

I entitled this message **LOVE YOUR NEIGHBOUR** instead of
“YOU CAN’T BE TOO BUSY, TOO SELFISH or TOO LAZY TO LOVE YOUR NEIGHBOUR BECAUSE IT’S A COMMAND, YOU KNOW!” (Just not friendly enough)

We will start with a reading from God's word and for many of us this is a familiar story that we already know! Once you've been a believer for a while you come to realize that it's often the 10th, 25th or 101st reading of a passage where you get fresh eyes and insight, so let's pray that God will move our hearts tonight.

Today our reading comes from the gospel of Luke and we will be reading the Parable of the Good Samaritan.

Luke 10:25-37 New American Standard Bible

25 And behold, a lawyer stood up and put Him (Jesus) to the test, saying, “Teacher, what shall I do to inherit eternal life?” 26 And He said to him, “What is written in the Law? How does it read to you?”

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 wanting to justify himself, he said to Jesus, “And who is my neighbor?”

The Good Samaritan

30 Jesus replied and said, “A man was going down from Jerusalem to Jericho, and he encountered robbers, and they stripped him and beat him, and went away leaving him half dead. 31 And by coincidence a priest was going down on that road, and when he saw him, he passed by on the other side. 32 Likewise a Levite also, when he came to the place and saw him, passed by on the other side. 33 But a Samaritan who was on a journey came upon him; and when he saw him, he felt compassion, 34 and came to him and bandaged up his wounds, pouring oil and wine on them; and he put him on his own animal, and 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 and said, ‘Take care of him; and whatever more you spend, when I return, I will repay you.’

36 Which of these three do you think proved to be a neighbor to the man who fell into the robbers' hands?” 37 And he said, “The one who showed compassion to him.” Then Jesus said to him, “Go and do the same.”

So let's break down this story.

This is a familiar story to me – so I went on a hunt and read over commentaries and explanations in many places like Matthew Henry or Tyndale Commentaries, or even Christian ministry sites like Christianity.com, Got Questions, Bible Study tools, just to name a few. This is a distilled version of what they all say by way of understanding the basics of parable this way.

The Parable of the Good Samaritan is an answer to a question posed **to** Jesus **by** a lawyer. The lawyer's question was, “Teacher, what shall I do to inherit eternal life?” (Luke 10:25). I want to go to heaven. What should I do? “He said to him, ‘What is written in the law? What is your reading of it?’” (Luke 10:26).

(Side note – many Christian Apologists will tell you that when we are discussing our faith we tend to be quick to give an answer when often a well worded question is both a great way to understand more about where the person is coming from and also, great to help the other person come to his own conclusions. It takes practice, but Jesus is a good example.)

By having him quote the OLD TESTAMENT, they both could agree on an authority. He is actually asking the lawyer, what does Scripture say about this and how **you** interpret it? This directs the discussion towards Jesus' intended lesson. And we hear the lawyer answer Jesus' question by quoting Deut 6:5 and Lev 19:18. (Got Questions)

Jesus agrees with the lawyer that his answer is correct. Jesus' reply tells him that he has given an orthodox (**scripturally proper**) answer, **but** then goes on in verse 28 to tell him that this kind of love requires more than an emotional feeling; it would also include action; he would need to "practice what he preached."

The scribe was an educated man and realized that he could not possibly keep that law. There would always be people in his life that would be **HARD to love. I'm sure we can all understand!**

So then what does he do? He tries to limit the law's command by limiting its scope and asked the question "who is my neighbor?" The word "neighbor" in the Greek means "someone who is near," and in the Hebrew it means "someone that you have an association with." This interprets the word in a **specific sense**, referring to a fellow Jew and would have excluded others such as Samaritans, Romans, and other foreigners.

So you can see, Jesus then gives the parable of the Good Samaritan specifically to **correct** the false understanding that the scribe had, of who his neighbor is, and what his duty is to his neighbor. According to the Tyndale commentary, the three selections of priest, Levite and Jew would be common characters in parables but here Jesus would have changed it up and surprised the listeners when we added in Samaritan.

So that was the set up and then we get to THE STORY

The Parable of the Good Samaritan tells the story of a man traveling from Jerusalem to Jericho, and while on the way he is robbed of everything he had, including his clothing, and is beaten to within an inch of his life. That particular road was treacherously winding and was a favorite hideout of robbers and thieves. Interestingly, the Bible only refers to him as a certain, nondescript man. We don't know his religious beliefs, his job, his race or his stature, just that he was robbed. Likely Jesus did this on purpose. (section notes from Got Questions)

The next character Jesus introduces into His story is a priest. Jesus spends no time describing the priest. Only tells of how he showed no love or compassion for the man by seeing him, and deliberately ignoring him to the point of passing on the other side of the road. If there was anyone who **would have, should have** known God's law of love, it would have been the priest. By nature of his position, he was to be a person of compassion, desiring to help others.

The next person to pass by in the Parable of the Good Samaritan is a Levite, and he does exactly what the priest before him did: he passes by without showing any compassion. Again, he would have known the law, but he also failed to show the injured man compassion.

(As an aside – I knew that the tribe of Levi was commissioned to do priestly duties so I wondered what the difference was between these two, and learned that specifically the priests held exclusive rights for service at the sacrificial altar and in the outer and inner sanctum of the temple; the Levites took responsibilities of non-priestly tasks like singing, guarding the temple, and other kinds of temple work)

These are both examples of people you would find in church. Regulars, Leadership. US.

The next person to come by is the Samaritan. Now **this person** is the twist in the story. The listener would have thought THIS man to be the **least likely** to have shown compassion for the man. **Samaritans were considered a lower class of people by the Jews since they had intermarried with non-Jews and did not keep all the law. Therefore, Jews would have nothing to do with them, even walking the long way around so they wouldn't have to travel through Samaria.**

Like we said before, the “certain man who was robbed” we know very little about. CERTAIN. Not much detail here. We do not know if the injured man was a Jew or Gentile, but it did not seem to make a difference to the Samaritan. The “Good Samaritan” saw only a person an injured person in desperate need for help, and so he did, above and beyond the minimum required. He was on his way somewhere else and he clearly **interrupts** his journey to offer help to this stranger. Imagine the relief of the man in distress.

What does the passage say HOW he helped? Well, he dresses the man's wounds with wine (which would have been to disinfect) and then oil (to soothe his pain). He puts the man on his animal and takes him to an inn for a time of healing. He pays the innkeeper with his own money. He then goes even further and tells the innkeeper to take good care of the man, and he would pay for any extra expenses on his return trip.

I think we would agree that this Samaritan treated the man the way we would hope one of our loved ones would be treated if they were hurting and in genuine need.

So, why did Jesus use this story...?

Because the good man was a Samaritan, Jesus is showing the difference between those who knew the law and those who actually followed the law in their lifestyle and conduct. And in turn, the difference between those of us who simply academically know God's word and then those who live it and act on it from the heart.

Jesus asks the lawyer if he can apply the lesson to his own life with the question “So which of these three do you think was neighbor to him who fell among the thieves?” (Luke 10:36). And the lawyer admits, it was the Samaritan. Jesus then tells the lawyer to “go and do likewise,” meaning that he should start living out what the law tells him to do.

By finishing this way Jesus is encouraging the lawyer and the hearers of the parable to be like the Samaritan our own lives; i.e., we are to show compassion and love for those we encounter in our everyday activities. We are to love others (vs. 27) regardless of who they are...and in today's terms, their financial status, political beliefs, race, gender, culture or religion. If someone has a need and we have the resource, then we are to give generously and freely, without expecting a return.

And the kicker of the story – realistically, naturally - All this is impossible for both the lawyer, and for us. We know we cannot keep the law because of our human condition; our heart and desires are mostly of self and selfishness. When left to our own devices, we do the wrong thing, and miss the mark. I hope that the lawyer eventually saw this and came to the realization that there was nothing he could do to justify himself, that he needed a personal Saviour to atone for him and to save himself from his sins.

So then, the Parable of the Good Samaritan shows us:

- we should be ready to reach out to any neighbor/everyone knowing that we are all made in the image of God
- we should be willing to set ourselves aside to show love and compassion for others.
- we need God's redemption, help and grace to do any of these things

So we have the scripture passage and we have the explanation. I don't know if any of you are feeling convicted, but I know I am. I appreciate when I'm asked to share, but in truth usually the ideas that I talk about are for ME first and things I'm working on and if they apply to you as well then, good!

Let's now take this story and apply it.

Every generation deals with many new variations of "distractions, discouragement and depravities." (GQ) These days, I think you would agree that we might be OVER CONNECTED to the entire world though news, media, social media, and just in general being online and having access to so much and yet disconnected from the people around us. (I know we could spend time discussing how much is real and how much of what we think we know is deception but that's for another day.) It takes real effort to slow down, unplug and find the time to check in, talk, reach out and spend time with our closest friends and families that everyone else seems like an impossibility. Do you feel the same way?

We are also OVERLY BUSY which makes us DISCONNECTED from life giving relationships. I sometimes wonder if we have lost some of how to be a church family or the body of Christ. We have filled our schedules so full that when we do see a need, we often are reluctant to be the one who acts because it would cost us. Cost us time, money, interrupt our non-negotiable schedule and we would have to be willing to give of ourselves when often we leave ourselves running on empty. So we HOARD our time and compassion.

What is the challenge then?

What are some things we need to consider in our own life? When it comes to others. I have seven quick steps to consider.

- 1) **Notice** what God shows you – All three parables characters SAW the man. Their eyes worked. Some of us refuse to see others. We look away. We deliberately do not want to engage because we so not want the aggravation. We disobey. There is no nice way to candy coat it. LOOK!
- 2) **Stop.** Really that's the big one. That's where you argue with yourself and try to make excuses so you don't have to put yourself out and interrupt your day. This is where we have to battle selfishness and laziness and where we can get tripped up.
- 3) **Act** - Assume you are the one called to help. Not the next person, not the ministry leader, not just the pastor. You. Me. The believer. The follower of Christ. God's representative. I think of Moses who used "Lord I'm not qualified, I stutter" and God's answer was, I chose you. BUT. I'm busy. BUT I'm an introvert. BUT I don't have a lot of money. BUT I'm a germophobe. BUT someone else is better. We all know we are making excuses. I even think about in general, what about serving in church..... or those of us who rationalize that we are leaving it to the "more qualified" That's just an excuse and laziness and God isn't fooled. We are HIS to do what He wishes or we aren't. We are PART of this BODY of Christ or we are a spectator.
- 4) **Reach out** in compassion rather than irritation or – meaning agape love/God's benevolence and God's loving grace – When we act, we need to act with the right posture. (Most of you know I also teach Grade One.... and in Science we are learning what is alive and not alive. Grade One's marvel to learn a leaf ON the tree is alive but once it falls OFF it dies.) We need to be connected to the source of life too. The only way we can model the love and character of God is to be GRAFTED in and have connection to the source - the Holy Spirit bearing fruit in us. We can't muscle it out. We can't. The fruit of the spirit is divine and not of this world and can only come from God. What a relief – because on my own I know I can't do this stuff.
- 5) **Place of Kindness.** We need to extend Godly kindness. Kindness is misunderstood these days. Kindness is NOT niceness. Don't be confused. Niceness is going along to get along. People say to be kind costs nothing - I wholeheartedly disagree. It takes effort to be kind when you would rather be frustrated or angry or rude. Romans 2:4 says that it is His kindness that leads us to repentance. Most of us will not pay the cost to be kind. We would rather be silent and not act. It costs us time and effort and energy to be kind, and often we know it will rob us of satisfaction when we would rather be selfish, direct or harsh and feed our own old man. It means often we have to step up and go out of the way when others would rather ignore a situation. Often taking a deep breath and doing what nobody else wants to do. Kindness is a sacrifice to the Lord.
- 6) **Meet the need, with no strings** – Why do we act? Simply? Gratitude to the Lord. Obedience. Because we love the Lord. Because we have ALL been in need at some point. Don't expect payback, credit or accolades. We act because it's right and because God has supplied us.
So how do it do this? Simple things. Learn someone's name, Look them in the eye. Reach out to help meet their need (By the way: sometimes what people really need and what they are asking for are two different things, right?). Give. Be generous with all

God has blessed you with and hold it with an open hand – Your Time. Blessing.
Materials. Compassion

Lastly, from the parable...

- 7) **Follow up genuinely.** What does it mean to follow up? Check in. Call. Show up. Visit. Connect. Circle Back. Rosario Butterfield wrote a book call the 'Gospel Comes with a Housekey' which highlights the how Christians can be hospitable (and using their home and a place of ministry and connection to Christians and non-Christians alike). Don't let your schedule.... or your pride of the current state of your home, cause you to miss opportunities that God brings your way.

This lesson has become more costly and evident to me and my family as my parents have had health struggles as of late. God is calling us to love our neighbour, and right now in my family, our “neighbours” also happen to be our parents. I’m a very busy person. Sometimes it’s hard to stop and act with patience and grace when my life and schedule are turned upside down. Yes, this is what family is supposed to do. Stepping up.

And WE (at Cedarview) are your church family.
And we have the accountability for each other as well.
Stepping up.
And our neighbours, friends, co-workers and strangers?
They will know we are Christians by our love.

Why. Why do we act?

- Out of obedience to our Lord who died for us and wants that NONE be lost.
- As an opportunity for people to catch a glimpse of Jesus and to share one day.
- And out of LOVE and GRATITUDE for his sacrifice - that we also die to self and live for His Kingdom

And now?

We are it. Corporately we are the Body of Christ and you are a member.
You might be the only Jesus someone ever gets to see.
Jeannie Mayo says we are Jesus with skin on. His hands, his feet.
So we today we examine ourselves. Ask the Lord to open our eyes.
We ready ourselves and watch and pray for opportunities for action and sacrifice.
We ask the Lord help to see the need.
And we hear Jesus words to the lawyer to **Go and Do Likewise.**
And to us **Go and do the same** with the Holy Spirit's help.
Help us Lord.

Prayer: Thank you for your word. Help us to obey you out of gratitude for all you have done for us and fulfil your Kingdom purposes, with the power of the Holy Spirit working in us.