousness, and be a light in the darkness—perhaps then, the divide won't feel insurmountable.
- We must not take it upon ourselves to decide whose life is worth loving.

CLOSE IN PRAYER - PRAYER TEAM