

Won't You Be My Neighbor

Summary

In this sermon, the pastor explores the parable of the Good Samaritan through the lens of Jesus' conversation with an expert in the law. The sermon contrasts the lawyer's question 'Who is my neighbor?' (seeking to limit who deserves love) with the more important question 'Won't you be my neighbor?' (focusing on inclusion rather than exclusion). The pastor emphasizes that Christian love is proactive, affirmative, and interventionist, requiring us to help remedy injustices even when we didn't cause them.

Intro Prayer

Heavenly Father, as we gather to discuss what it means to be a true neighbor, open our hearts to your challenging message of love. Help us to see beyond our comfortable boundaries and recognize the image of God in everyone we encounter. Guide our conversation today, that we might not just hear your Word but be transformed by it to become the answer to someone else's prayer. In Jesus' name, Amen.

Ice Breaker

Think about your childhood neighborhood. Who was one neighbor that made a positive impact on your life, and what did they do that you still remember today?

Key Verses

Luke 10:25-37

Matthew 22:37-39

1 John 4:20

Psalms 25:7

Questions

The lawyer asked Jesus 'Who is my neighbor?' while the sermon suggests the better question is 'Won't you be my neighbor?' How do these two questions reflect different attitudes toward others?

The pastor mentions that we often find ourselves 'hoping God's word is not God's word.' Can you share a time when you wished a biblical command wasn't quite so demanding?

In the parable, Jesus deliberately tells us nothing about the man who was robbed. Why do you think Jesus left out those details, and how does that affect the message?

The sermon states that 'Christian love is proactive, affirmative, and interventionist.' What does this look like in your daily life?

How does seeing others as made in God's image change how we treat them, especially those we might otherwise avoid or ignore?

The priest and Levite didn't cause the man's suffering but chose not to help. In what situations might we be tempted to 'pass by on the other side' of someone's suffering?

The pastor says, 'Don't you know that you are the answer to someone's prayer?' Has there been a time when you realized you were positioned to be the answer to someone's prayer?

The sermon connects loving our neighbor with loving God Himself. How does this connection challenge or change your understanding of the command to 'love your neighbor as yourself'?

Life Application

This week, challenge yourself to be intentionally neighborly to someone outside your usual circle. This could be someone of a different background, belief system, or social status than you. Make a specific plan to show kindness to this person - perhaps through a conversation, an act of service, or simply acknowledging their presence with dignity. As you do this, reflect on how this interaction might be answering a prayer they've offered, and how serving them is actually an act of loving God Himself.

Key Takeaways

The question shouldn't be 'Who is my neighbor?' but rather 'Won't you be my neighbor?' - focusing on inclusion rather than exclusion.

Christian love requires us to help remedy injustices even when we played no role in causing them.

Being a neighbor means proactively showing compassion through action, not just feeling sympathy.

We are called to love others regardless of their 'worthiness' because they are made in God's image.

Loving our neighbors is directly connected to loving God - we cannot truly love God while ignoring the needs of those around us.

Ending Prayer

Lord Jesus, thank you for challenging us with the parable of the Good Samaritan. Forgive us for the times we've asked 'Who is my neighbor?' when trying to limit our responsibility to love. Help us to see with your eyes, feel with your heart, and act with your hands. Give us courage to cross roads, overcome prejudices, and invest our time, resources, and energy in those you place in our path. May we be known not just as people who avoid causing harm, but as people who actively bring healing. Make us true neighbors in a world desperate for your love. In your name we pray, Amen.