

The Good Samaritan – "Love Without Boundaries"

Text: Luke 10:25-37 (CSB)

25 Just 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?" 30 Jesus replied, "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 Likewise a Levite, when he came to the place and saw him, passed by on the other side. 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 on olive oil and wine. 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 repay you whatever extra you spend.' 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 likewise."

Key Background:

- **Samaritans and Jews:** Samaritans were despised by Jews as half-breeds - descendants of intermarriage between Jews and Gentiles after the Assyrian conquest. Jews considered them racially and religiously impure, with centuries of hostility due to these deep-seated prejudices.
- **Priests and Levites:** Religious leaders responsible for temple duties who should have set the example for loving others. However, under Levitical law, touching a bloodied or potentially dead person would make them ceremonially unclean, requiring costly purification rituals and preventing them from performing their temple service for days.
- **Travel Route:** The road from Jerusalem to Jericho descended nearly 3,400 feet over 17 miles through rocky terrain with numerous switchbacks, creating dangerous blind corners that made travelers vulnerable to robbers. This route was notoriously perilous and known as "The Way of Blood."
- **Neighbor Concept and Mercy:** Leviticus 19:18 commanded loving one's neighbor as yourself, but Jewish tradition and social norms had narrowed "neighbor" to mean only fellow Jews, excluding Gentiles and especially Samaritans. Religious leaders debated extensively about who qualified as a neighbor worthy of mercy, creating boundaries that God's law never intended.
- **Two Denarii:** Represented about two days' wages for a common laborer.

Questions from the Story:

- What did the teacher of the law say was the way to inherit eternal life (v. 27)? Did Jesus agree with him? Why?
- Though the expert in the law was trying to trap Jesus (v. 25), did Jesus value his learning and understanding of the Bible (v. 28)? What does this show us about how Jesus values and builds upon the biblical truth people already understand?
- If the man was assured by Jesus that he answered correctly (v. 28), why did he ask the follow-up question (v. 29)? What does this reveal about his heart?
- Why did the teacher of the law ask "who is my neighbor" (v. 29)? What does this tell us about his desire to love others?
- Why did the man fall into the hands of robbers (v. 30)? What does this show about the dangers that can leave us in need?
- Why did the priest and Levite pass by on the other side (vv. 31-32)? What does this reveal about the limits of religious duty without love?
- Why did the Samaritan have compassion and stop (v. 33)? How does this reflect God's heart for those who suffer?
- Why did the Samaritan use oil, wine, and his own animal (v. 34)? What does this teach about the cost of showing God's love?
- Why did the Samaritan pay the innkeeper and promise more (v. 35)? What does this suggest about the depth of true mercy?
- Why did Jesus ask, "Which... proved to be a neighbor?" (v. 36)? How does this show that God's love calls us to act with mercy?
- Why did Jesus say, "Go and do likewise" (v. 37)? What does this teach about trusting Jesus to guide us in loving others?
- How did the Samaritan's actions differ from the priest and Levite (vv. 31-34)? Why do you think Jesus used a Samaritan to show this love?
- Jesus taught mercy to gain eternal life (vv. 25-28, 37). What does this say about how God can use us to share the good news of His love?