

Introduction: Last week we saw that Jesus has now turned his face—with a steely resolve towards ministry in and around Jerusalem. **THE SAMARITANS ACTIVELY OPPOSE HIM FOR THIS.**

The closer he gets to that territory—the more he preaches, teaches, heals the sick—and the more his popularity grows—the more dangerous for him it will become. Because the center of power is in the south.

And the power brokers in that world are three groups:

(1) Sadducees. These are priestly appointments—esteemed and wealthy men of privilege who comprise half of Israel’s Supreme Court: **The Sanhedrin**. These men do not want any prophets from the North to stir up trouble in the capital city because so long as they keep the peace—their nest will be feathered.

(2) Pharisees. The Perushiim meaning “pure ones” the separate ones. They’re not an official party in the sense that they are OT in origin. But they are a hold over from previous generations when they rose to power and prominence. They are the people’s party. They supply the towns with local rabbis, teachers, pastors, and more prominent Pharisees make up the other half of the Sanhedrin. They do not like prophets because they believe the ideal leader is scribal in nature—after Ezra the great scribe from the 5th century BC.

(3) Scribes-Lawyers. These are experts in letters “the lettered ones.” They are literate, well-educated and often associated politically and religiously with the Pharisees. Agreeing with Pharisaic doctrine on matters of the spiritual realm, the after life, the resurrection and so forth.

Here’s what these religious leaders will learn from Jesus today...

Big Idea: 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 infatuation and devotion to our God.

Jesus illustrated that in a parable.

Luke 10:30-37

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. ³¹ Now by chance a priest was going down that road, and when he saw him he passed by on the other side. ³² So likewise a Levite, when he came to the place and saw him, passed by on the other side. ³³ But a Samaritan, as he journeyed, came to where he was, and when he saw him, he had compassion. ³⁴ 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. ³⁵ 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.’ ³⁶ Which of these three, do you think, proved to be a neighbor to the man who fell among the robbers?” ³⁷ He said, “The one who showed him mercy.” And Jesus said to him, “You go, and do likewise.”

What precipitates the need for this parable?

1. A Calculated Question (10:25).

“A lawyer (legal expert) stood to test Jesus...”

What you’ll see here is a formal Socratic debate structure.

So he takes an aggressive posture towards Jesus in front of Jesus’ audience.

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

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

Then he asks his question. Not a brainteaser for sure—every Jew knew the answer.

“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.*”

So, his question is about his eternal inheritance as a son of Abraham—trusting in the dowry of his good Jewish pedigree and the legalities which ensure he will receive that trust—provided—as a good son of Abraham—he walks faithfully and meticulously according to Moses’ religious law.

“So Jesus,” he asks, “What laws must I follow in order to claim my rightful heritage when God’s Kingdom comes and his will is finally done on earth as it is in heaven?”

2. A Counter-Question (10:26-28).

Jesus answers him with a standard and widely used heuristic teaching device: A Socratic question.
“What is written in the law? How do you read it?”

“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.”

- He quotes the greatest Command—the one every scholar recites in the morning and at evening before bed. Dt. 6:10. The Jews’ supreme obligation was to love Yahweh—the one true God of the universe—with the totality of the self. The heart and mind and strength.
- 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. All the commands of Moses—all 600 or so can be divided into this simple taxonomy—categorize as either showing supreme love and devotion to your God by honoring and obeying him as the one true God. Or showing those image-bearers of God mercy, kindness, deference and love.

“And he said to him, “You have answered correctly; do this, and you will live.”

In other words—you want to live again. You’re desire is raise to life at the end of the age and to be given your inheritance as a good son of Abraham. And if you could—you sinful man—love God with all that you are—without a twinge of failure or faltering. And if you could—you prejudice, deceitful, spiteful human being—love your fellow image-bearers as the true sons of God—you would indeed have the everlasting life in God’s eternal unending Kingdom you desire.

3. A Clarifying Question (10:29).

“But he, desiring to justify himself, said to Jesus, “And who exactly is my neighbor?” Ahh. Now we come to it. He wants to make sure that every ruffian and rough neck within the sound of his voice knows that his obligations have been delimited to other faithful, wealthy, healthy, prosperous, full blooded Jews. Those are his neighbors. That is the scope of his obligation. People. Exactly. Like. Himself.

And let me tell you just who it was that this self-righteous man had no tolerance for:

- **The people from the East.** Those Asians and Orientals who practiced magic arts. Who performed wicked incantations and abominations—sacrifices and moral indecency.
- **The people from the West.** The Romans and those wild stories of far off Europeans who were all pagan idolaters—power hungry oppressors of God’s true people. Surely the loathsome pagans who were part of the foreign war machine—whose very presence in Israel was a defilement.
- **The people to the far North.** 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.” Galileans were regularly chided for their harsh country semitic accents. They were regularly disparaged and looked down upon. Typically due to the influence of the Greek speaking world. And the Pharisees would teach them, but didn’t like spending a lot of time with them. It was, well, beneath them.
- **Then you have the Sadducees and Priestly class to the south in Jerusalem.** The Pharisees and the Tannaim had a polite toleration for them because they are an explicitly OT party. But they loathed their super conservative theology and truncated view of the Bible. They often found themselves in a full roiling verbal brawl over supernaturalism and the existence of angels, demons, the spiritual realm, and the final resurrection of the dead. Oh and they disagreed about which books belonged in the Bible. But at least they were Jews. Full blooded Jews. At least they presided over OT religion and so they had a polite toleration for the priests and the Levitical assistants.
- **The half-bread Samaritans to the immediate North.** Oh man, you want to talk about the worst? Of all the people groups the Perushiim and the Tannaim couldn’t stand to be around—those descendants of heretics who had intermarried with Iranians, Iraqi, or Syria—(ancient Assyrians), they even had the nerve to unilaterally relocate the temple of God at Geriziim—the site of a holy well.
 - They were political and religious rivals and avoided each other like the plague.
 - They were regularly cursed in the 18 benedictions in the synagogue prayer and worship meetings.
 - 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!”

Surely, none of these people are my neighbor? Maybe the Priests or their Levite admin assistants? But everybody else “Losers.” Especially those half-breed, scurrilous heretics the Samaritans.

4. A Contemptible Analogy (10:30-35).

So Jesus teaches him indirectly. He asks questions because when a person arrives at an unmistakable conclusion on their own—they have really learned the lesson. When a person can see and be led to an inexorable—inescapable conclusion—then they really know the answer.

In the play we have a cast of characters:

A Pious Jewish Man: Ahh—the best of all worlds for them.

Scurrilous thieves and brigands—they beat him within an inch of his natural life and leave him bleeding out in the street.

The Priest: The highest ranking religious figure in all Israel—topped only by the Chief Priest. Sees his fellow Jew and skips the road knowing that touching a defiled body will defile him for days and send him into a series of ritual washings for days.

The Levite: He’s an assistant to the priest—the second highest ranking religious person in all Israel—the text says in Greek that he took a good look—meaning, that at least he walked up looked intently at the battered body of a groaning man—but then decided “Nah. Not worth it.” And kept on going.

The Priest and Levite, mind you, are religious rivals of the Pharisees and Lawyers.

Then, there is one person absent from the story. Undoubtedly the scribal expert in the law expects Jesus to make Him the hero of the story. And surely Jesus will say “now go do like the good Lawyer—the excellent, morally praiseworthy scribe in the story. Be like him.”

The Samaritan. But Jesus broadsides this guy. He shocks him by saying, “And there was this Samaritan who came after on his donkey. He saw the injured man and:

- 1.) He went to him. He actually took the time to go over to him.
- 2.) He bound up his wounds. He healed what was broken.
- 3.) He carried him—offered him his donkey while he walked miles back to a suitable inn.
- 4.) He stayed with him—overnight. Whoever was waiting for this guy is probably now worrying about his safety. Indeed several Samaritans killed a Jewish man just like this in Jesus’ time—and the retaliation on those Samaritan extremists was brutal.
- 5.) He provided for his ongoing care. Left money for a couple days recovery and his credit card just in case more was needed.

5. A Concluding Question (10:36-37).

“So which one of these travelers really obeyed the Shema and the second highest command to love your neighbor? The people who don’t look like you or think like you or share your skin color or religion.”

The answer is like one of those final essay answers that’s worth 60% of your final grade. Just a mic-dropping moment. When the holier-than-thou, smug, hater. Who only loves the people who look and act and think like him. This cynical, self-important, blind pharisee. Leading the blind in his stuffy and cold religion.

And he. Is me. And he. Is you. “SEEKING TO JUSTIFY HIMSELF” that is the key...

Because there is sanctimonious pharisee in all of us.

There’s a priggish schoolmarm in every religious heart who thinks that the people who are the farthest from God don’t deserve his mercy or kindness or help. And the kind Muslim—the gracious Mormon, the Caring Catholic, the Bleeding heart Baptist—the sincere skeptic—they all need the love and the mercy of God.

And we have been called to show our love for God by the way we care for the people who are made in his image—regardless of what team their on.

Doesn’t mean we agree about theology or what a man or woman is.

Listen there are things we won’t agree with doctrinally or ethically with lots of groups. **But we have not been called to step over their dead spiritual corpses on our way to glory.** We have been called to show kindness and mercy regardless of their response or change.

Takeaways:

- **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.
- **Our love for others is directly proportional to our love for God.** Now this is different than the first principle. The first principle is one of measurement—Gauging what is true about the state of our love for others. As the moon only reflects the light of the Sun—so too our hearts can only reflect the love of God for others. It is God’s love. This second is a principle of causality—The more we love God the more we enlarge our capacity to love those made in his image. When my heart is genuinely pursuing God in devotion—when I am seeking by the Spirit to love God with all my heart, my soul, my mind—my strength—the byproduct of all genuine love for God is an increased care and concern for those image-bearers.

Series: The Seeker: A Study Through Luke
Part 11: The Worst Possible Example: The Samaritan
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Our love for people is a measure of our love for God. Our love for God is the key to enlarge our capacity for love for others.

When we become smart, industrious, emotionally invested—starry-eyed devotees to the one true God of the universe—we begin to see the world as God sees it.

And we start to see people the way God sees them: broken and sidelined through sin. Fallen and lost for eternity without the hope of Christ—needing forgiveness, mercy, healing, a little extra-no-strings-attached effort from some lovers of God.

In the Baptist church I grew up in the most famous song in the 70's was "Pass it on."
It only takes a spark, to get a fire going

But soon all those around can warm up in its glowing

That's how it is with God's love, once you've experienced it

You spread his love to everyone—you want to pass it on.

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