

The Center of Our Service Luke 10:25-37

Introduction

- Today, we are going to discuss making Christ the center of our service.
- We are going to use the story of the Good Samaritan to illustrate our point.
- In 1973 two psychologists recreated the story of the Good Samaritan at Princeton Theological Seminary to see how seminary students would respond to someone in distress after preparing a talk on the Good Samaritan.¹
 - The experiment began in a classroom, in which several seminary students were asked to prepare a talk on the story of the Good Samaritan
 - The preparation for the talk was interrupted when the students were dismissed from the classroom.
 - As students exited the classroom, some students were told that they needed to hurry to a building across the campus, as they would be giving their talk shortly.
 - Other students were told that they needed to exit the classroom because another class would be entering the classroom. There was no hurry for them to prepare their talk, as they had plenty of time before their presentation.
 - As the students made their way across the campus, a medical emergency was staged, in which a man was lying on the sidewalk in distress. The experiment was to see how many of the seminary students, who had been preparing a talk on the story of the Good Samaritan, would stop and help the man lying in distress.
 - Can you guess what happened?
 - None of the students stopped to help the man in distress
 - Of the students who were told they needed to hurry across campus to give their talk, many of them didn't even notice the man in distress
 - Of the students who were told they had plenty of time before they would be giving their talk, some acknowledged the man in distress, but none of the students actually helped the man in distress.
 - This study doesn't just say something about seminary students, but really all of us as Christians who attend worship services every Sunday; how well do we put our faith into practice?
- Theologian, N.T. Wright points out that "The Good Samaritan' has passed into folklore, and has succeeded, confusingly, in changing the meaning of the word 'Samaritan' itself in modern English."²
 - Examples from the New Testament, including the story of the Good Samaritan, inform us that Jews and Samaritans did not get along.

¹ Social Psych Online, *Being a Good Samaritan: Psychology of Helping*. www.socialpsychonline.com. December 15, 2015. Accessed October 8, 2018.

² N.T. Wright, *Luke for Everyone*. Louisville: Westminster John Knox Press, 2004, pgs. 126-127.

- Even Jesus was questioned when he stopped at a well in Samaria to speak with a woman there.
- Putting the description “good” beside “Samaritan” would have been heresy in Biblical times.
- Yet, consider all the references we now have to “Good Samaritan”
 - The term has transcended beyond the church to the secular world
 - Hospitals and organizations use the title
 - The story of the “Good Samaritan” has become a term in society for someone who is willing to serve others, without recognition.
- Just like those seminary students, we sit here today with a challenge and an opportunity to take the faith we hold so dearly, and to make a difference in the world around us.

Don't allow your destination to get in the way of your journey

- **Luke 10:25-28**
 - Once again there is a question of how to inherit eternal life
 - The rich ruler asked the same question (Luke 18:18)
 - Jesus responded in a similar way-the law is the standard “bar” for entrance into the Kingdom of God.
 - Just like the rich ruler, the lawyer seems to know the right answer, but questions how to put it into practice.
 - Why is it that both the rich ruler and the lawyer inquire about eternal life?
 - It appears they know the right question to ask, and even the right answer to the question, but struggle to put the truth into practice.
 - Could it be that despite the education and training that both the priest, and the Levite had, it still did not enable them to help the robbed man?
 - Could this be the same thing that plagued the seminary students at Princeton, and also plagues us today?
 - Why is it that we've done a good job in the church telling people about how to inherit eternal life, but have failed on how to live faithfully in the journey we presently endure on the way to eternity?
 - Could it be that we have put so much emphasis on the destination that we have forgotten the journey?
 - Think about the disciples
 - When Jesus called them out of the fishing boats, following Jesus seemed easy. Sacrifice was not on their mind; they saw Jesus as a leader of a new adventure.
 - The anticipation that they shared with so many other Jews, that some day a Messiah would come, and deliver the Kingdom to them was all they could think about
 - As they sat around the table for the Last Supper, instead of contemplating the cross, they were arguing about who might be the greatest in the kingdom of God
 - They got stuck on the destination, and forgot about the journey

- In no way, is Jesus implying that in order to inherit eternal life, it can be earned by doing the law. Instead what Jesus was telling the lawyer, the rich ruler, and to us today, is that the journey toward eternal life is about surrender, sacrifice, and obedience.
 - I think the majority of us want to experience eternal life
 - We know that life in this world is only temporary
 - At some point, sooner or later, we will face death
 - Eternity is not the question; the real question is how do we approach the journey toward eternity today?
- When the journey gets tough, when faced with uncertainty, when approached with the opportunity to serve-how will we respond?
 - **Luke 10:29**
 - We want to justify ourselves- I know what the right answer is, BUT...
 - It's in trying to justify ourselves that we discover what is really at the center of our life.
 - We like the idea of the destination, what we don't do as well with is the journey
 - **Luke 10:27**
 - Notice that at the core of the law is a love for God and for others
 - The core of the law says nothing about us, except that our entire focus is on God and others
 - Whatever your life revolves around is what will shape you.
 - If Christ is that the center of your life, then you won't just be focused on the destination, but you will live faithfully along the journey.
 - Don't allow your destination to get in the way of your journey!

Our justification reveals what is really at the center of our life

- **Luke 10:29**
 - What is the lawyer really asking?
 - I know what the right answer is, but is there some other way to fulfill the journey?
 - Can I pick and choose who my neighbor is?
 - I am so excited about a lunch that we are going to have after church today
 - We've had so many people begin to come to our church in the last 6 months, that in order to get to know them all, and get them connected to ministry of the church, we are having a lunch make this happen.
 - Two things that are very important to me:
 - Letting people know that they are part of the family of MMBC
 - Connecting people to ministry opportunities
 - Any church that has an outward focus has the potential to overcome selfish destruction

- We are entering into seasons that provide opportunities for us to reach out to others
 - Fall Festival
 - Veteran's Day
 - Thanksgiving
 - Christmas Wrapping Party
 - Community Care Packages
 - There is an opportunity for every person, young and old, to have a part in the ministry of this church!
 - There is no room for excuses!
- Vision Statement: Making Christ the Center of our: Life, Relationships, and Service
- When Christ is at the Center, our focus is in the right place. There's no need to justify ourselves, because God's grace compels us to live faithfully for him and to serve others!
- Our justification reveals what is at the center of our life!
 - For the lawyer, despite wanting to inherit life, he really only wanted to serve people like himself
 - For the rich ruler, despite wanting to inherit life, he really wanted to protect his financial assets.
 - For you, despite the destination of eternal life, you may really want to only serve yourself
 - There's only one person who can justify us
 - Christ is our justification
 - What he has done for us on the cross, pays the price for our sin, and can remove the obstacles of selfishness, because his grace is just too much to serve ourselves!

What kind of a neighbor are you?

- **Luke 10:33-36**
 - Notice that the Samaritan not only noticed the Jewish man, but had compassion for him.
 - He went the extra mile
 - Remember that not only did this cost him time, and resources, but as a Samaritan, he was serving a Jew!
 - As a parent, I'm struggling to balance expectations and opportunities for my kids
 - There are more opportunities than ever for kids to participate in from sports, to dance, to events, etc.
 - There are also greater expectations than ever to be the best, to be the smartest, to do everything
 - And yet, what we are producing is a more and more confused society
 - Do you remember a guy whose famous for the line, "Won't you be my neighbor?"
 - Mr. Rogers- simple man, with a simple message.

- He walked into his living room and to so many viewers living rooms by taking off his shoes, and putting on a sweater
 - He invited people to come into a world of imagination, hope, and joy
 - It was announced recently, that actor Tom Hanks would be working on a movie in which he would play the role of Mr. Rogers.
 - I'm not sure exactly how that movie will portray Mr. Rogers, but it will be interesting to see how it will play out, especially in a culture that is the complete opposite of the neighborhood Mr. Rogers envisioned.
 - Notice how Jesus changed the lawyers question from "Who is my neighbor?" To "Who proved to be the neighbor?"
 - While the lawyer was interested in justifying his journey toward keeping the law, Jesus is always more interested in us focusing on how we can serve others.
 - It's simple, and yet it takes sacrifice to put Jesus' words into action.
 - Think about the last few weeks as we have studied the story of Mary and Martha, the Rich Ruler, and now The Good Samaritan
 - There's a link between all three stories, there is a lot to distract us in each of these stories
 - Time
 - Money
 - Comfort
 - Jesus, however simplifies all the distractions to get us to focus on what is most important
 - Martha, only one this is necessary
 - Rich Ruler, you still lack one thing
 - Lawyer, be a loving neighbor
 - Amidst all the expectations and distractions, and opportunities that life puts on us, the center of everything must be Christ!
- What kind of neighbor are you?
 - Are you the kind that is more concerned about the destination than the journey?
 - Are you the kind that is always looking for a way to justify yourself?
 - Or, are you the kind that shows mercy, because you have experienced the mercy of Jesus Christ?

Conclusion

- Jackson overwhelmed with Multiplication
 - Drawing circles and lines
 - Counting on his fingers
 - Helping him to understand that if he can memorize his 2's, 3's, 4's, 5's, that he can build a foundation that will make multiplication so much easier
- My guess would be that many of us are overwhelmed with life and how to make Christ the center of our life, especially when it comes to serving someone other than ourselves.

- How do we have the time?
- How do we find the resources?
- How do we reconcile our life choices?
- Stop for a second, take a breath, **vs. 27**
 - When Christ is at the center; time, money, service begin to fall into place.
 - Like Jackson with multiplication, before you tackle the problems, get the foundation right...
 - Understand that without Christ at your center you will stumble and fall
 - You were created for more than what the world provides
 - Find your identity in Christ
 - Then, begin to do what he says to do
- Serving others is a necessary step for getting the focus off of us, and seeing a greater vision for life.