

CORE SEMINAR

Spring 2024

The Parables of Jesus

Course 8: The Parable of the Good Samaritan | Luke 10:25-37

ICE BREAKER

Choose an ice breaker from the *Spring Community Group Guide* or go to www.fbcportland.org/icebreakers to select an ice breaker to ask your group.

- Spend about 5 minutes discussing the question – this is a great way to “warm up” your group.

INTRODUCTION

Thank you for being a part of this CORE Seminar this semester. We’ve received a lot of great feedback and we hope that you all have enjoyed them. But, today marks the end of the teaching portion of this semester.

This week we conclude our study of Jesus' parables with one of the most well-known: the Good Samaritan. Chances are, you're familiar with this story from childhood Sunday School or hearing it preached as an adult. Its widespread popularity suggests we know it inside and out. So, today we'll revisit it. We will focus on this idea of justification. In culture, we define justification as *“a good reason or explanation for something.”*¹ But in Christianity, we define justification as *“an act’ of God in the sense of a legal declaration, a judicial pronouncement.”*² The difference in these definitions of justification lean on who is doing the work of justifying – the individual or God. In our parable today, we will look at justification and how Jesus answers a lawyer who was seeking to *“justify”* himself.

Everyone ready? Ok, let’s pray and we will get started...

QUOTE: *For the love Jesus demands is love of one’s neighbor, that is to say, not some general love of mankind, but a love that does not pick and choose, that is unreservedly and principally committed to God’s will and guidance also with respect to its object. For the neighbor is anyone whom God places in our way, as is described in such an unparalleled and beautiful way in the parable of the Good Samaritan. – Herman Ridderbos*

¹ <https://dictionary.cambridge.org/us/dictionary/english/justification>

² <https://www.thegospelcoalition.org/essay/the-doctrine-of-justification/>

Have someone in your group read Luke 10:25-28

²⁵ And behold, a lawyer stood up to put him to the test, saying, “Teacher, what shall I do to inherit eternal life?” ²⁶ He said to him, “What is written in the Law? How do you read it?” ²⁷ 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.” ²⁸ And he said to him, “You have answered correctly; do this, and you will live.”

So, in this parable we are immediately introduced to the context [always the first thing we should look at in order to understand what is going on]. The context is a lawyer intended to put the Teacher [Jesus] to the **test**. Now, when we think of lawyers today – and we try not to do – we picture those who are experts in criminal or civil law. But, this was not the case in Israel. Lawyers in Israel in the 1st century would have been professional students in the Jewish [law of Moses] and rabbinic law. These were not only the laws that governed the religious community but also the laws that governed the people of Israel.

This lawyer is the expert and he has purpose – to put Jesus [the Teacher] to the test. The Greek word for tested is **ekpeirazó**. The idea behind this word is **to test thoroughly, tempt**. Based on this definition, we can read the lawyer’s intention another way – the lawyer came to challenge Jesus. His challenge was intended to expose Jesus as an **amateur** as well as expose himself [the lawyer] as the **expert**. Not arrogant at all – right?

To do this, he asks Jesus a fundamental question concerning the law of God - **“Teacher, what shall I do to inherit eternal life?”** Now, Luke seems to add to this lawyer’s arrogance by saying this was a test question and not a genuine fundamental question. There was no humility in his question [Luke doesn’t say this], but I believe that Jesus immediately knew His heart and answered him – with a question, **“what is written in the Law? How do you read it?”** In other words, **“You are a lawyer – duh! ‘You tell me what it says.’”**

The lawyer was wise enough to answer with the most basic of the laws, **““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.”** Knowing the requirements of the law, Jesus told him to go and *live it* by stating **“do this and you will live.”**

QUESTIONS: What did the lawyer – the man who is an expert in the Jewish law – ask Jesus?

- **Based on his words, how do you think he understood God’s law?**

Have someone in your group read Luke 10:29

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

In **verse 29**, we see Luke’s editorial comment on the lawyer – and maybe providing more insight into the **heart** of the lawyer – by saying the lawyer was **“desiring to justify himself.”** Now remember, this verse is positioned right after he and Jesus had a conversation about **the law** and how this lawyer would inherit eternal life through the law. As an expert in the law, he would have known this that he could only inherit eternal life through God. The law of God reflected the righteousness of God. This is what judged the lawyer – or what should judge him. But, Luke states that he desired to move away from the law **“justify himself”** against his neighbor – and not the law of God.

And this tends to fit with our culture today. We seek to justify ourselves – not by God’s law BUT we judge ourselves by our friends and our neighbors. When we compare ourselves to our friends and neighbors tend to pick the friends and neighbors that we would “ace the test” against. We pick drunkards, or murderers or jerks – and we **pass** our own justification test. **BUT** when we compare ourselves against God’s law – not only do we discover who God is – but we also discover who we are... stinking sinners who are hopeless to justify ourselves. So the law exposes our sin and pushes us to Jesus Christ – the only One who can justify us.

But this lawyer made the worst mistake he could possibly make – he thought he could **justify** himself. I think we could all agree that the majority of people either think OR they hope that they will be able to justify themselves at the day of judgment – by saying **“I was a good person, compared to other people.”** or **“I led a good life, compared to other people.”**

But with this heart, the lawyer asks the question, **“Who is my neighbor?”** In this question, you can almost hear the lawyer sarcastically ask, **“Just how many people fit into the category that they can compare to me OR how many people am I to love like I love myself?”** Basically, ok – I’ll love my neighbor, but you’re going to have to tell me who is my neighbor.

QUESTIONS: Why do you think the lawyer attempted to justify himself?

- **Based on what standard – the law he is to be an expert of OR his own standard?**
- **Did the lawyer understand God’s law or the law in such a way that it benefitted him?**
- **Do we do the same? Meaning do we tend to judge others based on our moral standard rather than God’s standard?**

Have someone in your group read Luke 10:30-35

30 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.'

And Jesus replied, let me tell you a story...

The first character we are introduced to in this story is a man who was travelling from Jerusalem to Jericho. We don't know much about this man – only from where he is coming from and where he is going. From the location he is traveling from, most commentaries think that this man was Jewish. Wherever he is from, he is going to Jericho.

Jericho was the Old Testament city where “the walls came tumbling down.” But, the New Testament Jericho was quite different. New Testament Jericho is surrounded by a brutal desert – and in the middle of this desert is a lavish oasis filled with green, beautiful trees, and running water. This oasis is Jericho. This is where a man from Jerusalem was headed.

With this in mind, Jesus introduces the **second batch of characters** – robbers came upon him. They beat him, stripped him and took everything from him. They left him for dead. This man was without hope and unable to help himself due to his condition. He was no longer traveling to Jericho – because he was fighting to stay alive.

Or was he without hope?

“Now by chance” – or just at the right time – Jesus introduces the **third character** in this story. He is a **priest** was heading from Jerusalem to Jericho. And in heading to Jericho this priest was ready to take advantage of Jericho's beautiful oasis and enjoy the environment of Jericho. But, as he was walking toward Jericho, he noticed a man who had been beaten, stripped, destitute and half dead. Jesus doesn't give us the reason why, but this priest **“saw him he passed by on the other side.”**

The fourth character was a **Levite**. Like the priest, he was headed along the same route. And just like the priest, he saw the man who had been beaten, stripped, destitute and half dead. And again, just like the priest – Jesus doesn't give us the reason why – the Levite **“saw him, passed by on the other side.”**

And remember, the lawyer has asked Jesus to define who his “neighbor” is – so that he can justify himself. Now the priest and Levite would have been a great “neighbor” and certainly, the lawyer could answer that he could live and love like the priest & Levite – even possibly

be superior to both. But, they both left a man dying on the road – maybe even a fellow Israelite. There were Jewish laws that “declare[d] that all ethical, civil, religious and ritual positive duties are suspended if their implementation or fulfillment would create or sustain danger to human life.”³ Meaning the priest & Levite would have had an obligation to stop and help the man. They both **failed** – and both would have been an acceptable neighbor for the lawyer to love.

Then Jesus introduces the fifth character – the Samaritan man. This man was under no obligation to stop and help a Jewish man [if he was Jewish]. He would have been under no obligation to risk his life – in the midst of an area filled with robbers who had already shown what they are capable of. But the Samaritan’s journey brought him to this man.

He saw that the man had been beaten, stripped, destitute and left half dead. In this, Jesus stated that the Samaritan man “**had compassion.**” Which was more than the priest and the Levite had for the man. But not only did the Samaritan have compassion for the man, but he “**went to him [he didn’t pass him on the other side] 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.**” He then gave the inn keeper 2 denarii and promised to pay the bill in full if the expense exceeded the 2 denarii. This Samaritan was truly **generous**.

But, he was a Samaritan – and not even a man that the lawyer considered to be a neighbor. You all have heard the history between Israel and Samaria – they didn’t like each other. But in this story, the Samaritan the compassion of God and the Israelite religious men didn’t even come close.

QUESTIONS: Why do you think Jesus responded to the lawyer’s questions by telling this parable?

- **In verse 25, Luke states that the lawyer intended to put Jesus to the test. How do you think the lawyer would have reacted to this parable?**

Why do you think the priest and the Levite did not stop to help the dying man?

- **Are these good reasons?**
- **When you see someone in trouble, what is your first instinct? Why would you respond this way?**

Which character do you see yourself - Robbers, Priest, Levite or Samaritan?

Have someone in your group read Luke 10:36-37

³ https://www.daat.ac.il/daat/kitveyet/assia_english/kirschenbaum.htm

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."

Now, who is the lawyer's **neighbor**? This is precisely the question that Jesus is asking the lawyer. He wants to know which one proved to be a neighbor to the man who was beaten, stripped, left destitute and half dead. This lawyer, however, was asking Jesus how, through his own **efforts**, he could achieve eternal life, not salvation. In the end, Jesus answered this by saying, "be like the Samaritan." Of course the answer is the hated and despised Samaritan, but the lawyer would NEVER acknowledge that. He would only say, "**the one who showed him mercy.**" The lawyer came to realize that he couldn't justify himself any longer. He lacked the kind of compassion that the Samaritan reveal. This kind of compassion extended beyond his narrow definition of "neighbor."

Jesus simply responds with "**you go, and do likewise.**" Jesus allowed the parable to answer the lawyer's question. The same goes for us. We are to love our neighbor, and our neighbor is the one who we might consider to be an enemy. Our neighbor is the one with a need right in front of us. Only the law of God and the love of Jesus Christ can reveal this kind of compassion toward others.

QUESTIONS: How did Jesus' definition of a neighbor differ from the lawyer's idea of a neighbor?

- **What if the injured man was from Israel? The United States?**
 - **And what if the Samaritan was a Palestinian? Iraqi?**
- **How do Jesus' words challenge your own way of thinking about who your neighbors are?**

CONCLUSION

Was there anything that stood out to you from **the parable today**?

- Was there any "aha moment" for you?

Next Week: Final Hangout Night for the Spring

CLOSING PRAYER