

Luke 10:25-37 Love and Mercy

**Life with God calls for total love for God and self-giving love for others.**

**1) What shall I do to inherit eternal life? (An Ultimate Question)**

- a) What is eternal life?
  - i) OT background: Dan. 12:2 “And many of those who sleep in the dust of the earth shall awake, some to everlasting life, and some to shame and everlasting contempt.”
  - ii) The life of the age to come
  - iii) Resurrection/Vindication
  - iv) Sharing the life of God (Dan. 12:3 “. . . shine like the brightness of the sky above . . . like the stars forever and ever”)
- b) What does it mean to “inherit” eternal life?
  - i) This life with God was promised to Abraham and his seed—“I will be God to you and to your seed after you . . . I will be their God” (Gen. 17:7, 8).
  - ii) Inheriting the land/earth was part of this promise, so that the hope of eternal life was life with God in the land/earth. The context of Deuteronomy 6, which the lawyer quotes in 27 is concerned with this idea of possessing inheritance.
    - (1) Moses’ generation failed to enter the land because of unbelief, so they did not inherit the promise of life.
    - (2) Later generations would be exiled from the land because of unbelief (covenant breaking), thus not inheriting the promise of life.
    - (3) In Jesus’ day, Israel was in the land, but still exiled from the presence of God, so the key question on every Jew’s mind was “How can I/we inherit eternal life?” In other words, “How can we enjoy the life with God that was promised to Abraham’s seed?”
- c) How was this a “test” for Jesus? The lawyer wanted Jesus to state plainly His plan to bring in the Kingdom of God to discredit Jesus or implicate Jesus in something.

**2) What is written in the Law? What do you recite from it? (A Leading Question)**

- a) Jesus points to God’s Word for the answer, and specifically to the original covenant document known as the Law (Torah, Books of Moses, Pentateuch—5 Books).
  - i) God does not change, therefore His moral commands and plan for humanity does not change.
  - ii) The Law contains the gospel, the goal of which is to live in loving communion with God (Romans 3:21, 31).
- b) The Royal Law of Love (James 2:8)
  - i) Total Love for God (Deuteronomy 6:5)
    - (1) heart—seat of affections and intellect
    - (2) soul—life
    - (3) strength—physical vigor
    - (4) mind—seat of intellect
  - ii) Self-giving Love for Others (Leviticus 19:18)
- c) Easier said than done. “You have **answered** correctly; keep **doing** this, and you will live.”
  - i) “Do” 4x in this text (vv. 25, 28, 37a, 37b)
  - ii) Leviticus 18:5 “You shall therefore keep My statutes and My rules; if a person does them, he shall live by them: I am the LORD.”

**3) Who is my neighbor? (An Evasive Question)**

- a) The lawyer desires a definition of neighbor that will establish his righteousness as a covenant keeping Israelite who will inherit life without the need of change (repentance).
- b) Worldly Ethics: I only have to do good to those I deem to be good.
- c) Calvin: “It is a mercenary love which the children of the world entertain for each other.”

- d) Based on Leviticus 19, which the lawyer quoted, the correct question would have been: Who is God? What is He like? Whom does He love?
  - i) Leviticus 19:2 “Speak to all the congregation of the people of Israel and say to them, ‘You shall be holy, for I the LORD your God am holy.’” Then follows the laws which include “You shall love your neighbor as yourself.”
  - ii) Luke 6:35-36 “But love your enemies, and do good, and lend, expecting nothing in return, and your reward will be great, and you will be sons of the Most High, for He is kind to the ungrateful and the evil. Be merciful, even as your Father is merciful.”
  - iii) **Common Grace** is God’s goodness to all, including His enemies who hate Him.

**4) Which of these three, do you think, proved to be a neighbor to the man who fell among the robbers? (A Subversive Question)**

- a) Jesus would have us identify, first, with the wounded man. If you are the guy in the ditch, are you going to wrangle over the definition of neighbor?
- b) The priest and Levite represent the Temple establishment, the heart of Israel’s identity politically and religiously.
  - i) “Hope from Israel fades for the wounded man” (James Edwards).
  - ii) No one, including the lawyer, would have missed Jesus’ condemnation of the corrupted Temple administration.
  - iii) Jesus’ critique goes beyond the Temple to every aspiration of the kingdom that rejects the path of Jesus.
- c) “A Samaritan” would have been a jarring twist.
  - i) “Priests, Levites, and People of Israel” was the standard trio from the OT.
  - ii) “Priest, Levite, and Samaritan” would be like “Peanut butter and pickles”
  - iii) Samaritans were rejected by the Jews as anti-Israelites, genealogically mixed, and religiously perverse.
  - iv) “Compassion” (v. 33) is in contrast to “passed by on the other side.”
  - v) Self-giving love (vv. 34-35)
    - (1) “Mercy is always something done *with* people not *to* or *on* them. For the Samaritan, it meant getting down in the ditch with the victim, getting bloody lifting the man up, walking while another who cannot walk rides, reaching into one’s pocket to pay for another, and risking never being appreciated and perhaps still being hated for all the trouble” (David Garland).
    - (2) “When Samaritans help Jews, and Jews abandon prejudices and embrace their enemies, the kingdom of God is in their midst” (Garland).
  - vi) Inasmuch as the Samaritan embodies the mercy of God in this parable, he certainly points us to Jesus who embodies the mercy of God in reality and brings us into the Kingdom of God through the self-giving love of the cross.
- d) The first question for the lawyer, as for each of us, is: Will you accept the mercy of the Samaritan/Jesus (cf. John 8:48)?

**5) You go, and do likewise.**

- a) Beware of hiding a loveless heart behind pious words and rituals.
- b) “The hypocrisy of men is chiefly detected by means of the second table of commandments (relating to love of neighbor)—for, while they pretend to be eminent worshipers of God, they openly violate charity towards their neighbors” (Calvin)
- c) When you love others for the love of God, you are enjoying a foretaste of the inheritance of the saints in light (Col. 1:12).
- d) God is holy-love, therefore our love must be a holy-love.

**Doxology: To Him who loves us and has freed us from our sins by His blood and made us a kingdom, priest to His God and Father, to Him be glory and dominion forever and ever. Amen.**