

Luke 10:25-37
Fifth Sunday after Pentecost
July 13, 2025

Grace to you and peace from God our Father and from our Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ. Amen.

[The lawyer] 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." And he said to him, "You have answered correctly; do this, and you will live." But he, desiring to justify himself, said to Jesus, "And who is my neighbor?"

Dear brothers and sisters in Christ,

Not only is there a flow to the church year, there's certainly also a flow to the Gospel accounts regarding the life of Christ. The evangelists often use narrative cues to help us connect the dots from one account to the next and how they are related. We saw that last week, as the text began, "Now *after* these things" and (in a sense) disassociated the narrative of would-be followers from the narrative of the 72 sent ones.

This morning, our Reading's selected portion of Scripture omits a very important transitional cue in the Gospel's greater narrative, a cue which helps us understand the relationship between the return of the 72 sent ones and a seemingly sudden focus on the lawyer standing up to test Jesus. That important cue is found in verse 21 of Luke 10, which says, "In that same hour (the hour of the return of the 72) Jesus rejoiced in the Holy Spirit and said, "I thank you, Father, Lord of heaven and earth, that you have hidden these things

from the wise and understanding and revealed them to children; yes, Father, for such was your gracious will.”

Immediately we recognize this in our text, the contrast between the children who simply trust the word of their teacher and the ‘wise and understanding’ – in this case, the lawyer (and don’t necessarily imagine a courtroom trial lawyer, but simply “an expert in the law”)... this one who calls Jesus “Teacher,” but by confidence in his own wisdom, stands up to *test* his teacher. Yet, remarkably, this ‘wise and understanding’ supposed-cream-of-the-crop and smartest-in-the-class doesn’t recognize he is speaking to God in the flesh.

We often point out the lawyer’s *lack* of even logical wisdom, when he asks, “what must I *do* to *inherit* life?” – By definition, you don’t *do* anything to *inherit* anything. How can we who confess salvation by grace alone add to our inheritance by our efforts, our works, our commandment-keeping, our customs? And, we often, understandably, focus on that *fallacy* in the lawyer’s supposed wisdom.

But, more fundamental to this text is the transparent reality that this supposed ‘wise and learned’ one either doesn’t know or doesn’t revere that he is speaking to the Incarnate Messiah. *Perhaps* he has *some* appreciation for that, as the text indicates he seeks to *justify* himself before Jesus... but that only makes the matter worse:

why try to justify yourself before the Incarnate Christ sent to justify you? Why not just cling to him as do the little children?

And that's why those verses before our text are so important, saying Jesus "rejoiced in the Holy Spirit"... meaning, Jesus rejoiced *in the work of* the Holy Spirit, that work of bringing faith to little children and those who cherish the simple clarity of God's Word, as opposed to hiding the simple truth from those who wish to interpret it by their own wisdom and understanding. (Note how the Collect doesn't just say "Teach us to love Your law"... as if seeing faith as great wisdom, but rather asks for faith as the little children might say it, "Teach us to love *You*... [You] above all things" – the one true God who loves us and gave His Son for us... He created, redeemed, and sanctifies us, so that the Introit echoes the refrain, "His steadfast love endures forever" ... and so, in simple faith, "Teach us to love *You*." Indeed, "Give thanks to the Lord, for he is good.")

Of course, the simple faith wants to learn more about God's *goodness*, and that goodness includes his holiness! We don't just pray "Teach us to love your mercy," but "teach us to love *You*" ... and that "You" is the "Holy, Holy, Holy" One... so, to love Him *is* to love His holiness and, therefore, his holy will, his holy Ten. But those who consider themselves "wise and understanding" – the lawyer in our text – they want to adjudicate God's holiness, to connect with God by their mental assent (almost as a theistic philosophy), to scrutinize whether, according to *their* standards, God is in fact good... or to

show they can *match* God's goodness! But, to the simple to whom the Holy Spirit grants faith, *because they already believe the goodness of God*, that goodness that is made known in the flesh and blood of Jesus Christ, who secured their inheritance by grace... because they have confidence in Christ and thus in their unity with God, therefore they want to learn of his holy will.

And the *more* they learn of it, the *more* they learn of their own unholiness. And so, 'the simple' – the little children – cherish the gospel of Christ crucified, He who is truly **the Good Samaritan**... being vulnerable with his *own* life for the sake of the life of even his enemy... giving of himself for the sake of even his enemy... pouring out in the hospital his riches, equipping the innkeepers and stewards with all the divine and sacramental riches and wealth needed for the healing of his once-enemy, now-beloved.

So also for those whose lives echo Christ and the theology of his cross. In other words, as that is the Gospel that saves *you*, then to *share* that Gospel, to walk in that theology of the cross, to "go and do likewise," is to echo Jesus, to confess him by confessing the love of Him who is the Good Samaritan. In other words, where so many hear this parable as a moral lesson – of how you should live if you love God's *law* (as if trying to justify yourself *apart from* Christ) – it's really a lesson of confessing *Christ crucified*, whose sacrificial love toward sinners is *the* fulfilling of the Law! This is how you should live because you confess the One who is the Good Samaritan, He who

loved God with His whole heart and therefore gave His life for his enemies: “While we were yet enemies, Christ died for us.” And again, “This is love; not that we first loved God but that He first loved us and gave His Son as the atoning sacrifice for our sins.” And then, how does the apostle conclude? – “If Christ so loved us, we ought love one another.” As Jesus says it: “You go and do likewise.” Why? Because you will thereby earn your inheritance? No, Jesus does not, at the end of the parable, repeat the phrase, “Do this and you will live.” Rather, “Go and do likewise,” simply because that’s what it means to love your neighbor!... because that’s what it means to confess Christ and His saving gospel! To confess Christ crucified and His saving gospel – apart from our merit, apart from any worthiness in me, apart from customs, apart from works – to confess by word and deed that our salvation is in the Good Samaritan alone *is to love* your neighbor!

That word “love” is confusing for us. We are heirs of the Enlightenment, of Renaissance romanticism, and most recently of the “All You Need is Love” generation. We have really made a mess of the word “love.” Is love **a subjective emotion**, or is it **a vocational duty**? If it is to be the fulfilling of the Law and the confession of the love of Christ toward sinners, is it not *both*? The Good Samaritan in the parable is said to have compassion (σπλαγχνίζομαι), literally – the bowels yearn, a gut-twisting sympathy – and that compassion moved him to help his neighbor.

Perhaps too often we focus on only one or the other aspect of love – either I will only *feel* for my neighbor inwardly, but without action; or I will actually help him outwardly, but only begrudgingly. We ought pray for the compassion, the heartfelt sympathy of Christ toward those misled, beaten, left for dead by the world... we ought truly pray for such compassion in our hearts as those who confess Christ; for we know Old Adam is loveless and self-serving, so we ought pray *against* him and *for* true Christian compassion.

But, if we wait for that to perfectly well up within, we will never act. The Table of Duties are a *wonderful* summary of Christian love, while using the word “love” only twice – “Husbands, love your wives,” and again, from Romans, “The commandments... are summed up in this one rule: “Love your neighbor as yourself.”

Yes, that summary – which the lawyer himself gave! – is the keeping of the Ten Commandments, which *themselves never* use the word love, but define love’s duty to God and neighbor. So, *act* in love toward your neighbors; *carry out* your Christian duty toward them. Do not simply look sympathetically at them and then pass by, comforting yourself that at least you inwardly experienced gut-wrenching compassion. Doesn’t leaving one in his own helplessness (said of the priest and Levite) equate such lovelessness with the robbers who originally harmed him? – they “stripped him and beat him and departed, *leaving him* half dead.” So, what good is it to feel compassion toward your neighbor, but to leave him as you found

him? Or, as the epistle says it, “Suppose a brother or sister is without clothes and daily food. If one of you tells him, ‘Go in peace; stay warm and well fed,’ but does not provide for his physical needs, what good is that?” So, we love in deed and truth, not *merely* in the heart.

And yet, to be content helping only as one duty-bound is not to confess Christ *clearly*. (And here is where we see that our love can never match the love of Christ!) For Christ set His face to Jerusalem for his enemies, not just because he was duty-bound (though, that was most certainly true as the Chosen One) but because he *rejoiced* in the mission, the will of the Father, the *true love* toward sinners that was *Christ’s* true love because he was very God of very God. So, the Scriptures do not say, “Because he was first duty-bound to us, let us be duty-bound to one another,” but “because he first *loved* us, let us *love* one another.” Compassion *to act*; acting *from* compassion.

But such compassion we know is not in our hearts, so plagued our hearts are with Old Adam’s selfishness. The only solution? – just as our text was prefaced by Jesus rejoicing over the work of the Holy Spirit to bring *faith* to little ones, so also over the work of the Holy Spirit to bring *love* to little ones. For love flows from faith, and faith in God forms love for one another.

So then, true Christian love carries those qualities that are fruits of the Spirit precisely because it is only by the Holy Spirit’s work in creating and sustaining faith in God that we can also *learn* to

love one another. How does Paul say it: “Love is **patient**, love is **kind**. Love does not envy nor boast; it is not arrogant or rude. It does not insist on its own way; it is not irritable or resentful; it does not rejoice at wrongdoing, but rejoices with the truth.” Or, as said elsewhere: “The fruit of the Spirit is *love*, joy, peace, **patience**, **kindness**, goodness, **faithfulness**, gentleness, **self-control**.”

Now, what does this look like for the Christian? We said last week that the Gospel and its benefits would come into your homes, streets, and daily lives. So, is it any wonder that, in this morning’s parable, the Good Samaritan – the story’s image of Jesus himself – comes with all of his love to his neighbor-in-need *along the road*, in the *sojourn of daily life*? Even the question – “Who is my neighbor?” – is a *daily life* question!

So, when your **spouse** is beaten down by the world or his/her Old Adam, do not shake your head at him or her, keeping your distance while praising yourself for so wonderfully keeping the letter of the law of your marriage vows; but uplift and carry your spouse and remind him/her of marriage’s blessed state by the promises of God. (Perhaps even call each other to repentance... that’s love, too!)

And when your **child** is frustrated by his place in the world, fathers, do not provoke them to anger or bitterness, but raise them up in the fear of the Lord – meaning, not just their reverence toward his law, but their joy in His promises in Christ Jesus and *therefore* in love toward their neighbor.

And, when **parents** are disheartened, wearied by the toil of providing for the household, children: honor them, serve and obey them, love and cherish them and their faithful (even if very imperfect) efforts to raise you up in Christ Jesus.

And when the **young** are confused and enticed by the false promises of this world, the widows and the aged should lovingly speak truth to them and encourage them in the lifelong dependence upon the strengthening and sustenance of Christ. And when the **aged and widowed** feel left alone on the road of life's sojourn, the young should come alongside, value and cherish them as dear brothers and sisters who are cherished by Christ Jesus as baptized children of God.

Whether in our homes, our streets or our towns, daily life brings us into contact with our neighbor – most specifically, our spouse, our children or parents or siblings, our employer or employee, pastor and parishioner and all of the household of faith, government and citizen, young and old – in short, *the Table of Duties!* – daily life brings us into contact with our neighbor, that we may live daily life among them with faith in God and fervent love toward one another. So then, beloved, let us love another, for love is of God.

If we would start in our own homes, we would find the task of the Good Samaritan our full-time duty; anything beyond our front door (or even bedroom door!) we could not handle. And yet, God

calls us to it, especially among those of the household of faith (the epistle says). And so, as we find *ourselves* beaten down by the world, the devil, our own weakness... thanks be to God, that the true Good Samaritan comes and tends to and cares for us... nurtures and restores us to health each week in this divine hospital for weak and weary souls, binding our wounds, pouring on divine healing ointments, and promising respite under the care of an attentive innkeeper... until Christ returns to claim and greet us and take us with Him where He has gone.

In the Name of the Father
And of the Son
And of the Holy Spirit.
+ AMEN +

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