

The Good Samaritan

Main Thing

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This morning, I want to encourage you to open your Bibles to the gospel of Luke 10. As you're turning to Luke 10, if you're a guest or visitor with us today, I want to welcome you to a very specific study on the life and the person of Jesus Christ. Now I know in a setting such as this, in a context such as this, you would expect to hear that, however, the reason for this study particularly through the gospel of Luke is that we live in a culture, we live in a society today even sometimes within the church, for lack of better terms, where Jesus Christ is relegated to a mere prophet, teacher, healer, political revolutionary, philosopher, whatever it may be, yet, as you walk through the gospels, you discover that he is so much more. He is God in flesh. He is Messiah. He is Savior. He is Redeemer. As we're walking through the gospel of Luke, if you haven't been with us as of yet, we're doing so in a somewhat unorthodox manner. We didn't begin at the manger. We didn't begin at the Christmas scene. We haven't walked chronologically through his life. In fact, we're doing much the opposite. We began with his glorious ascension, the empty tomb, and a crucified Savior on Mount Calvary. And the reason for doing so is that today, we're going to read one of the most famous stories, one of the most famous scenes in the life of Jesus Christ. There was a crowd that was gathered. There was one in particular individual who had a one-on-one conversation with him, and we're going to discover that they saw the scene a little differently than us. They were curious. They were questioning. Is this one who speaks like none other, is he the one? Could it be that the prophets in all of their statements have pointed to this one? Could it be that all the prayers through all the generations are culminating in this rabbi from Nazareth? We don't have to question. We don't even have to have a curiosity. In fact, we know for a fact that for 2,000 years, the tomb has been empty and the blood of Jesus saves. And so today, as we look back at this famous encounter that Jesus has, we don't do so wondering if he is the answer, we do so having confirmation that he is the answer.

As we turn to Luke 10, we're going to read the famous story of the Good Samaritan. In fact, of all the parables Jesus told, this may be one of the most, not only well-known, but most beloved, however, we're going to do something a little bit unusual. Please note my gift to sarcasm. We're going to read it in context. The Good Samaritan wasn't a story told in a vacuum. As you're about to discover, it's actually an answer to a dialogue that Jesus had with a certain lawyer. Beginning in verse 25 of Luke 10. It says,

25 And, behold, a certain lawyer stood up, and tempted him, saying, Master, what shall I do to inherit eternal life? 26 He said unto him, What is written in the law? how readest thou? 27 And he answering said, Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy strength, and with all thy mind; and thy neighbour as thyself. 28 And he said unto him, Thou hast answered right: this do, and thou shalt live. 29 But he, willing to justify himself, said unto Jesus, And who is my neighbour? 30 And Jesus answering said, A certain man went down from Jerusalem to Jericho, and fell among thieves, which stripped him of his raiment, and wounded him, and departed, leaving him half dead. 31 And by chance there came down a certain priest that way: and when he saw him, he passed by on the other side. 32 And likewise a Levite, when he was at the place, came and looked on him, 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 on him, 34 And went to him, and bound up his wounds, pouring in oil and wine, and set him on his own beast, and brought him to an inn, and took care of him. 35 And on the morrow when he departed, he took out two pence, and gave them to the host, and said unto him, Take care of him; and whatsoever thou spendest more, when I come again, I will repay thee. 36 Which now of these three, thinkest thou, was neighbour unto him that fell among the thieves? 37 And he said, He that shewed mercy on him. Then said Jesus unto him, Go, and do thou likewise.

Now this is one of the most beloved passages, not just in the Bible, but particularly in the life of Jesus Christ. And do not get me wrong, does it advocate mercy? Of course it does. Does it encourage us to see those who are struggling in life and to give out of the abundance of our life? Yes, it does. However, today I think we're going to discover that this famous parable, if we'll peel away the layers, there's actually more to it than just the obvious.

So let's begin with the "why." You know, typically we end with the "why" but we're going to begin with the "why" today and here's the question I want to ask: why did Jesus even tell the parable? Remember, he's answering it. So we have to ask ourselves, what is the conversation, what is happening that would cause Jesus to tell this story? It's very particular. Notice verse 25, a certain lawyer stood up and tempting him. You do realize this is biblical language for he is up to no good, is what this is. He is not there to learn. He is not there to "as we might call it," get saved. Oh, no, no, no. In fact, it makes it very clear that he is "tempting him." He desires to entrap Jesus and what we're going to see in just a moment, his reason for doing so is he's attempting to "justify himself."

And so he asks Jesus a very important question, "How might I gain or possess eternal life," and what Jesus does here is the same thing he does with whom we know as the rich young ruler. Remember that guy? Young guy, very wealthy comes to Jesus one day and he says, "How can I know I have eternal life?" And Jesus answered and said, "Well, what about the commandments?" He says, "I've done them from my very youth," and he began

to name four or five that he had completed just as it is written. Remember what Jesus said? "Go sell everything you have and you'll inherit the kingdom of God." Now, unfortunately, a lot of people look at that passage and say, "Oh, Jesus said that if you give it all away, you go to heaven." No, no, no, no. You know what Jesus was doing? Jesus was exposing that there was a commandment that young man had broken, the commandment of covetousness. In other words, he desired to better himself than others. What Jesus did with the rich young ruler is he exposed the fallacy of the system that he had set up from his own perspective and he does the exact same thing here.

What does he do? He says, "What's written in the law?" And notice what he says. "We should love the Lord the God with all our heart, soul, mind, strength, and our neighbor as ourselves." Now notice what Jesus says in verse 28, "You've answered right. Go and do it." Does that strike you odd at all? It does me. This is the same Jesus that when Thomas, who we know as doubting Thomas, came to Jesus and said, "Hey man, we're really confused. How are we supposed to live this thing called life? We don't know which way to turn." Remember what Jesus told him in John 14? Jesus said, "I am the way, I'm the truth, I'm the life, nobody comes to the Father but by me." Now the reason that is important is because Jesus did not answer this question as if you do A, B, C, and D, you're good to go. He answered the question very particularly because he was exposing the fallacy of the perspective that this man had. He actually believed that if he checked off the right boxes, if he crossed the right T's and he dotted the right I's, from his perspective that he was good to go.

But here's the problem, verse 29. See the first word? "But." He willing to justify himself said, "who is my neighbor?" Now this man's a lawyer. He probably has the ability to somewhat think critically and Jesus has just posed a problem to him that if he will just do as he says he should do, then he's gonna be okay. But he realized, no matter how fervent he could be, no matter how faithful he could be, that there is nobody who can actually do what he said and do it the way it should be done. And so he does what every good individual does, he begins to justify himself and say, "Okay, who's my neighbor because I neglected to help this person but does that really count? I mean, after all, they don't really even live in my neighborhood. We don't even speak the same language. So surely the fact that I ignored that person, I should be good to go, right?"

Can I share with you the problem about self-justification? By the way, the word justify or to have justification means this, to present somebody as worthy of the standard that was set. He desired to justify himself. He desired to say, "According to the standard that I've set, I should be good." Can I share with you two problems with self-justification? The first problem is this: everybody justifies themselves according to their own standard that they prefer. There's a lot of people today that are justifying themselves before God and others saying, "It doesn't matter what the Bible says, this is just how I feel, and because I feel this way, it's truth for me." That's justifying oneself. Or oftentimes, just like this young man does, we see what the Bible says, and we say, "Well, surely that can't be literal. I mean, after all, it's a metaphor. So, generally speaking, eh, I think I've done okay." Do you see how we justify it? But here's the bigger problem about self-justification: it's not a Lone Ranger experience. Do you know what humanity does?

When we get in the process of justifying ourselves, we surround ourselves with yes men. That's what we do. We surround ourselves with people, listen, that agree with us because they have the same deficiencies as us. And so what he did is he justified himself. Basically what he was saying to Jesus is, "Well, I can meet the standard I've set that pleases me and you might be surprised, Jesus, how many people I've got that agree with me." Here's the good news: it doesn't matter how many people you have in your group that goes against the word of God, you're still wrong.

And so Jesus says, "Okay, we've got a problem here." And so there's a parallel. You say, "Well, parallel?" Well, yeah, in the next verse, verse 30, it says, "and Jesus answered him." What Jesus is about to do is speak one of the most famous stories and parables in all of the Bible, and when I mention the term a parallel, understand, we've got a very particular man who has created a system in his mind that makes him righteous and justified before God. The problem is he cannot see the shortcomings of his perspective and so Jesus tells a parable.

Now, let me show you the parallel of a parable. I think oftentimes we shortchange the parables. I mean Jesus told over 30 of them, we read them, we look at them and go, "Okay, it proves a good point. Be nice to your neighbor. Okay, on to the next story." Here's the problem and here's the parallel. In Mark 4, Jesus tells the parable of the sower. It's a famous story. I'm sure many of you are familiar with it. And in doing so, he says a man goes out to sow seed. He talks about the four different types of ground that it lands on. The first one didn't even hit the ground because it's swept up. The second one is hard ground, springs up quickly, goes away. Third one bears fruit for a while. The fourth one is good and stable. The disciples come to him. They say, "Jesus, um, man that was a nice story, but we're really struggling with what it means. Can you help us out?" I want you to hear what Jesus says, "If you can understand this parable, you can understand them all." Now what was Jesus saying there? You know what Jesus did in Mark 4? Every single element of the parable, he not only explained, he gave explicit details. For example, he said, "Okay, here's your explanation." That first seed that the fowls of the air came by, that was the story, right? You know what Jesus' explanation was? That's what happens when Satan comes and takes it out of your heart. The second one that sprang up quickly and then he said, that one is like those who hear the word of God, they're excited about it, but they fade away because they have no root within themselves. You say, "Pastor, what are you getting at?" Parables are more than just a simple story with a simple answer. Every single one of them, every element that Jesus spoke of has a very specific interpretation and understanding in the context of the story.

So here's the setting. We have a man trying to justify himself before Jesus, Jesus basically exposes that he is shortcoming in his perspective, so he tells a story, listen, not just about being nice to your neighbor, he tells a story to show the deficiencies of this man's perspective. So what was it that Jesus actually shared? Well, notice this very particular thing. Verse 30, "A certain man went down from Jerusalem to Jericho. He fell among the thieves which stripped him of his raiment, wounded him and departed, leaving him half dead." Now let's just all agree, basically Jesus said we've got a guy who's in a mess. He's by himself. He's all alone. He's half dead on the side of the road. Now, that's a bad

enough story but there's a bigger problem here. The bigger problem is verse 31 and 32. It says, "and by chance, there came a certain priest that way. When we saw him, he passed by on the other side. And likewise a Levite, when he was at the place, he came and he looked on him and he passed by on the other side." Not only is this man half dead, not only is this man in dire straits, he has no financial resources because he's been robbed, a thief has come to him, he is most likely in medical peril in need of some type of assistance, and if you've ever been to the Middle East on the side of the road between Jericho and Jerusalem, can I tell you what's out there? Nothing. I mean nothing. This guy's in a mess. Is it possible, could it be that there's a bigger parallel here? Is it possible that this is more than just a story of some random guy who fell to the thieves on the side of the road that a couple guys who should have helped him didn't help him as a "life lesson"?

So let's go back into these verses and let's look at them in the same manner of the parable of the sower. Let's look at the specifics of them and see what was it that Jesus could have possibly been trying to show us. Is it possible that more than just a man on the side of the road, that Jesus was drawing a parallel that the lawyer that stood in front of him is actually the man on the side of the road. Let's talk about this for just a moment. You've got a man, he's going from one place to the other, not just the lawyer per se but possibly represent a representative of humanity at large. What happened? He got attacked by thieves, and he was left half dead. I don't know if you realize that, but that's the story of humanity. You know, you and I as humanity, Adam and Eve, the Garden of Eden, the Bible says we just walked in the cool of the day with the Lord. We just went about our business doing everything that we knew that we should do, and then what happened? The thief showed up. You know what Jesus said about Satan in John 10? The thief comes to steal, kill, and destroy. And there in Genesis 3, it says that he entertained a conversation with Eve and with Adam and what did he convince them of? He convinced them that going contrary to God, and listen, a justification of their own selves is the way to go. Is that not what we hear from Eve's mouth? "This fruit is good for me. It's gonna taste good. It's gonna make me wise like the gods." You do realize that the Garden of Eden is the first example of self-justification that we have in the Bible. In Adam and Eve's eyes, they thought what they were doing, listen, was actually better than what God had instructed them to do.

So what happened? They got robbed, didn't they? They got robbed of joy. They got robbed of peace. They got robbed of prosperity. You do realize at the end of chapter 3, humanity's in a mess. They're out in the cold. They've got no food to eat and the only couple on planet Earth is upset and mad at each other. I mean, think about it for a moment. They've been robbed but here's the most important part, they were half dead. You say, "What do you mean they were half dead?" See back before humanity ate of that "forbidden fruit" back in Genesis 2, you know what God told Adam? He said, "If you'll do everything I tell you to do, eat of the right tree, everything's gonna be good. But if you eat of that one," what'd he say? "You will surely die." You know, if we could go back in the setting of Jesus' day where they were in the synagogue and they were actually reading it from the scroll of Genesis, you know what it actually says? "In the day that you eat," listen to this, "you will die die." It literally says you'll die twice. I got news for you, when

Adam and Eve did their best to cover themselves up with fig leaves, they were half dead. Oh, their heart was pumping. The blood was flowing. Their mind was entertaining ideas. Their soul was as dead as it can get.

And you know what? This lawyer standing in front of Jesus and anybody and everybody who's rejected Jesus is in the exact same position. In fact, today, it doesn't matter how your life parallels this individual. You may have the education he had, you may not. You may have the wealth and the connection he had, maybe not. But do you realize if there's never been a time in your life where you've understood the sacrifice that Jesus made on Mount Calvary and the reality of what the resurrection can do for your sin and for your soul, then guess what? You are a half-dead, robbed individual. Satan has robbed you of the joy that God wants you to have. He's robbed you of the peace that can be rightly yours. And guess what? He's also robbed you of heaven for all of eternity.

And you're half dead which is fascinating because not only does he expose the fallacy of this man's argument but then beginning verse 33 we have that word again, "but." Look who shows up on the scene, "But a certain Samaritan as he journeyed, he came, he had compassion on him and he went and he bound up his wounds pouring in oil and wine. He set him on his own beast. He brought him to the inn. He took care of him." Is it possible? Yes, we're supposed to be nice to our neighbors. Yes, we're supposed to be merciful. But is it possible that what Jesus is trying to communicate is that humanity is in the position of the man on the side of the road and the only person who can fix it is him? Is it possible that Jesus is actually the Samaritan in the story? You say, "Well, how can that be?" A Samaritan is a half-breed, half-Jew, half-gentile. Jesus was completely man, completely God, was he not? He was a theological Samaritan. I mean, if you want to look at the particular aspects of it, he really does fit the bill because you know what the problem with the Samaritan was? A Samaritan was received by nobody and despised by everybody. Sounds a whole lot like Jesus, does it not?

But then the particulars get better. What does it say he did? He had compassion on him. Is that not the biblical record of Jesus' life? He sees a woman at the well, he has compassion on her. He sees Nicodemus on the roof at night, he has compassion on him. There's a woman that's thrown at his feet, caught in adultery, he has compassion on her. He overlooks Jerusalem, he has compassion on it. That is really the story of Jesus' earthly ministry. He came to those that were half dead and had compassion on us.

So what does he do in particular? It says that he went unto him and he bound up his wounds. Now I know some of you are going to think I'm getting in the weeds, but I think I'm just fulfilling the prophecies here. Isaiah 53, one of the most famous passages in all the Old Testament about who the Messiah would be, you know what it says? He will bind up and heal our wounds and iniquities. Do you see the picture starting to develop? Jesus is basically painting this glorious picture for those of us who want to justify ourselves, for those of us who want to say it's according to our standard. He says, "Well, time out. So far what you've attempted hadn't worked. Why don't we try this?"

He says not only did he bind up his wounds, he poured in the oil and the wine. Now remember back to the parable of the sower, every item had a specific understanding and interpretation. And did you know what? In your Old Testament, by the way the New Testament didn't exist when Jesus told the story, in your Old Testament the oil more often than not represented the Holy Spirit and wine represented blood. What did Jesus, what was it said of him in Matthew 3? Remember he goes down to the Jordan River and John baptizes him. Remember what John the Baptist says? He's speaking of himself. "I baptize with water, but he," Jesus, "will baptize you with the Holy Spirit." On the night of his crucifixion, twice, Jesus pulled the disciples aside. He said, "Guys, here's the deal. It's actually beneficial for you that I depart from you because then the Holy Spirit will come unto you and he will comfort you and he will speak truth to you." And then the night of what we call the Last Supper, he held up a glass and he said, "In this wine is the new testament of my blood."

Do you see the picture that he's painting? See, here's why they left confused, he hadn't gone to Calvary yet. He hadn't raised from the dead yet. But we know that he has and we can look back at these stories and we can look back at these teachings and say, "Wow, he was painting an incredible picture." But there's a problem. You say, "Well, what do you mean there's a problem?" There is a problem in verse 35. Verse 35, he goes to the innkeeper and he says, "Here's two pence. When I come back, I'll pay the rest of the bill." You say, "Well, why is that a problem?" Because he doesn't say when he's coming back. He doesn't say, and I don't know about you, but I've checked into a whole lot of hotels in my life, and last time I checked, I don't get to go up to the front desk and say, "Hey, here's the deal, man, I don't have any money, but just trust me, there's a guy showing up, he got this thing, it's all good." How's that one gonna work out?

Now, I want you to think about the scene for just a moment. Think about this. You've got a man who's half dead, beaten within an inch of his life. He's been put in this inn and whoever this good Samaritan is says, "Here's two pence." Can I tell you the significance of a pence? You probably have a study Bible that will tell you in the margin. A pence was a daily wage. So basically he said for two days, he's got all that he needs, but on that third day, boy that's when the rubber hits the proverbial road, does it not? I can only imagine because you know innkeepers, you know people that do commerce for a living, they're in the business of making money and I get it, and I know what he's thinking. He's thinking, "You know what? As soon as that alarm clock goes off this guy's out of here because I know I've seen this a hundred times and that guy ain't coming back. This guy's getting evicted. I'm flipping the room. We're gonna get a new resident." They were, I guarantee you that inn owner gets up early in the morning to see how this was gonna play out. Have y'all seen the parallel yet? Have you seen it? Jesus said, "Hey, on third day, I'm going to come again and when I come again," notice he didn't say, I'll give you two more pence, what does he say? He says, "I'll take care of him whatsoever thou spendest more." In other words, Jesus says, "It doesn't matter how big the bill is, when I come back on day three, I got the tab." Do you see the parallel that's happening here?

Now I want to close the story with this incredible picture. Now imagine, I've got to go back to the beginning. You've got a man who came to Jesus saying, "You know what?"

According to my standards, I got this. I think everything's okay because I like my ideas, my friends like my ideas, what do you think about my ideas, Jesus?" And Jesus basically says, "Well, the problem, friend, is a thief has robbed you, you're half dead, and you need somebody to pay the bill you can't pay." And so at the end of the story, Jesus asked him a question, verse 36, "Which now of these three thinketh thou was the neighbor?" Verse 37, he said, "He that showed mercy on him." Then Jesus said, "Go and do likewise." Now this is the key to the whole story because usually we say, "Oh, go be nice, go be generous, go give away things." There's nothing wrong with doing that but why, after all the details that we've just walked through, why would Jesus say go and do likewise? And I'm going to tell you why. You had a man that was attempting to justify himself, and basically what Jesus is saying is, "Fine. You think you're that good? You be just as righteous as God in flesh, and you're good to go." Yet you and I both know there's not a one of us that can meet the standard of Jesus. That's why Revelation 20 is so important because at that great final judgment when God opens up the book of works, nobody debates. Nobody argues. Because the standard of righteousness isn't how you feel and the standard of righteousness isn't the latest thing that's being propagated or celebrated. The standard of righteousness is Jesus. And basically he says, "All right, big boy, you think you're invincible? You think you know all the answers? You think you got life by the proverbial horns? Then why don't you match what I'm doing and let's see how you do."

Wow. What a conclusion because this story wasn't set up any other way than how do I get eternal life, and Jesus concludes by saying not by doing anything that you think will get you there, but by trusting a Samaritan, Jesus, who can pay the price for "whatever the bill is." That's a great phrase that Jesus meant, whatever the bill is, I got it today. Today, maybe you and I need to learn the lesson of the good Samaritan, not just about being merciful and gracious, but realizing there is nobody who can save us but Jesus.

Let's pray with our heads bowed, our eyes closed. Maybe today you're with us here in person, maybe you're watching online, maybe even listening on the radio, and maybe today's that day where the Lord took an almost unbelievably familiar story, and hopefully today, peeled away some layers for you and you realized that no matter how good you are to your proverbial neighbor, you're never going to be good enough. No matter how great a system you've set up to justify yourself, it's never going to work. Maybe today's the day where you realize how desperately you need Jesus. The Bible says, whoever calls on the name of the Lord will be saved. It doesn't say whoever "gives away all his money." It doesn't say whoever helps every person they see. It doesn't say whoever joins a church, gets baptized. It says whoever calls on the name of the Lord. Maybe today's the day that you call out. All you've got to do is admit you've got a sin problem and believe that Jesus is the only answer. It's not about reading a script. If it was about reading a script, then this guy in Luke 10 would have had it made. It's about your heart, realizing its sinful, depraved condition and asking Jesus to save you. So maybe today your heart's cry, again it doesn't have to be what I would say or somebody else would say, it doesn't have to be out loud, maybe your hearts cry would go something like this. "God, today I realize I'm just like this lawyer. I've got a sin problem. There is no way, God, I'll ever meet the standard and, God, today that's why I need Jesus. God, I've been places I should have never been. I've participated in activities I had no business being a part of. God, you

know the words that have left my lips and the thoughts that have been between my ears. Lord, your Bible says the wages of my sin is death, but the gift of God is eternal life through Jesus Christ our Lord. God, today I believe, I believe I've got a sin problem that only Jesus can solve. I believe that Jesus loved me so much that he came on my behalf. He lived a sinless life on my behalf. God, today I believe that on Mount Calvary when he was bearing the nails of the cross, it was my sin, it was my transgression that nailed him there. But God today, thank you that on that third day when the tomb was discovered empty, there wasn't a sin bill that Jesus couldn't pay. And God today, I believe he paid my sin bill. In the best way I know how, God, I'm asking you to forgive me. I'm asking you to save me. I just want to turn my life over to you."

With our heads still bowed, our eyes still closed, maybe you're that person today. Maybe today you walked on this campus or you're watching online and you didn't realize that the thief had robbed you not just of this life but of the next. Maybe today you didn't realize that though you look good in the mirror, you're half dead in your soul. Maybe today's the day you called out. In a moment I'm going to pray for us, we're going to stand and sing. I just want to invite you just to step out to step forward. I'll be here. We've got a team here. We would love the privilege of not only hearing your story, but celebrating with you and praying with you and praying for you. But maybe today you say, "Pastor, I'm already saved but the Lord's been on me for a while about telling others through the ordinance of baptism." We'd love to have that conversation. Or maybe today you're like people we meet each and every week who say, "This is our home, this is our church family, we just want to be a part of it." Or maybe today you say, "You know what, I'm just going through a rough patch. It'd be really nice if somebody would just pray with me and pray for me." Whatever it is, we're here to help.

Lord Jesus, as we come to this time of decision, God, thank you. Thank you that when we were half dead "on the side of the road of life," you didn't just walk by like the Levite and the priest. God, you had compassion on us. You bound us and, God, you paid the price for our sin. Today I pray that all those other voices and all those other opinions just like that lawyer had would go by the wayside and we'd only respond to your voice. It is in the name of Jesus Christ we pray. Amen.