

Loving Your Neighbor:

A Biblical Guide to Christian Compassion

As I was preparing this message, the song from Mr. Rogers' Neighborhood kept running through my head—probably 15,000 times. So I thought, if I have to endure it, I might as well share it with you this morning. Now, all day today, you can have it stuck in your head, too!

The Lawyer's Question

Let's get into today's message. We're talking about neighbors. Let's turn to Luke 10, starting at verse 25:

A certain lawyer stood up and tested Jesus, saying, "Teacher, what shall I do to inherit eternal life?"

Jesus responded, *"What is written in the law? How do you read it?"*

In other words, *How do you interpret what you've read in Scripture?*

Now, we know this story well. That's the challenge when we come to passages like this one, the prodigal son, or the good shepherd. We think, *Oh, I've heard this before.* And we check out. But let's not do that today because this passage has the power to transform our lives and our culture.

The Lawyer's Attempt to Justify Himself

The lawyer asked a good question but with the wrong motive. He was testing Jesus, hoping to trap Him with His words. Instead of answering outright, Jesus pointed him back to the law—not because the law saves us, but because it shows us our need for salvation.

In verse 27, the lawyer gave the right answer: *Love the Lord your God with all your heart, soul, strength, and mind; and love your neighbor as yourself.*

The problem? He wouldn't apply it to himself. He wasn't willing to admit his own lack of love for God and his neighbor. So instead of humbling himself, he tried to

justify himself: “Well then, Jesus, define your terms. Who exactly is my neighbor?”

The Story of the Good Samaritan

That’s what lawyers do, right? They debate, and they dissect the wording. But Jesus wasn’t going to let him skirt the issue. Instead, He told a story:

A certain man was traveling from Jerusalem to Jericho when he was attacked by thieves. They stripped him, beat him, and left him half-dead on the side of the road.

Now, the road from Jerusalem to Jericho was dangerous. Traveling it meant taking your life into your own hands. What’s surprising is that so many religious leaders used that road, yet neither the Jews nor the Romans did anything to make it safer. You’d think they would have! But I guess it’s easier to maintain a religious system than to improve a neighborhood.

Jesus never called this story a parable—we did. It’s possible He was describing an actual event, something well-known at the time.

The Power of Presence

One of the biggest lessons we can take away from this story is this: *There is no ministry more powerful than simply being there.* Being in the right place at the right time, doing the right thing in honor of God—that’s ministry.

You’ve experienced this before. Think about a funeral service. You might struggle to find the right words, but just showing up means everything. Presence speaks volumes.

We live in a broken world—can I get an amen? I’ve told you before, and I still believe it: Humpty Dumpty was pushed! Somebody helped him off that wall. Just check the police report!

We see brokenness everywhere. We see people on the streets holding signs, asking for help. Have you ever pulled up to a stoplight, seen someone standing there, and started evaluating? *Do they really need help? Are they just scamming people?* You hope the light doesn’t change so you don’t have to sit awkwardly

beside them. But the truth is, people are struggling all around us, and we have a responsibility to keep our eyes open and our hearts soft.

The Samaritan's Compassion

Verse 33 says, *A certain Samaritan, as he journeyed, came where the wounded man was. And when he saw him, he had compassion.*

That's where the miracle happens: When a person in need meets a person with a heart to help.

The Samaritan saw the man and was moved with compassion. We can't have the compassion of God until we start seeing people the way God sees them. Jesus never overlooked anyone. He noticed every single person. If we want to add value to people's lives, we do it by *caring about them and caring for them.*

A hurting world doesn't care how much we know until they know how much we care.

Ministry is About People

Ministry isn't about you or me—it's about God touching people *through* you and me. When it becomes about us, we stop serving. But we've been saved *to serve!* It's not about policies or programs—it's about *people.*

The priest and the Levite in Jesus' story ignored the wounded man. Why? Maybe they had excuses like we do. *I'm too busy. Someone else will help. I don't want to get involved.* But to God, a "down-and-outer" is just a fixer-upper! Where we see junk, He sees something valuable—something worth restoring. He's in the salvaging business.

The Right Question

The priest and the Levite thought, *What will happen to me if I stop to help?* But the Good Samaritan flipped the question: *What will happen to him if I don't stop?* That's the heart of ministry.

Serving others means putting our own plans on hold. It means stepping outside our comfort zones. Heroes aren't the ones who run away from trouble; they're the ones who run toward it.

The world says, *Promote yourself. Assert yourself.* But Jesus says, *Deny yourself.*

By making a Samaritan the hero, Jesus challenged the Jews' prejudices. The Samaritan helped a Jew—a man who likely despised him. He risked his own life, spent his own money, and never received public recognition. He didn't do it for applause. He did it because mercy doesn't need a reason.

The Challenge: Go and Do Likewise

Jesus turned the tables on the lawyer. The man asked, *Who is my neighbor?* Jesus responded, *Who acted as a neighbor?*

The lawyer had to admit, *The one who showed mercy.*

And Jesus said, *Go and do likewise.*

And not just once—*keep on doing likewise.* It's not a one-time act of kindness. It's a lifestyle.

So what about you? Who are you planning to serve this week? Who has God put in your path? *Even the Son of Man came not to be served, but to serve and to give His life for others.*

If you want to be like Jesus, serve others, not as a hobby, but as a way of life.

Closing Prayer

Father, give us eyes to see the opportunities all around us, not just in this building but along the road we travel each day. Help us not just to *feel* compassion, but to *act* on it. To make a difference, no matter the cost. May this church be filled with people we meet and serve outside these walls. In Jesus' name, amen.

Now, do you really want to see hurting people? God's going to show you someone this week. Be ready to respond.