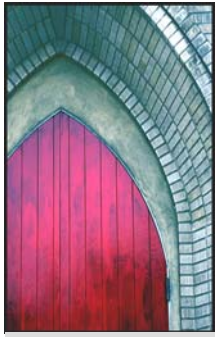


# MISSIONS & OUTREACH

Part 2 - Why Jesus Won't Leave Us Alone...

SCRIPTURE TEXT: LUKE 10:25-37 (ESV)



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January 22, 2006

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## *Upon This Foundation:*

In part 1, we saw from the summary of the Law in Luke that outreach is the 2nd greatest activity in the world. Worship is the first because God is ultimate, not man, and because there will come a day when missions will cease, but worship abides forever. As we proceed deeper in, we do so upon this foundation that God's glory must be central to our thinking about ministry to the poor because the Bible talks about the believer's responsibility to care for the poor more than almost any other Christian activity—including prayer and Bible study.

Prayer and study draw us into a closer walk with Jesus and give expression to our worship. But when we think about loving the poor, do we think along the same lines? To Jesus, mercy is as essential an expression of worship as anything else we are called to. Yet we can spend our lives missing this point—as illustrated by the lawyer in Lk 10. But the devotion Jesus has for awakening our hearts to this point is seen in His response.

## *Luke 10:25-37*

*<sup>25</sup>And behold, a lawyer stood up to put Jesus to the test, saying, "Teacher, what shall I do to inherit eternal life?" <sup>26</sup>He said to him, "What is written in the Law? How do you read it?" <sup>27</sup>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." <sup>28</sup>And he said to him, "You have answered correctly; do this, and you will live."*

*<sup>29</sup>But he, desiring to justify himself, said to Jesus, "And who is my neighbor?" <sup>30</sup>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."*

*<sup>31</sup>Now by chance a priest was going down that road, and when he saw him he passed by on the other side. <sup>32</sup>So likewise a Levite, when he came to the place and saw him, passed by on the other side.*

*<sup>33</sup>But a Samaritan, as he journeyed, came to where he was, and when he saw him, he had compassion. <sup>34</sup>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. <sup>35</sup>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." <sup>36</sup>Which of these three, do you think, proved to be a neighbor to the man who fell among the robbers?" <sup>37</sup>He said, "The one who showed him mercy." And Jesus said to him, "You go, and do likewise."*

## *Go Get 'Em, Jesus?*

Life is short. What radical thing might God be calling you to—especially with regards to loving your neighbor? The question makes us nervous because we all know stories of God blowing in on someone's life, and then next thing you know they're moving to Africa or adopting kids from a third world country or selling their home in the suburbs and moving to the poor part of town because they believe God is calling them to help.

We get nervous because what if God calls us to something similar? Even more nervous as we begin to realize that there are some things He may be calling us to—and in fact already has in Scripture—that honestly we're just not willing to do. So we can begin to look at our call to love the poor as God's way of exacting a little payment for our unwillingness to sacrifice as others have—"If I make this much, I really should give some to charity." But what if God **is** calling **you** to something radical? And what if His reason is not vindictive, but loving?

Lisa and I have this thing we do that makes us laugh. Whenever someone gets put in their place or delivers an argument ending one-liner, one of us will say, "Slam!" Jesus had more opportunities to say "Slam!" than anyone ever. Is this passage one of them? Is Jesus kicking this guy to the curb or pulling him close? When we consider Jesus' heart behind this conversation, we see that it isn't vindictive, but loving. He is coaxing this man out from under the umbrella of self-righteousness he has put up. Whenever Jesus does this, it isn't to shame, but to redeem.

## *What Happens When You Test Jesus:*

Jesus was popular among the people. People gathered in throngs to hear Him, but He was not a typical rabbi. He spent a lot of time with known "sinners." He entered their homes, ate at their tables, received their expressions of love—like being anointed with a harlot's perfume—and regarded them as people he actually liked being around. This offended other Law experts because it seemed to them that Jesus took a soft line on who a "righteous" person should spend time with. And if He took a soft line on this, perhaps He took a soft line on the Law of God.

So the law expert tests Jesus with the most basic question of the Law—"How is a person saved?" He wants to see if Jesus will minimize the importance of the Law with regards to salvation. But Jesus responds with a trap of His own by answering his question with another question—"What does the Law say?" As an expert, the lawyer gives the standard summary—love God and love your neighbor. Jesus replies, "Do this and you will live."

The lawyer moves from testing Jesus to defending himself. He thinks, "Have I loved God? I've given myself to becoming an expert in His Law. Surely that demonstrates my devotion to Him. Have I loved my neighbor? As for my neighbors, my fellow countrymen, the children of Israel, I have given my professional life to serving them. Isn't it loving to impart to my neighbor my expertise of the Law?" To justify himself as a keeper of the Law, he baits Jesus; "Who is my neighbor?" thinking Jesus will say, "All the children of Israel." But instead Jesus says, "That reminds me of a story."

The parable of the Good Samaritan exposes the lawyer to be neither an expert nor keeper of the Law. To this do we say, “*Slam!*” Why did Jesus become a man? To save sinners—to fulfill the righteous requirements of the Law that we’re powerless to keep—which includes law experts as well as harlots. See, law experts, harlots, tax-collectors, republicans, democrats, rich people, poor people, Samaritans, priests and Levites are all prone to the same trap—to find our identity in our title or expertise, and not in Jesus’ sacrifice on our behalf.

What “*title*” is most sacred to you? How do you justify that your life is worth something to God? Do you measure that by your professional success? Your academic achievements? Your uniqueness? Your family? Your knowledge of the Bible? Its an important question, because what if what you count on to make you acceptable to God conflicts with God’s call to surrender everything and follow Him? What do you do when you come to a fork in the road where your expertise or identity beckons you one way but the call to take up your cross and follow Jesus beckons you another and you’re conflicted about which to take?

## *Finding Yourself in the Story:*

Whenever we trust in anything other than the righteousness of Christ to make us presentable to God, Jesus, compelled by His love for us, drives us to despair of it. And this is what He does with this lawyer. He thinks himself an expert in the Law, but Jesus exposes him as a law-breaker. When Jesus asks him to summarize the Law, he does, but getting the right answer is a far cry from living that answer. So Jesus sets out to bring him to despair of his own self-righteousness. How does He do it?

Jesus expounds the 2nd great command with a story about the necessity of showing mercy. Jesus shows the man two pictures of what being a neighbor isn’t, and one picture of what being a neighbor is. (*It’s ironic how the Lawyer can suggest he is justified in loving his neighbor as himself by taking a narrow definition of word, though his intent for even having this conversation was to publicly humiliate Jesus, not only a fellow Israelite, but one who shared the same profession. This was a failure to love Jesus as he loved himself, and he missed it. And the story Jesus told brought that home.*)

It would have been understood that the beaten traveler was a Jew because the road from Jerusalem to Jericho was in Judea, and because this was a conversation between two teachers of the Law. If the man was any other nationality, Jesus would have specified it, as he did with the Samaritan—a nationality the Jews despised. The other two characters, the priest and the Levite, are clearly foils—examples of what not to do. So the only person in the story the Lawyer is left to identify with is the man lying beaten in the road! With this, Jesus reminds him of an essential truth—if we’re to be saved, we need mercy... all of us.

## *My Hope is Built On Nothing Less:*

To receive mercy, we need to come to the end of our belief in our expertise or titles to save us. We need to understand that unless someone comes along, picks us up, carries us out of our mortal peril, binds up our wounds and covers the cost healing our brokenness demands, we will perish. Jesus does not allow the man to regard himself as the mighty, strong, giver of help, but as the recipient. Why? Because Jesus wants this man to embrace what is written in the Law he professes to be an expert in—Isaiah 64:6: “*We have all become like one who is unclean, and all our righteous deeds are like a polluted garment.*”

Jesus wants to take us to the place where we see that our righteousness is filthy rags. Why does He want to do this? To put us in our place? To say “*slam?*” No. He does this so that we might cast ourselves upon the mercy of Christ for our very life and breath... so that we might respond to the Gospel as one farmer in Connecticut in the 1740’s, Robert Cole, did when he heard George Whitefield preach. He said: “*My hearing him preach gave me a heart wound. By God’s blessing, my old foundation was broken up, and I saw that my righteousness would not save me.*” It is the love of Christ that wounds us in this way.

Jesus delights to give us “*heart wounds,*” so we might abandon any other hope of justification outside of His grace. He gives “*heart wounds*” so we might abandon any other view of ourselves outside that as ones in need of mercy. He gives “*heart wounds*” so we might know our hope is built on nothing less than Jesus’ blood and righteousness. What a merciful thing for Jesus to show us that without mercy, nothing can save us. It is grace that Jesus chases us to the end of our self-righteousness and shows it to be insufficient. Why? Because it is!

## *A Wounded Heart Beholds Poverty:*

Jesus invites the law expert to reconsider how well he keeps the 2nd great command. And you cannot examine your fidelity to this command without also having to examine the quality of your love for God. Throughout Scripture caring for the poor is presented as the test of genuine love for God. 1 John 3:17 says, “*If anyone has the world’s goods and sees his brother in need, yet closes his heart against him, how does God’s love abide in him?*”

Its **really** seeing our brother in need that often eludes us. Captured in the film, “**End of the Spear,**” missionary Nate Saint and 4 others prepare to make contact with an extremely violent tribe in Ecuador. Nate’s son, Steve, sees that they have packed guns, only to fire in the air to scare off attackers. Steve asks his dad, “*If they attack you, will you fight back?*” His dad lovingly says, “*No, son. We can’t. They’re not ready for Heaven yet. We are.*” What a picture of **really** seeing a brother in need. I don’t know that I could have or would have said that to my son. But I believe it was by grace that Nate Saint did.

I don’t know if Jesus is calling you to sell everything you have and move to Africa, or if He is calling you to adopt some children who need a loving home, or if He’s calling you to lay down you life and die for the sake of the Gospel. I don’t know. Here’s what I do know. He calls all of us to care for the poor, and so we must **behold** poverty. The priest and the Levite saw the man in the road, but would not behold him. They just passed by as if he were not there. Beloved, he’s everywhere!

And our lives are happening now. They happen once. By grace Jesus will not leave us alone to become self-professing experts in a law we do not and cannot keep. The life He has for us is so much greater! It is a life lived with the heart wound of grace—that we would find our identity in Christ alone... That there would be nothing in our lives we wouldn’t surrender for the love of God... That there would be nothing we would desire more than intimacy with God, and nothing we would look to to justify us except the mercy and grace of Jesus Christ... And that there would be no one we wouldn’t touch because of the weight of the memory of our heart wound, our desperate need for mercy which came to us through the touch of Christ! I believe that there is no richer life than this. This is a call to live like the princes and princesses of His Kingdom! And I believe this is why Jesus will not leave us alone on this.