



# Sermon, Sunday, October 22, 2023

## “Jesus, Our Good Neighbor”

**SCRIPTURE: Luke 10:25-37** <sup>25</sup> An expert in the law stood up to test Jesus.<sup>[a]</sup> “Teacher,” he said, “what must I do to inherit eternal life?” <sup>26</sup> He said to him, “What is written in the law? What do you read there?” <sup>27</sup> 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.” <sup>28</sup> And he said to him, “You have given the right answer; do this, and you will live.” <sup>29</sup> But wanting to vindicate himself, he asked Jesus, “And who is my neighbor?” <sup>30</sup> Jesus replied, “A man was going down from Jerusalem to Jericho and fell into the hands of robbers, who stripped him, beat him, and took off, leaving him half dead. <sup>31</sup> Now by chance a priest was going down that road, and when he saw him he passed by on the other side. <sup>32</sup> So likewise a Levite, when he came to the place and saw him, passed by on the other side. <sup>33</sup> But a Samaritan while traveling came upon him, and when he saw him he was moved with compassion. <sup>34</sup> He went to him and bandaged his wounds, treating them with oil and wine. Then he put him on his own animal, brought him to an inn, and took care of him. <sup>35</sup> The next day he took out two denarii, gave them to the innkeeper, and said, ‘Take care of him, and when I come back I will repay you whatever more you spend.’ <sup>36</sup> Which of these three, do you think, was a neighbor to the man who fell into the hands of the robbers?” <sup>37</sup> He said, “The one who showed him mercy.” Jesus said to him, “Go and do likewise.”

### Introduction: My side, your side

Today is the 21st Sunday after Pentecost according to the church calendar. Thanks to your prayers, I had a great two-week vacation with my family. While I was on vacation, I heard a lot of sad news on the TV. The conflict between Israel and Hamas, which began with the war between Israel and Palestine, is reaching its peak. There was also news of the tragic death of Wade Al-Fayoume, a 6-year-old boy living near Chicago, because of a hate crime against a Palestinian Muslim family. Mutual wounds create greater hatred, so reconciliation and peace seem far away. Furthermore, people are polarized into two groups and argue about who is right and who is wrong. However, this situation only cases increases hurt and conflict.

Where can we find hope in this situation? What answer would Jesus give us? Please meditate on the answers to these questions through the text of Luke today.

### Body: The Parable of the Good Samaritan

Today’s text is a challenging story that demands something we cannot afford. In today’s text, there is a conversation between an expert in the law and Jesus. The lawyer asked Jesus, “**Teacher, what must I do to inherit eternal life?**” In response, Jesus re-asks the lawyer how the law would respond to this question. 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.**” In response to this, Jesus said, “**You have given the right answer; do this, and you will live.**”

Then, trying to make himself appear righteous, the lawyer asked Jesus again, “**And who is my neighbor?**” From the perspective of an expert in the law, his neighbors were Jews, and his enemies were Gentiles who did not believe in God. In fact, the expert in the law expected Jesus to accurately acknowledge his thoughts.

Next Jesus tells the parable of the Good Samaritan. A man was going down from Jerusalem to Jericho when he was attacked by robbers. The robbers took everything from this man, beat him to the brink of death, and then left him on the street. Without someone’s help, this person would surely die soon.

At that moment, a priest who was going down to Jericho after finishing his work in the temple in Jerusalem saw this man. The priest who saw the dying man must have thought a lot. However, the text does not say what



he was thinking. Instead, it says that the priest saw him and passed by on the other side. The priest turned a blind eye to those in need.

Next, a Levite passed by and dying man. He does the same thing the priest did. According to Jesus' parable in today's text, both the priest and the Levite turned away from the person in critical shape.

However, in today's parable of Jesus, there was a Samaritan who was also passing on that same road and saw the dying man. Samaritans are like strangers to Jews. However, unlike the priest and Levite in Jesus' parable, the Samaritan took pity on the man who had been robbed. And the Samaritan treated and cared for the man the best he could. The Samaritan in Jesus' parable showed great love that is not easy to show. This kind of love is so precious. It is also a way of life that we should emulate. But we cannot all live like good Samaritans.

In fact, in today's parable, we cannot blindly criticize the priest and Levite. How would we act if we were in their shoes? Most likely, we would behave similarly to them. Through this parable, Jesus does not mean to say who did well and who did not. So what does the parable of the Good Samaritan mean?

After telling the parable of the Good Samaritan, Jesus asked the law expert, **“Which of these three, do you think, was a neighbor to the man who fell into the hands of the robbers?”** The expert probably didn't want to say he was a Samaritan, so he answered, **“The one who showed him mercy.”** Then Jesus says, **“Go and do likewise.”**

In today's text, in the conversation between Jesus and the law expert, the expert's interest was in defining who was his neighbor. This is a self-centered perspective. In contrast, Jesus' interest was in being a neighbor to those in need. This view of Jesus centers on the person who was robbed.

In fact, we think of our relationships with our neighbors from a perspective like that of the lawyer. In other words, we see the other person from our own perspective. And we judge the world subjectively. We also divide our side from the other a side. We deny, ignore, or reject those who are not on our side.

If they follow this way of life, Jews who follow God's command to love their neighbors as themselves cannot love the Samaritan, because Samaritans are not neighbors to Jews. This attitude and way of life makes us distinguish between those we should love and those we should hate. So, Jesus tells an expert in the law not to divide who his neighbors are, but to be their true neighbors regardless.

### **Conclusion: Only Jesus through the cross and resurrection saves us.**

Now let's summarize today's message. Today's text tells us the ultimate truth. That is, Jesus is the only one who gives us true life, eternal life, and salvation. Not even a priest or Levite can save us. Nor can anyone we think of as our neighbor save us. Only Jesus of the cross and resurrection saves us.

We are like the person who met the robber in today's text. In other words, we are in a situation where there is no possibility of salvation. However, just as a man who was on the verge of death after being hit by a robber was saved by meeting a good Samaritan, we are saved by the love of Jesus on the cross and the power of his resurrection.

Dear brothers and sisters in Christ! Have you experienced Jesus as your only neighbor? So, do you see the light of salvation and live according to it? If we have experienced this, how we should live is determined.

Please think about it. How did the person who met the robber who was saved from death with the help of a good Samaritan live after that incident? Wouldn't he have lived his life sharing the abundant love he received with his neighbors? I hope that we too have the grace to live by sharing the abundant grace we have received from the Lord with our neighbors.

