



A Post Tenebras Lux Sunday Sermon...

The Good Samaritan

Luke 10:25-37

^{ESV} **Luke 10:25...** And behold, a lawyer stood up to put him to the test, saying, "Teacher, what shall I do to inherit eternal life?" ²⁶ He said to him, "What is written in the Law? How do you read it?" 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 he, desiring to justify himself, said to Jesus, "And who is my neighbor?" ³⁰ Jesus replied, "A man was going down from Jerusalem to Jericho, and he fell among robbers, who stripped him and beat him and departed, leaving him half dead. ³¹ Now by chance a priest was going down that road, and when he saw him he passed by on the other side. ³² So likewise a Levite, when he came to the place and saw him, passed by on the other side. ³³ But a Samaritan, as he journeyed, came to where he was, and when he saw him, he had compassion. ³⁴ He went to him and bound up his wounds, pouring on oil and wine. Then he set him on his own animal and brought him to an inn and took care of him. ³⁵ And the next day he took out two denarii and gave them to the innkeeper, saying, 'Take care of him, and whatever more you spend, I will repay you when I come back.' ³⁶ Which of these three, do you think, proved to be a neighbor to the man who fell among the robbers?" ³⁷ He said, "The one who showed him mercy." And Jesus said to him, "You go, and do likewise."

It seems like there is always a question behind every question. I'm not sure why we do it, but we almost never ask the real question that's on our mind. Instead, we often try to lay an elaborate framework so we can get the particular answer

we want to hear, or so we can justify our behavior or position on some issue. The funny thing is most of the time it works.

Kids, of course, take awhile to learn how we ask questions and often try to go ahead and answer questions straight up. I remember one time when Beverly was babysitting a bunch of kids in our home and had to take a carload to swimming lessons. The swimming instructor got all the kids in the water and then said this, "Now kids when you go swimming you must never swim alone. You must always have a swimming buddy. Does anyone here know why?" Patrick, one of the little boys my wife babysat got very excited and raised his hand and then shouted out, "Because you might get mugged."

Adults however learn the game. They learn that it is best to go at things obliquely. I mean think about how we each dread the question, "Honey, are you doing anything right now?" We know there will be a follow-up question and that that question will get to the real request.

Sometimes, however, the way in which a question is asked reveals something even deeper. This morning we see a perfect illustration of just that point. In our story, we find a lawyer asking Jesus a question. Now to start with, I should point out that the lawyer is not a lawyer like we think of today. In Jesus' day, a lawyer was someone who was an expert on Old Testament law. He was someone who studied the words of the law and made a practice of interpreting the law for others. In that sense, he was sort of a cross between a preacher and Miss Manners.

In the story before us, we find him asking Jesus a question. Now most of the time, the Bible doesn't tell us the motivation behind peoples' words. But in this story it does.

Notice the way verse 25 reads.

^{ESV} **Luke 10:25**... And behold, a lawyer stood up to put him to the test, saying, "Teacher, what shall I do to inherit eternal life?"

What Luke tells us is that this lawyer wanted to put Jesus to the test. I'm not sure why he wanted to put Jesus to the test. It may have been that he disliked what Jesus taught or the fact that Jesus hung out with some pretty unsavory characters. He may have he wanted to make Jesus out to be the fool or perhaps he was angry about what Jesus had just said to His disciples. You see in the verses that go before the passage we're looking at, Jesus had pronounced a wonderful blessing on His disciples. Look at what he says in verse 21.

^{ESV} **Luke 10:21**... In that same hour he rejoiced in the Holy Spirit and said, "I thank you, Father, Lord of heaven and earth, that you have hidden these things from the wise and understanding and revealed them to little children; yes, Father, for such was your gracious will. ²² All things have been handed over to me by my Father, and no one knows who the Son is except the Father, or who the Father is except the Son and anyone to whom the Son chooses to reveal him." ²³ ¶ Then turning to the disciples he said privately, "Blessed are the eyes that see what you see! ²⁴ For I tell you that many prophets and kings desired to see what you see, and did not see it, and to hear what you hear, and did not hear it."

You can get a sense, I think, of why the lawyer may have been offended. Jesus had told His disciples that of all the men that had ever lived they were the most blessed because He had revealed to them things that the best and brightest men did not or could not understand. He had revealed to them things that the great

men of the Bible had longed to know and to hear. That would have been especially hard for someone who thought he was an expert on God and God's law. So the lawyer asks Jesus a question. Now, I'm curious about what the question behind the question may have been that the lawyer wanted to ask. It may have been, **"Do you think we know less about the law than you disciples?"** Or it may have been, **"Do you think you are the only one who knows the truth?"** But that's not how the question came out. It came out, **"Teacher, what shall I do to inherit eternal life?"**

Now the amazing thing is that Jesus chose not to answer the question directly. Instead, He answers the question with a question. Look at verse 26.

^{ESV} **Luke 10:26**...He said to him, **"What is written in the Law? How do you read it?"**

Now the lawyer doesn't seem shocked or dismayed by the question. I mean, after all, he was an expert on the law. He certainly had no intention or thought of being tripped up by an itinerant, country preacher. So, he answers the question straight up.

^{ESV} **Luke 10:27**... 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."

Now his answer is a great answer, straight out of the Old Testament, straight out of the law of Moses. In fact, he takes two passages from the Old Testament and puts them together. The first passage is Deuteronomy 6:5.

^{ESV} **Deuteronomy 6:4...**"Hear, O Israel: The LORD our God, the LORD is one. ⁵
You shall love the LORD your God with all your heart and with all your soul and
with all your might.

The second passage is from Leviticus 19:18.

^{ESV} **Leviticus 19:17...**"You shall not hate your brother in your heart, but you shall
reason frankly with your neighbor, lest you incur sin because of him. ¹⁸ You shall
not take vengeance or bear a grudge against the sons of your own people, but
you shall love your neighbor as yourself: I am the LORD.

This lawyer knew the words of the law. He did what every good Jewish boy had
been taught to do since birth. So he summed up man's obligation before God by
summing up the tablets of the law. His summary went like this. The first tablet of
the law contains a summary that reflects all of the commandments about how we
should our lives before God. It includes the commandments:

You shall have no other gods before Me.
You shall not make any graven image.
You shall not take the name of the Lord in vain.
You shall remember the Sabbath day, to keep it holy.
Honor your father and your mother.

So the way to love the Lord your God with all your heart, strength and mind is
simply to keep the first five commandments. Then, he went on. The way to love
your neighbor as yourself, is to keep the second table of the law. It contains a
summary of all the commandments that reflect just how to do that. It includes
the commandments:

You shall not commit murder.
You shall not commit adultery.

You shall not steal.
You shall not lie.
You shall not covet.

It was a good answer. I'm sure he felt good about how he had answered Jesus. He may have even leaned back and taken a deep breath and thought to himself, **"I'll bet He wasn't expecting someone like me."** He certainly wasn't expecting the kind of answer he got. Jesus looked at him, and without sarcasm or anger spoke the worst words any sinner can ever hear.

^{ESV} **Luke 10:28**...And he said to him, "You have answered correctly; do this, and you will live."

I expect at that point there was a measure of silence. I suspect that the lawyer probably expected more from Jesus, at very least he expected more words. What he got was ten words, short simple and to the point. His mind was, no doubt, whirling. He may have thought to himself,

Well, of course, my answer was right intellectually. But He has taken my thoughts and matched them up to a person's actions. He's saying you don't just need to know the words, you actually have to do the words. And, of course, no one can actually do the words, not all the time. If that is what the text really meant, that means that...

Suddenly, the lawyer found himself breaking the heavy silence to ask a follow-up question. But now he had more on his mind than testing Jesus. I love the way Luke puts it:

^{ESV} **Luke 10:29**...But he, desiring to justify himself, said to Jesus, "And who is my neighbor?"

You can see from his question...you can get a sense from what he asks...of what was troubling the lawyer. He wanted to justify himself because, knowing the law, he was troubled by the impact of what Jesus had said. He was clearly thinking about and wanting Jesus to put some sort of limits on the command.

He may have been thinking about those people, people like the Jesus' disciples who were ignorant and uncultured and thus hard to love. Or he may have been thinking about the great unwashed that permeated the regions of Judea and Galilee. He may have even been thinking about Gentiles or even worse, he may have been thinking about the Samaritans that plagued the countryside.

You see in New Testament times, Gentiles and especially Samaritans were viewed with bitter contempt. The Samaritans, in particular, were held in special disdain. They were mongrels, half-breeds, half Jews and half Gentiles. They were hated as the enemies of Israel because they had failed to maintain the purity of their bloodline, and even worse because they had failed to maintain purity in their worship. Sometimes when Jews traveled from the outer parts of Israel to Jerusalem they would walk around Samaria altogether, so they could avoid contamination. Jews were absolutely forbidden to marry Samaritans and they could not so much as receive a cup of water or a morsel of bread from the hand of a Samaritan without being ritually defiled. When you understand their bitter hatred, you can get a sense of the enormity of the shock the disciples felt in John 4 when Jesus asked the Samaritan woman at the well for a drink of water.

So, the lawyer asks Jesus his follow-up question hoping for some reprieve, some escape from the demands of the command.

Now two things strike me as remarkable about Jesus' answer. The first thing that strikes me as remarkable is that He doesn't attack the lawyer with regard to the first table of the law. He could have said,

Why are you worried about who your neighbor is? Shouldn't you first be worried about loving the Lord your God with all your heart, strength and mind. You're not really thinking that you're really obeying the first tablet of the law are you?

But Jesus doesn't do that. Instead he deals with the man...where he is. The lawyer wants to know who his neighbor is, so Jesus answers him. That leads me, of course, to the second amazing thing about Jesus' answer. He could have just said, **"Everybody is your neighbor"** and been done with the lawyer. Instead, He puts a face on things by telling the lawyer a story. He told him *this* story.

^{ESV} **Luke 10:30...** Jesus replied, "A man was going down from Jerusalem to Jericho, and he fell among robbers, who stripped him and beat him and departed, leaving him half dead. ³¹ Now by chance a priest was going down that road, and when he saw him he passed by on the other side. ³² So likewise a Levite, when he came to the place and saw him, passed by on the other side. ³³ But a Samaritan, as he journeyed, came to where he was, and when he saw him, he had compassion. ³⁴ He went to him and bound up his wounds, pouring on oil and wine. Then he set him on his own animal and brought him to an inn and took care of him. ³⁵ And the next day he took out two denarii and gave them to the innkeeper, saying, 'Take care of him, and whatever more you spend, I will repay you when I come back.'

Now, notice how Jesus lays the story out. He has a certain man, a man whose origin is completely unknown, fall prey to a band of vicious robbers. Then Jesus has a priest and a Levite pass by and see the poor, abused man lying beside the road. But instead of getting involved they decide to pass him by on the other side of the road...that is, not only do they not help him they actually move over to other side of the road so they don't have to see him. They are either too afraid or too pious to trouble themselves about the poor wretch. Perhaps, they were afraid they would be defiled by handling a dead man, or perhaps they were afraid he was a Gentile or a Samaritan.

Finally, Jesus has a Samaritan pass by, a wretched, despised Samaritan. And the Samaritan takes pity on the poor man, dressing his wounds with his own oil and wine, putting him on his own beast, laying out his own time and money to see that the poor, helpless man is taken care of.

Brothers and sisters, do you see what Jesus did? He told a story that stripped away all of the pretense hiding the lawyer's question. The lawyer stood condemned by his own words and by the words of the law.

You shall love your neighbor as yourself.

It is, of course, this part of the passage that condemns us when we spend any time thinking about it. We have, today, the same tendency that this lawyer had. We examine our spirituality by the second table of the law, but that's all right. It is fully adequate to expose us for what we are. It knocks us down and pummels us anytime we consider what it actually says, so one of the things that happens is that we just stop listening to what it says.

That is why the Reformers took such pains to teach their people the rigors of the law. It was the same for all of them whether it was Luther, or Calvin, or Knox. I particularly love the way Luther explained the commandments of the second tablet of the law in his shorter catechism. Luther even included the word “neighbor” in most of his explanations. Listen to what he says in his shorter catechism.

You must not kill.

Q. What does this mean?

A. We must fear and love God, so that we will neither harm nor hurt our neighbor's body, but help him and care for him when he is ill.

You must not commit adultery.

Q. What does this mean?

A. We must fear and love God, so that our words and actions will be clean and decent and so that everyone will love and honor their spouses.

You must not steal.

Q. What does this mean?

A. We must fear and love God, so that we will neither take our neighbor's money or property, nor acquire it by fraud or by selling him poorly made products, but will help him improve and protect his property and career.

You must not tell lies about your neighbor.

Q. What does this mean?

A. We must fear and love God, so that we will not deceive by lying, betraying, slandering or ruining our neighbor's reputation, but will defend him, say good things about him, and see the best side of everything he does.

You must not desire your neighbor's house or your neighbor's wife, servant, maid, animals or anything that belongs to him..

Q. What does this mean?

A. We must fear and love God, so that we will not attempt to trick our neighbor out of his inheritance or house, take it by pretending to have a right to it, etc. but help him to keep and improve it. We must fear and love God, so

that we will not release his cattle, take his employees from him or seduce his wife, but urge them to stay and do what they ought to do.

Of course hearing Luther's explanation of the law draws our minds back to the lawyer. How terrible this story must have been for him to hear. But Jesus doesn't stop there, instead he turns to ask the lawyer one more question and what a question it is. Speaking in a plain, soft voice He asks:

^{ESV} **Luke 10:36**...Which of these three, do you think, proved to be a neighbor to the man who fell among the robbers?"

The question leads me to wonder, as I was taught not to do in seminary, what the lawyer must have been thinking. I suspect that he wished he had never heard of Jesus. Certainly, he wished that he had never asked Jesus that first question. He must have felt the eyes of everyone there staring at him, waiting for his answer. I am sure he must have felt like the young Confederate private who was once brought before the icy blue eyes of General Robert E. Lee for some disciplinary action. The young private could not stop shaking and when Lee noticed his shaking he tried to console the young man. **"Private"**, he said, **"you've no reason to be afraid. You'll get justice here."** To which the young man responded, **"Yes sir that is why I'm shaking."**

So the lawyer mustered up his courage and answered our Lord.

^{ESV} **Luke 10:37**...He said, "The one who showed him mercy." And Jesus said to him, "You go, and do likewise."

The answer is a true one, but it also reveals something about the heart of the lawyer. It seems he just could not bring himself to say the word "Samaritan". I

do not know if it was because of his own deep abiding hatred of the Samaritans or perhaps because of his fear of the other Pharisees and lawyers that were there. Whatever the reason, Jesus in His wonderful mercy gives him one last application of the law. With a voice of compassion and a desire to break the man loose from his own complacent self-righteousness, the Lord Jesus says...

^{ESV} **Luke 10:37...** "You go, and do likewise."

Now friends, in closing I have two words from the Lord for each of you. They are not words of my own making but they come right out of this morning's story.

The first word is simple enough. If you are here this morning working your way to heaven this is what you have to do.

You must 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 you must love your neighbor as yourself.

That means that you must fulfill this summary of God's law perfectly. God, you see, does not grade on a curve. You can't do anything from selfish motivation. You must keep His law to perfection, and you must do so every hour of every day for the rest of your life.

But I also have a second word from the Lord, for those of you who may be saying to yourselves, **"You know I just can't do what the law demands. There is a part of me that is so consumed with me that I can't really think outside of myself. Is there no other way? Is there no hope for someone like me?"**

If that is what you're thinking I have a word for you as well.

You see brothers and sisters, there was another Good Samaritan. One, who, though despised and rejected by His own people, came and found us in the throes of death, stripped naked of the original righteousness we once possessed, beaten down by our own sin, by the world, by the flesh and by the devil. He found us in our sin passed over by those who could not or would not show mercy. He poured not His own oil and wine but His own blood upon our sins.

He placed us not on His beast of burden but instead bore our sin in His own body upon the cross. He clothed our nakedness with His own precious righteousness and when anyone puts their trust in Him He declares them to be righteous in a way that satisfies God's consuming, holy demand.

This other Good Samaritan is the Lord Jesus, Himself.

He offers mercy and it is mercy wide enough to forgive. There is peace to all those who cast their eternity into His hands. He obeyed every single aspect of these awesome and terrible laws and He obeyed them in our place, so there is mercy and mercy and mercy besides. Place your faith and hope and love in Him, even if you are a Christian already this word is the same. Come to His mercy when you fail. Come to His mercy when you are angry at your brother without cause. Come to His mercy when your desire for things unholy consumes you.

Come to His mercy when you feel the compulsion to speak evil of your brother and desire to slander him and his reputation before others. Come to Christ, pleading His mercy whenever you fail to,

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 you must love your neighbor as yourself.

Come to Him who has born all our sin and sorrows. There is no demand that He has not fulfilled already in your behalf. We have His own promise, that: **...the one who comes to Me I will certainly not cast out.**

So come. You know His compassion and you have His promise. Do this and you will live.

Let us pray.