

Day 2

The Good Samaritan: Love your neighbor

Yesterday we talked about the The love God has for His people and how He expects us to love Him.

Today we are going to look at what it means to love our neighbor and those around us.

In our theme scripture Matthew 22:36-39, a lawyer challenges Jesus asking him, “Teacher, which is the great commandment in the Law?”

Jesus answers him saying, “You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind. This is the great and first commandment. And a second is like it: You shall love your neighbor as yourself” (ESV).

The first verse Jesus quotes is from Deuteronomy 6:5, but the second is from Leviticus.

For Jesus, to love your neighbor as yourself meant Leviticus 19:9–18:

“When you reap the harvest of your land, you shall not reap your field right up to its edge, neither shall you gather the gleanings after your harvest. And you shall not strip your vineyard bare, neither shall you gather the fallen grapes of your vineyard. You shall leave them for the poor and for the sojourner: I am the LORD your God.

You shall not steal; you shall not deal falsely; you shall not lie to one another. You shall not swear by my name falsely, and so profane the name of your God: I am the LORD.

You shall not oppress your neighbor or rob him. The wages of a hired worker shall not remain with you all night until the morning. You shall not curse the deaf or put a stumbling block before the blind, but you shall fear your God: I am the LORD.

You shall do no injustice in court. You shall not be partial to the poor or defer to the great, but in righteousness shall you judge your neighbor. You shall not go around as a slanderer among your people, and you shall not stand up against the life of your neighbor: I am the LORD.

You shall not hate your brother in your heart, but you shall reason frankly with your neighbor, lest you incur sin because of him. 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” (ESV).

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- Live generously towards the poor and alien (Lev. 19:9–10).
- Do not steal from anyone (Lev. 19:11).
- Do not be deceptive in dealings with people (Lev. 19:11).
- Do not swear in God’s name (Lev. 19:12).
- Do not oppress, rob, or exploit the poor by paying unfair wages (Lev. 19:13).

- Do not curse the deaf or put a stumbling block before the blind (Lev. 19:14).
- Do not be partial to the poor or show favor to the great but judge honestly (Lev. 19:15).
- Do not commit financial fraud. The word *slander* in Hebrew is *rakhil*, and it may be related to the term *rokheleth*, meaning *merchant*. (Lev. 19:16).
- Do not hate your brother (Lev. 19:17).
- Do not seek revenge or hold a grudge but extend forgiveness (Lev. 19:18).

For Jesus, speaking to Jews shaped by the Torah, this is what loving your neighbor looked like.

Who is my Neighbor?

In [Luke 10:29-37](#). They asked Jesus the same question and this is his response....

²⁹ But he wanted to justify himself, so he asked Jesus, “And who is my neighbor?”

³⁰ In reply Jesus said: “A man was going down from Jerusalem to Jericho, when he was attacked by robbers. They stripped him of his clothes, beat him and went away, leaving him half dead. ³¹ A priest happened to be going down the same road, and when he saw the man, he passed by on the other side. ³² So too, a Levite, when he came to the place and saw him, passed by on the other side. ³³ But a Samaritan, as he traveled, came where the man was; and when he saw him, he took pity on him. ³⁴ He went to him and bandaged his wounds, pouring on oil and wine. Then he put the man on his own donkey, brought him to an inn and took care of him. ³⁵ The next day he took out two denarii^[a] and gave them to the innkeeper. ‘Look after him,’ he said, ‘and when I return, I will reimburse you for any extra expense you may have.’

³⁶ “Which of these three do you think was a neighbor to the man who fell into the hands of robbers?”

So Who is my neighbor according to Jesus?

The story of the good Samaritan shows us that a true neighbor has nothing to do with closeness. My neighbor is anyone who crosses my path in life. As a [disciple](#), A disciple is another word for a follower of Christ, one who is learning to be like his Master. As a disciple you follow Jesus Christ, who is the Master and by living like Him you become more like Him. ([Matthew 16:24](#); [1 Peter 2:21-22](#))..., everyone I meet should taste the love of Christ in me, so that He can be glorified through me. “*A new commandment I give to you, that you love one another; as I have loved you, that you also love one another. By this all will know that you are My disciples, if you have love for one another.*” [John 13:34-35](#).

A priest and a Levite both passed by and chose not to help. These were men who would probably have said that they kept all the commandments, including loving your neighbor. But when it came to the moment of their fellow man being in need, when no one could see them doing a good deed, then their love failed. True love isn't performing good deeds in order to keep a good conscience. The Samaritan was the true neighbor because he showed mercy and compassion, even though he had nothing to gain from it.

As a Samaritan, a people despised by the Jews, he could have felt that he didn't have any obligation at all to stop and help. In fact, you could almost say he could not have been blamed at all if he kept on walking,

as did the Levite and the priest. But he *did* stop, and he *did* exceed expectations to help. That was true selflessness and love.

And so “a good Samaritan” has become a phrase for someone who goes above and beyond to help someone in their time of need. But the time of need isn’t always a dramatic incident. Someone’s time of need may be when they need to experience patience, compassion, or gentleness rather than irritation, rudeness, or harsh words.

When Jesus saw the multitudes, He was moved with compassion for them. (Matthew 9:36.) Am I compassionate towards my fellow-man? Or do I let their quirks, their habits, their weaknesses, and even their sin, become a point of contention for me? Do I harden my heart to others, and in my pride and high-mindedness think that I’m better than them? Do I write them off, or have demands on them that they should be a certain way in order for me to love them? Or do I esteem them better than myself, and become a servant to all? (Philippians 2:3; Mark 9:35.)

Love your neighbor as yourself

“*Love your neighbor as yourself*” is the commandment. This can be my intention, but then I find that, like Paul writes in Romans, that when I go to do the good, I find the evil present. I find things like self-seeking, envy, pride, impatience, bitterness. But that doesn’t mean that I have to give in to those things! That means I have found the perfect opportunity to deny those lusts and resist temptation, so that the fruit of the Spirit can increase in my life. When I walk in the Spirit and do not fulfill those lusts that come up from the flesh, then I will grow in the virtues, by which I can love my neighbor. Sincere love, joy, peace, longsuffering, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, self-control.

“*Love your neighbor as yourself.*” How often have I fallen, made mistakes, said or done something I regret? When I am struggling, when I need compassion, mercy, and goodness, don’t I hope that others will bear and help and support me? Hasn’t Jesus borne with me in my weaknesses? Hasn’t He given me chance after chance after chance? “*Love one another as I have loved you!*” I need to be obedient to Jesus’ commandment: “*Just as you want men to do to you, you also do likewise!*” Luke 6:31.

This is the kind of love that Paul wrote to the Corinthians about. Love that suffers long and is kind. Love that does not envy, does not parade itself, is not puffed up, does not behave rudely, does not seek its own, is not provoked, thinks no evil. Love that bears all things, believes all things, hopes all things, endures all things, and never fails. (1 Corinthians 13:4-8.) This kind of love does not come naturally. My own ego has to be crushed to be able to have this love that never fails. And I cannot do this in my own strength. I need help, grace and power from above. And with that power I can have a love that is invincible.

That doesn’t mean that the other person is always in the right. But nothing anyone does should bring me out of love. Then I can help, encourage, exhort, and provoke them to the good in love.

The good Samaritan was “he who showed mercy.” I can be in this good Samaritan spirit in all of my interactions and relationships. That’s true Christianity.

As we look around us who are our neighbors that are in need?

How can we start loving our neighbors more?

What will you commit to start doing today to start loving our neighbors as we have been loved?

