

- F) Within the heart of the Samaritan is the essence of what it means to be a neighbor -- to be able to see a need, be filled with compassion, and act in mercy (Luke 10:33-35).
- G) Further, the Samaritan goes above and beyond what is necessary in order to help the injured man. His binding up of his wounds were probably with his own clothing (10:34). The oil and wine were his own (10:24). The cost for the inn and the assurance of further care were sacrificial (10:25).

#### 4) Shifting From Legal Theory To Practical Application

- A) With the new context which Jesus has provided for the lawyer, Jesus is now ready to return to the essential question with the lawyer -- who is the neighbor (10:36).
- B) The thoroughly Jewish lawyer, perhaps choking a bit on his own prejudices, cannot even bring himself to whisper the name "Samaritan," simply noting that the good neighbor is the one who shows mercy (10:37).
- C) Jesus Christ, no doubt with passion and intensity ("go" and "do" are both carry imperative force, and Jesus is pointed to the lawyer, telling him "you go" and "you do"), calls on the lawyer to "go and do the same" (10:37).
- D) The Judaism of Christ's time believed loving your neighbor only extended to fellow Jews, not Samaritans or strangers. But Jesus turns the traditions inside-out, instructing the Jewish lawyer to emulate the exemplary Samaritan!
- E) It is critical for us to note that when we love God, it manifests itself in loving our neighbor (10:25ff). Loving God means that we serve others, serving others is an outward response to loving God.
- F) Serving is a response to God in which we become His heart, hands, and feet for those who we are honored to serve.

# Who Is My Neighbor?

Long Beach Alliance Church • July 13<sup>th</sup>, 2008 • Pastor Chris Lankford

**WHICH OF THESE THREE DO YOU THINK PROVED TO BE A NEIGHBOR TO THE MAN WHO FELL INTO THE ROBBERS' HANDS?" AND HE SAID, "THE ONE WHO SHOWED MERCY TOWARD HIM." THEN JESUS SAID TO HIM, "GO AND DO THE SAME."  
~LUKE 10:36-37 (NASB)**

#### 1) A Story Of Responding To God's Love

- A) A lawyer, knowledgeable in the Law of Moses (Genesis-Deuteronomy, the "Torah") approaches Jesus and "tests" Him regarding a summary of the Mosaic Law (Luke 10:25ff).
- B) During the time of Jesus, a "lawyer" was an expert in the intricacies of the Mosaic Law for legal decisions. Much like a lawyer would today, the lawyer questions Jesus to test whether His knowledge of the Law is "orthodox" (correct).
- C) Rather than respond as the "Torah Answer Man," Jesus deflects the question of the lawyer with a question of His own, placing the lawyer in the comfortable position of providing a legal definition (10:26).
- D) Note that the whole of the Law is summarized in terms of loving God! The foundation of the Law is love (10:27).

E) Further, the appropriate response to the love of God is also one of love, both for God and "your neighbor." Jesus notes that this response brings "life" (10:28), because it reveals that God's love resides in the heart of the person.

F) Note also that Jesus Christ emphasizes that life comes from the "doing" of love, not simply from the knowledge of love. This was critical for His interaction with the lawyer. Knowledge of Scripture leads to more than head-knowledge, it leads to true life-change and genuine action!

## 2) Setting The Stage For Revealing God's Love

A) The lawyer, "wishing to justify himself" (10:29) asks "who is my neighbor?" Clearly, the lawyer expects to answer this next question himself (again). He wishes to define (and thus justify himself) what "neighbor" really means in the Law.

B) However, Jesus will have none of the lawyer's definition. Rather, he tells a parable (a short moral story revealing something about the Kingdom of God, cf. Matthew 13:11-17).

C) This parable is popularly known as "The Good Samaritan," although the listener in Jesus' time would never have utilized such a strange title. This would be the modern equivalent of "The Good Racist" or "The Good Pornographer."

D) Samaritans were the children of both Jewish and non-Jewish parents, forbidden children from marriages with non-covenant peoples of the land (cf. Deuteronomy 7:1-6).

E) The tensions between Jews and Samaritans were filled with animosity during the post-exilic period of Ezra's day (Ezra 4:4ff). This was exacerbated tremendously when the post-exilic community "divorced" themselves from their Samaritan wives and children (Ezra 10:3ff).

F) The road between Jerusalem and Jericho (Luke 10:30), which served as the setting for Christ's parable, was well-known for being fraught with danger and robbers.\*

## 3) A Mind-Blowing & Heart-Revealing Story

A) It was no surprise to the listener that a traveler could be robbed and beaten between Jericho and Jerusalem. Who will respond to such a tragic need?

B) "By chance" a priest was coming down the road (10:31). This would have been good news to the listener, since the priest was God's representative. However, without explanation for motive, the priest avoids the beaten and naked man, moving away from the body.

C) Then another religious official, a Levite (from the tribe of Levi, but not of the priestly family of Aaron, Levites were responsible for lesser tasks in the temple), comes upon the body (10:32). The text indicates he took a closer look, but passed by the body as well.

D) Now a Samaritan (emphasis is placed on the name, pushed forward in the sentence), the least respected of all people amongst the Jews, encounters the injured man (10:33) and feels compassion for stranger.

E) The Samaritan was the least likely person to be the climactic end of a story between Jesus and a lawyer! The idea of a Samaritan helping out after the priest and Levite had passed by was scandalous! The despised and unclean man outshines the exemplary leaders because of his heart and actions!

\* The eighteen mile road between Jerusalem and Jericho has a descent of about 3,250 feet, from around 2500 feet (Jerusalem) to -750 feet (Jericho). Historians note that the road passes through desert and rocky country. Many historians report dealings with robbers on the road. The location, filled with rocky caves and many switchbacks, was suitable for robbers. Many priests and Levites lived in Jericho and traveled up to Jerusalem for their periodic responsibilities at the Temple. (Various sources, especially *Luke, Word Biblical Commentary (35a)*, John Nolland, Pages 590-592).