

Luke 10:25-29 Then an expert in the law stood up to test him, saying, “Teacher, what must I do to inherit eternal life?”

²⁶ “What is written in the law?” he asked him. “How do you read it?”

²⁷ He answered, “**Love the Lord your God with all your heart, with all your soul, with all your strength, and with all your mind,**” and “**your neighbor as yourself.**”

²⁸ “You’ve answered correctly,” he told him. “Do this and you will live.”

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

Today we are looking at one of the more famous parables in the NT—the parable of the Good Samaritan.

I thought it would appropriate to interview one of the leaders of our Samaritan Team. Susan Kenoshita has served so faithfully over the years and is taking a break. She has been wise and faithful. Thom Hammond is in her place today to give us insight into that mercy ministry.

- Who is on the Samaritan Team, and how does it serve CCC and the community?
- How does your team allocate resources to those in need?
- If someone asks for assistance, how do you care for the individual or family?
- Who can ask for assistance, and how can they best do that?
- Can you share a story or two of how your team has assisted someone in Idaho Falls?

> Idaho Rescue Mission—we recently gave a large chunk of money to support the many ministries that touch lives directly by providing daily meals, shelter and recovery for hurting people.

Illus. One of the most powerful stories of selfless giving and mercy is the story of Oskar Schindler in WWII. Schindler was an industrialist and a failed businessman who had become adept at conning his way into certain industries. He relocated to Germany and finally found success in manufacturing. He joined the Nazi party in 1939, lived a lavish lifestyle—an unlikely rescuer of Jews in the Holocaust. When he began to see the Nazi’s treatment of Jews he concocted a plan—he and Itzhak Stern made the now famous “Schindler’s List.” He bribed, tricked and bluffed his way to saving 1000 Jews from Auschwitz. His alleged ammunition factory produced just one wagonload of bullets. He eventually was exiled, and returned to Germany where he died penniless and unknown. In 1993, his wife and other survivors lobbied to erect a monument in his honor titled “Righteous among the nations”—and he was posthumously awarded with the rare honor of the US Holocaust’s Memorial

Council's Medal of Remembrance. Steven Spielberg's 93 film *Schindler's List*.

We rarely look more like God then when we are showing God's love and compassion to our fellow image bearers.

Here's what the religious leaders will learn from Jesus today...Our professed love for an unseen God is directly measured by our tangible service to our fellow man. The love and mercy we show our fellow man is often a key indicator of the actual quality of our professed devotion to our God.

The story begins with...

1. A lawyer's trick question (10:25). "A lawyer (legal expert) stood to test Jesus..."

The lawyer comes to Jesus to test him assuming that Jesus will not pass the test. The legal expert takes an aggressive posture towards Jesus in front of his followers.

The legal expert is likely conspicuous. He is wearing the traditional head turban, a **tallit** (Jewish prayer scarf) and a richly ornamented outer tunic with very long **tzit tzit** or embroidered, blue tassels—all of which signify outwardly his devotion and sanctification to his God. Not only is he conspicuous because of his appearance, he is instantly the authority on Scripture in whatever room or environment he enters.

Standing to face Jesus, culturally this would have been an aggressive posture—intentionally challenging the country Jew from backwater Galilee. **He intends to expose Jesus as an uneducated fraud.**

He then asks the most important question a Jew could ask, "What must I do to enter eternal life?"

The question is not exactly what you might think. In the Jewish worldview, Eternal Life was not dying and going off to heaven—though they certainly did have a well-established view of the afterlife for Jews and non-Jews (namely—Paradise and *Gehenna*).

But for the first century Jew to ask about "eternal life" meant "what good work must I do to ensure my place in God's everlasting Kingdom when it comes from heaven to earth."

This theology is most assuredly echoed in Jesus' model prayer "Our Father who is in Heaven. Your Kingdom *come*—your will be done *on earth as it is in heaven.*" The Jewish expectation was that the Kingdom would break into the world.

So, his question is about his eternal inheritance as a son of Abraham—trusting his election in Abraham, and the legalistic compliance with Moses' law.

2. A counter-question (10:26).

²⁶ **“What is written in the law?” he asked him. “How do you read it?”**

Illus. It’s like when your wife asks you if those Jeans make her look fat. Now, you could answer “no”—but then she might say “You’re just saying that?” Well you could say “Yes” but now your condemned.

But you could answer her question with a question, “how do those jeans make you feel?” “good.” You respond, “well, then I think you have your answer.” And you escape the dilemma altogether.

Now, Jesus’s counter-question is not to evade the conflict—it’s to lead him inexorably to an inescapable truth.

²⁷ **The legal expert answered, “Love the Lord your God with all your heart, with all your soul, with all your strength, and with all your mind,” and “your neighbor as yourself.”**

- He quotes the greatest Command—the one every scholar recites in the morning and at evening before bed.
- He has obviously heard Jesus teach before because then he cites Lev. 19 “And love your neighbor as yourself.” These two commands are shorthand for all the commands.

²⁸ **“You’ve answered correctly,” he told him. “Do this and you will live.”**

Well, that’s a pretty high bar isn’t it. If you could live up to those two commands in any and every situation, without failure—do this, unerringly and unwaveringly. And you will have resurrection life when God’s Kingdom suddenly breaks into the world—life everlasting.

3. A clarifying question (10:29).

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

Many Jews have stood before him in the synagogue courts and either received a verdict of justified or not. His question reveals that he’s looking for a **loophole in the law** that will allow him to disassociate with notorious sinners or anyone less devout than himself—his clarifying question is an announcement to everyone around him—***that the scope of his social obligation has limits.***

And let me tell you just who it was that this self-righteous man had no interest in being neighborly with...

- a. **The people from the East.** Those Asians who practiced magic arts. Who performed wicked incantations and abominations—sacrifices and moral indecency.
- b. **The people from the West.** The Romans and those wild stories of far-off Europeans who were all pagan idolaters.
- c. **The people to the far North of Israel.** Let’s just say it. The Galileans. Did you know in rabbinic literature the word “Galilean” became synonymous with “sinner” like the word “tax collector.”
- d. **Then you have the Sadducees and Priestly class to the south in Jerusalem.** The Pharisees and the scribes found themselves in shouting matches over supernaturalism and the existence of angels, demons, the spiritual realm, and the final resurrection of the dead and which books belonged in the Bible.
- e. **The half-bread Samaritans to the immediate North.** Oh man, you want to talk about the worst? Of all the people groups the Pharisees and the Legal experts couldn’t stand to be around— those descendants of heretics who had intermarried with ancient Assyrians and Canaanites.
 - i. The Jews and Samaritans were political and religious rivals and avoided each other like the plague.
 - ii. The Samaritans were regularly cursed in the 18 benedictions in the synagogue prayer and worship meetings.
 - iii. They were denounced by the Rabbis as unworthy of resurrection and everlasting life. **“Adonai—please turn your face and do not remember the Cushites (Samaritans) at the resurrection!”**

This man likely had a whole list of people groups he excluded as his neighbors.

The legalist wants to limit the scope of his social obligation to love his neighbor—if he does, then perhaps he can make it in—and be rewarded with resurrection life when God’s Kingdom breaks in.

4. A scandalous analogy (10:30-35).

³⁰ Jesus took up the question and said, “A man was going down from Jerusalem to Jericho and fell into the hands of robbers. They stripped him, beat him up, and fled, leaving him half dead. ³¹ A priest happened to be going down that road. When he saw him, he passed by on the other side. ³² In the same way, a Levite, when he arrived at the place and saw him, passed by on the other side. Now what you may not know here is that at this point in the story the Legal expert is in agreement so far. That Jesus starts with two religious leaders who are not members of his party—or denomination—would be a welcomed introduction to the story. Now, he expects Jesus to insert a Pharisee or Scribe as the hero of the story. But Jesus completely subverts his expectation...

³³ But a Samaritan on his journey came up to him, and when he saw the man, he had compassion. ³⁴ He went over to him and bandaged his wounds, pouring olive oil and wine on them. Then he put him on his own animal, brought him to an inn, and took care of him. ³⁵ The next day he took out two denarii, gave them to the innkeeper, and said, ‘Take care of him. When I come back I’ll reimburse you for whatever extra you spend.’

Then, Jesus asks the Jurist—the legal expert in Moses’ law a question leading him to an inescapable truth.

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

³⁷ “The one who showed mercy to him,” he said.

Then Jesus told him, “Go and do the same.” You see son, that’s what Moses meant when he said to love your neighbor as yourself.

Several takeaways:

Principle: Our love for an unseen God is directly measured by the extent of our love for God’s image-bearers. If we really want to do a self-diagnostic on our love and devotion to God—just look at how we treat the people that we think are furthest from God. Look at how we treat the people who are hurting and languishing and helpless.

Key: Our love for God produces a love for others in us. The more we love God the more enlarge our capacity to love those created in his image. You show me a loveless, fault-finding, unmerciful “Christian” and I’ll show you someone who is a false believer.

Action:

- Like the good Samaritan, we must be quick and responsive, recognizing opportunities to show God's mercy to hurting people. That, my friends, is the instinct of the Gospel.
- Often, we must show others the love of the Gospel before earning the right to tell them the truth of the Gospel.
- Loving our neighbor is costly and involves sacrificial giving. The Samaritan's act of mercy was costly—in terms of time and resources. And we must not shrink back from demonstrating God's love through sacrificial giving of our time and effort.

I wonder if when Oskar Schindler died penniless and alone if he thought it was worth it. If he thought that no one, other than the Jews he saved, would ever know about his sacrifice. Little did he know that his story would become so well-known and a shining example of mercy and compassion.

And in the same way we will not know, until we enter God's eternal Kingdom, how many lives were impacted by our effort in compassion in the Gospel.