

Who is My Neighbor?

Spilman Memorial Baptist Church, Kinston NC

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September 27, 2026

Text: Luke 10:25-37

Purpose: We need to look at people around us as our neighbor instead of our enemy. We need to be willing to go and meet their needs instead of turning a blind eye. When we put our faith into action, we prove our faith is real.

A man with a large family of seven children moved to a new city. He and his wife didn't want to buy a home immediately. They wanted to rent a townhouse until they could get a feel for the area and choose a home where their kids would be in good schools and they could be conveniently located.



They found plenty of rental townhouses that were large enough, but the landlords always objected to having a family of nine occupy the place.

In frustration, one day the father asked the mother to take the four youngest children and go visit the local cemetery. She was puzzled by his request, but went along. He and the other three children headed off to investigate another townhouse they had found.

The place was perfect and the father told the landlord he would take it. Then came the usual question, "I see you have children. How many are there in the family?"

The minister gave out with a deep sigh, then said, "Seven ... but four are with their dear mother in the cemetery."

He got the townhouse.¹



Today, I come asking the question, "*Who is my neighbor?*"

Have you ever seen the television program "Mr. Rogers"? In that children's program, Mister Rogers, we see a kind, sweet old man who, everyday would come through the front door with his outdoor shoes on and a suit jacket. If you have seen the program, you know the man and can picture that scene in your mind. Mr. Rogers would walk through the door, smile at you, begin to hang his jacket in the closet and pull out a light sweater and put it on. All the while he is talking to you in this quiet hushed tone of voice. There is serene music in the background. As he proceeds to walk across the room, he would put on his sweater and then would sit on a bench and change his shoes.

It never fails, somewhere towards the end of this ritual of shoe changing he begins to sing, "It's a beautiful day in the neighborhood, a beautiful day in the neighborhood, won't you be mine, could you be mine. Won't you be my neighbor?"

Many years ago (May 1996), Mr. Rogers was invited to speak at North Carolina State University's graduation commencement exercises. Many of these students grew up as a child hearing this seemingly surrealistic person putter around in his neighborhood telling



all kinds of stories and interacting with puppets. These students were actually outraged that this man would be their graduation speaker. What they didn't know was that Mr. Rogers has his doctorate in Education. In the end, his speech was warmly received and they all loved him.

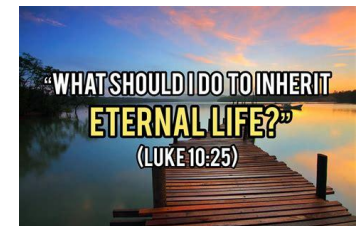


In our story this morning, we see students of the law trying to test, trap, and trip up Jesus with their questions. These Pharisees and Sadducees were students of the law.

They would sit around and debate, teach and instruct one another about the intricacies of the law and the subtle meanings of words from the Torah. (The first five books of the Bible.)

Lawyers always seem to be at the heart of many jokes. I heard a story about two lawyers who were to meet in court one day to debate and present their case before a Judge. The case was an important one that involved a lot of controversy and heated words were said at the pre-trial. Just as the trial began, the two lawyers began to yell at one another. The first one called the other a "liar." The second lawyer called the other a "thief." The judge interrupted the two and said, "Now that you have introduced yourselves, let's begin our case."²

The question they posed for Jesus that day was, "*What must one do to inherit eternal life?*" When it comes down to important questions, this has got to be one of the greatest questions. I met a man working at a gas station years ago that said, "if we think it is hot now, wait until we go down there." I asked him if there

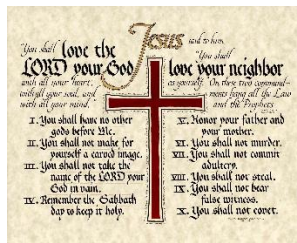


was any way to avoid going down there?” He said “No, we all are going down and there is no way around it.” We need to analyze this question, ponder this, and reflect on this, in order to search out the answer to this critical question. ***What must I do to inherit eternal life?*** Jesus turned this question back on this lawyer to see what his understanding of the answer was.



The answer was, “*Thou shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, with all your soul, and with all your strength and with all your mind; and your neighbor as yourself.*” Jesus said,

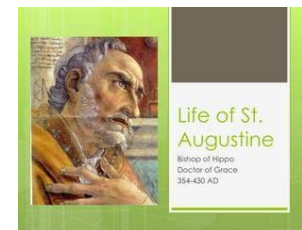
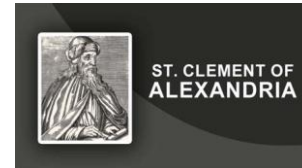
“You have answered rightly; do this and you will live.” This man’s answer is really a synthesis of two verses found in the Torah. The first part is taken from Deut. 6:5 known as the Shema. The second portion is taken from Leviticus 19:18. This is really taking the Ten Commandments or the Decalogue, and breaking it down into its two parts. Jesus commended the student for his astute answer.



In the Ten Commandments, we see that the first four commandments are related to our relationship between God and ourselves. (No other god’s, no idols, don’t take the Lord’s name in vain, remember Sabbath) The last six commandments are how we are to relate to one another, or our neighbor. (Honor your father and mother, don’t murder, don’t commit adultery, don’t steal, don’t lie, and don’t covet)

This teacher that was trying to trap Jesus properly summarized the way unto eternal life. But as with any good lawyer or legalist, there is always a desire to refine the definition of words. In this case, it was the word neighbor. “*Who is my neighbor?*”

Jesus brings light to the legalist point of view by painting a picture of who a TRUE neighbor was. If you have ever tried to understand the teachings of Jesus, you may have run into a problem. Jesus rarely answered a question with a yes or no reply. He always seemed to make it more confusing by adding an illustration to his teaching.



Over the centuries, students of the Bible have tried to allegorize the teachings of Jesus. An allegory is where every element in the parable represents something else. Clement of Alexander (150 AD – 215 AD), Origen (184 AD – 254 AD) and Augustine (354 AD – 430 AD) all had various ways to examine this parable.

For example, Origen said the robbers were our world’s hostile influence, the priests represented the law, the Levites represented the prophets, and the Good Samaritan represented Christ. He goes on to describe the Inn as the church, and the two denarii as representing the Father and the Son.³ Over the period of hundreds of years, the church has expanded and contracted the symbolism to meet the point Jesus was trying to convey.





I don't believe I am going to try and allegorize this parable for you this morning. I think I will let the text speak for itself to you this morning. In it, we are given an example of living and a direction to point our lives in service to others.



As I began to develop what I was to say to you this morning about this parable, I thought about the parable of the Good Samaritan as a whole.

How a certain man was traveling from the town of Jerusalem to Jericho. As I pondered this, I thought about who was this man. Was he a Jew or was he a Samaritan? Obviously, the implication was that it was a Jew since he had come from Jerusalem.

Rev. W. J. Townsend, describes the road from Jerusalem to Jericho as a steep and sterile pass, running downward for about four thousand feet. It is a barren, rocky, path that many traveled. It became a place where robbers and thieves found a home and a place of business. If you were wise, you did not travel alone or unescorted. Historians have called this road the "Bloody Way."⁴



The hearers of Jesus' day would have quickly identified with this poor individual who was beaten badly, stripped of his clothes and money, and left on the side of the road half dead. They knew this road and knew how treacherous it was.

After the man had been robbed, a Priest came by. If I was that man lying on the side of the road, with one good eye open, I would have said, "Thank Jehovah. You have sent a man of God to help me in my time of need." But what happens? The Priest passes by – probably went to the other side of the path – glances at the man and continues on his way. Maybe he was heading to Jerusalem to perform his duties at the temple. If he touched this man, then he would have been ceremonially unclean and unable to perform his duties there. If he lingered too long, he too might have been attacked. It could have been a trap to lure him in. We do not know why he did not help. All we know is that he DID NOT HELP. Imagine the disappointment as that man lay dying and how he must have felt.



The next person that that came by was a Levite. This man also was probably traveling towards

Jerusalem. A Levite is a man from the tribe of Levi. Men that belonged to this family were involved in the family business of serving in the temple. Their jobs included managing the flow of people to the priest in the outer court, providing firewood for the altar, and various other tasks in and around the temple. They derived their income from working in the temple. If this Levite touched this man, even though he was badly in need of help, he would be unable to earn a living for his family. So, he too, DID NOT HELP. So, the man lay there, knowing he surely was going to die.



The third person that came by was a Samaritan. If I was laying in the ditch dying and saw this Samaritan coming, I would know that I was as good as

dead. The Samaritans were a group of people that lived in the area of Samaria, just north of Jerusalem. This area was once a Jewish town until the Babylonian captivity. Those that remained in that area and were not deported, intermarried among the new settlers of that town. The children of those marriages became known as Samaritans. To a Jew, a Samaritan was a half-breed. A Jew would walk miles out of his way to avoid the small town and would even spit on one if they met. Their hatred was bitter and deep. In another story, we see that Jesus stopped at a well and talked with a Samaritan woman. That encounter is a topic for another morning.

Jesus has used the Samaritan as the hero of the story. This despised man was the one that showed compassion on an injured, beat up, half-dead Jew.

Let's see what he did for this man. He stopped, treated his wounds with oil and wine, bound him with bandages, transported him to safety, stayed and nursed him to health, and paid his health care bill. You cannot get any better treatment than this. The contrast between these three people is startling.

C. Roy Angell⁵ and Dean Brown, of Yale University said that there are three classes of people represented in this story.⁶

1. The Thief said, **“What is yours is mine.”**
2. The Pharisee and Levite said, **“What is mine is mine.”**
3. The Samaritan said, **“What is mine, is yours.”**

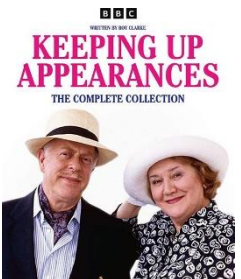
If you stop and think about it, you can identify people you know that represents all three of these points of view. The first view is the view of a thief. It is ALL about me.

What's in it for me! If I want it, I will take it. If I see it, I will grab it. Those that adopt this mindset, only want to take – they will steal, kill, and destroy others to take what is not theirs.



The second group is more concerned about KEEPING what is theirs. They are concerned about preserving their wealth, their status, their things, their possessions, their pride, their history, and their culture.

This second group reminds me of the woman named Mrs. Bucket (pronounced Bouquet), in the British comedy, “Keeping up Appearances.” This woman projects and tries to protect her culture and refinement in each episode. I just die laughing at the ridiculousness of her attempts to make herself look refined and cultured. She doesn't want to be seen with her father, who is a mentally disturbed ‘dirty old man.’ She doesn't want to be seen with Daisy, her sister, who chases every eligible man in town. As the comedy unfolds, you have got to give a gold medal to her husband who endures her attempts to “Keeping up her Appearances.”

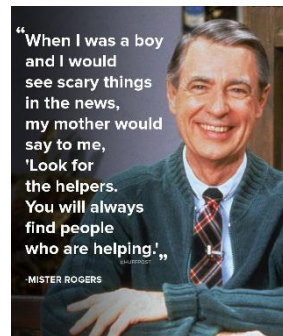


"Snobbish"

Condescending, Prideful, Pretentious,

Are we more concerned about what others think of us when we are doing good? Are we so callused to the needs around us that we are afraid that we are crossing some imaginary social taboo? People around us are sick, people around us are hurting, and people around us need us to show that we care. We need to go and visit. We need to take meals to those that need food. We need to sit with a friend in the hospital. We need to GO and DO. Not fold our hands and worry about "keeping up appearances." The example of the Samaritan is one that draws us into the needs of others. It compels us to measure our lives with this shining example. Its clarity of meaning is telling. We need to go and do likewise.

As we walk in our journey of faith, we must constantly be adjusting our course. Sometimes we need to travel a different path. Sometimes we need to get off the sidelines and join those that are helping. Sometimes we just need encouragement that what we are doing is the right use of our life, time, and resources. We need to say, "What is mine, is yours." We need to open our hands, hearts and resources to the aid of others, regardless of their race, color, religion, denomination, nationality, political affiliation, social status, or economic condition. If there is a need, and God lays it on your heart, then you should be willing to go as God leads you.



Jesus closed his remarks to the Lawyers with this phrase, "*Go, and do likewise.*" We are called to be the helpers in this world.

The only thing I would add is, "*He who has ears to hear, let them hear.*"

LET US PRAY

Notes

¹ Mikey's Funnies, July 9, 2010

² Thru the Bible, Dr. J. Vernon McGee, Vol. 4, Page 292.

³ Class discussion, Advanced Preaching, Dr. Roy E. DeBrand, Sept. 5, 2002

⁴ Rev. W. J. Townsend, D. D., Sermon in book, "The Parables of Jesus"

Manchester, James Robinson, Bridge Street.

⁵ As quoted by Dr. Roy E. DeBrand, of CUDS on Sept. 5, 2002

⁶ McGee, Vol. 4, page 293.