The Berean

Daily Verse and Comment

Luke 10:25-37

(25) And behold, a certain lawyer stood up and tested Him, saying, "Teacher, what shall I do to inherit eternal life?" (26) He said to him, "What is written in the law? What is your reading *of it?* " (27) So he answered and said, " '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 'your neighbor as yourself.' " (28) And He said to him, "You have answered rightly; do this and you will live." (29) But he, wanting to justify himself, said to Jesus, "And who is my neighbor?" (30) Then Jesus answered and said: "A certain *man* went down from Jerusalem to Jericho, and fell among thieves, who stripped him of his clothing, wounded *him,* and departed, leaving *him* half dead. (31) Now by chance a certain priest came down that road. And when he saw him, he passed by on the other side. (32) Likewise a Levite, when he arrived at the place, came and looked, and passed by on the other side. (33) But a certain Samaritan, as he journeyed, came where he was. And when he saw him, he had compassion. (34) So he went to *him* and bandaged his wounds, pouring on oil and wine; and he set him on his own animal, brought him to an inn, and took care of him. (35) On the next day, when he departed, he took out two denarii, gave *them* to the innkeeper, and said to him, 'Take care of him; and whatever more you spend, when I come again, I will repay you.' (36) So which of these three do you think was neighbor to him who fell among the thieves?" (37) And he said, "He who showed mercy on him." Then Jesus said to him, "Go and do likewise."

New King James Version

What is the love that we are to have and show fellow man (Leviticus 19:18; Matthew 5:43; 19:19; 22:39; Mark 12:31: Romans 13:9; Galatians 5:14; James 2:8)? The Greek word for "love" in this command is *agapao* (*Strong's* #25), "to have a warm regard for and interest in another, cherish, have affection for." This seems like a rather general definition of any kind of love,

but Jesus elevates it to an unconditional love, a heartfelt response to do good for another as the occasion requires, no matter who the other is, whether family, friend, enemy, or person on the street.

Showing this kind of love to our neighbor, then, goes far beyond wishing him well but extends to actively doing him good. It does not mean doing what will please him, but choosing to benefit him by showing him favor and goodwill. The outworking of this love may involve expressions of kindness or providence, or it could even be giving discipline and punishment. Its emphasis is on doing what is good for him, not on whether it will necessarily please him.

Then we must ask, "Who is my neighbor?" This question is asked of Jesus, and He replies with the Parable of the Good Samaritan in Luke 10:25-37. The text tells us this expert in the law wished to justify himself, that is, show himself to be in the right on this matter and thus excuse his behavior. He had no argument regarding loving God, and as for loving his neighbor, he may have indeed been a good neighbor as instructed by the Pharisaical interpretation of the law.

Generally, that interpretation essentially boils down to "love your neighbor as long as they are not Gentiles." Some Pharisees carried this to extremes, turning it into hatred for any racial, ethnic, and religious group but their own. They despised Samaritans (thus Jesus' use of a good Samaritan in His parable) and called Gentiles "dogs" and probably other derogatory names.

We do the same today. We will love our neighbors as long as they are friends or coworkers or of the same race, ethnic group, or social status. We will love our neighbors if they follow our team, political views, or social causes. But that is not what God wants of us!

This can be seen in the parable. The story is of a Jew traveling from Jerusalem to Jericho on business, a journey of about fifteen miles. Robbers hold him up, beat him, and take everything he has, even his clothing, leaving him by the roadside half-dead and bleeding.

First, a man of his own nation, no less than a priest—a man who represents the love, compassion, tenderness, and kindness of God to the world—

happens by. Of all people, one would think he would be the first to stop and help the battered traveler. Yet, he passes by on the other side, diverting his eyes, as if he never saw the man in need.

Then comes a Levite, one whose God-given task was to serve in the Temple. He not only sees the wounded man but also takes the time to walk over and examine him. But like the priest, he offers no help, scurrying to the opposite side of the road and continuing on his way.

Finally, a despised Samaritan happens by, and his heart goes out to the suffering man. Without thought for himself, he begins to clean him, pouring wine on the wounds to disinfect them and oil to promote healing. Then, putting him on his beast, he walks beside it until they arrive at an inn where the injured man could receive care and rest. He spares no expense and promises to repay the innkeeper for his troubles in helping the man get back on his feet.

Jesus ends the story by asking, "So which of these three was neighbor to him who fell among the thieves?" The lawyer, being an intelligent man, whose training had been the proverbial "straining out a gnat", now had to acknowledge the camel he had heretofore swallowed (Matthew 23:24). With a simple story, Jesus had given him a broad picture of the intent of this second great commandment. So the lawyer answers, "He who showed mercy on him."

It was the Samaritan, loathed by the Jews as heretics and religious frauds, who forgot all the antagonisms and abuses against him and showed mercy, kindness, and care—love—to the wounded Jew lying helpless by the side of the road. Only he displayed the love of neighbor that God expects of His people.

Jesus' instruction for the lawyer—and us today—is, "Go and do likewise."

Spiritually, this has been done for us. We, like this Jew in the ditch, were wounded unto death, left to waste away. The world passed us by, even those closest to us and those who claimed to be God's representatives, never giving us the help we needed. Then God, despised by this world, walked by and tended to us, paying for our care. He paid the ultimate price, giving His only

begotten Son to save us and the whole world (John 3:16-17). We could say that the sacrifice of Jesus Christ is the pouring of wine and oil to disinfect and heal those wounded by sin. It enables sinners from every stratum of society, upon belief and repentance, to be justified, to pursue sanctification, and ultimately, to be glorified.

So we see that God the Father and Jesus Christ are the perfect examples, the embodiments, of what it is to be a neighbor. The psalmist writes of God, "The LORD builds up Jerusalem; He gathers together the outcasts of Israel. He heals the brokenhearted and binds up their wounds" (Psalm 147:2-3). Jesus' mission was not just to preach, but also "to heal the brokenhearted, to proclaim liberty to the captives and recovery of sight to the blind, to set at liberty those who are oppressed" (Luke 4:18). This is how They express Their love to us.

— John O. Reid

To learn more, see:
You Shall Love Your Neighbor (Part Two)

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