

Gathering in the Word

Our focus scripture of the Samaritan is told by Jesus to a teacher of the law who is trying to determine who his neighbor is. This is no trivial and insignificant question. Until the time of Jesus, neighbors simply meant fellow Jews. But Jesus has widened the understanding of neighbor to include people of other races as well as Jews who have been on the margins and on the outside of society. It would appear that the lawyer is serious about his question—but is he ready for Jesus' response?

Hearing the Word

Luke 10:25-37 (The Voice Bible)

²⁵ Just then a scholar *of the Hebrew Scriptures* tried to trap Jesus.

Scholar: Teacher, what must I do to experience the eternal life?

Jesus (*answering with a question*): ²⁶ What is written in the *Hebrew Scriptures*? How do you interpret their answer to your question?

Scholar: ²⁷ You shall love—"love the Eternal One your God with everything you have: all your heart, all your soul, all your strength, and all your mind"—and "love your neighbor as yourself."

Jesus: ²⁸ *Perfect.* Your answer is correct. Follow these commands and you will live.

²⁹ The scholar *was frustrated by this response because he was hoping to make himself appear smarter than Jesus.*

Scholar: Ah, but who is my neighbor?

Jesus: ³⁰ This fellow was traveling down from Jerusalem to Jericho when some robbers mugged him. They took his clothes, beat him to a pulp, and left him naked and bleeding and in critical condition. ³¹ By chance, a priest was going down that same road, and when he saw the wounded man, he crossed over to the other side and passed by. ³² Then a Levite *who was on his way to assist in the temple* also came and saw the victim lying there, and he too kept his distance. ³³ Then a *despised Samaritan* journeyed by. When he saw the fellow, he felt compassion for him. ³⁴ The Samaritan went over to him, stopped the bleeding, applied some first aid, and put the poor fellow on his donkey. He brought the man to an inn and cared for him through the night.

³⁵ The next day, the Samaritan took out *some money*—two days' wages to be exact—and paid the innkeeper, saying, "Please take care of this fellow, and if this isn't enough, I'll repay you next time I pass through."

³⁶ Which of these three proved himself a neighbor to the man who had been mugged by the robbers?

Scholar: ³⁷ The one who showed mercy to him.

Jesus: Well then, go and behave like that Samaritan.

We begin with a lawyer—true—not a lawyer in today's sense of an attorney. At lawyer in that day was trained in a seminary. He became a lawyer not by taking the Bar exam but by taking a Bible exam in which he had to

demonstrate his nimbleness and quickness in stringing together long and complex verses about GOD's rules for life! **There was one drawback and downside for these guys (and they were all men): when you spend your life parsing** (*analyzing words, grammar, sentences, etc.*) **rules, commands, statutes, laws—you sooner or later conclude that the life of faith is all about *doing* certain things and *not doing* other things!**

This lawyer has spent his whole career pondering and thinking about laws and regulations. There had to be some payoff and advantage for knowing all this and so his life became a big game in which lawyers were the divine umpires who made all the religious calls in interpretations! So it is no surprised to hear this lawyer say to Jesus, "Teacher, which must I **do** to inherit and experience eternal life?"

- ✓ The Gospel makes it very clear that in the long run—you don't have to **do** anything!
- ✓ So Jesus let's this go for now because he knows that if he plays into this lawyer's hand a little more—he can make a strong point!
- ✓ So Jesus goes straight for what he knew this lawyer-man already knew was the biggest "**to do**" list in the world was—**the law of GOD!**

So Jesus asks, "*So what is written in the Hebrew Scriptures—the Law?*" (verse 26ff)

- ✓ Without missing a beat—the lawyer rattles off Deuteronomy 6:5 as the summary of the whole Law of GOD: "**You should love Him, your True God,**

with all your heart and soul, with every ounce of your strength.”

- ✓ The lawyer is right; he’s absolutely correct! **“Do this and you will live.”**
- ✓ Jesus was meaning that the lawyer had to do this all that **perfectly!**
- ✓ Of course—we all know—that no one is perfect and keep the law perfectly! So if perfection is the requirement for admission into GOD’s kingdom—then each of us are in a very difficult situation—unless there is such a thing as **GOD’s grace!**

So now the lawyer asks a second question: **“Who is my neighbor?”** Jesus doesn’t give a legal answer—**instead Jesus tells a story!**

- ✓ There’s 3 characters in this parable: a **Priest** (v. 31), and a **Levite** (v. 32) (*member of the tribe of Levi; chosen to assist priests of the Jewish Temple*). Both avoid the man who was beaten up and is lying on the side of the road.
- ✓ Jesus uses a **Samaritan** as the hero of the Parable.
- ✓ The Samaritan goes to the man on the side of the road and does first aid; takes him to a hotel where he puts the man up, pays for everything—and promises to return in a day or two to see how he’s doing and again settle the account—pay whatever costs are.

The Samaritan man (the outsider among Jewish people) is not thinking about himself. He’s focus is on the other person.

Remember—the original question by the lawyer—“Who is my neighbor?” Jesus turns things around and asks, **“Now which of the three men acted as a neighbor to the mugging victim?”**

- ✓ Some of us think like the lawyer and see who counts as my neighbor?
- ✓ But here Jesus says that figuring out is less important who your neighbor is—you must make sure that **you yourself act as a neighbor to everyone you meet!**
- ✓ Who those other folks out in our neighborhoods are, how they treat you, what they look like, whether or not they seem like folks with whom you have some stuff in common with is not nearly so important as making sure whoever **they are—you are their neighbor!**
- ✓ **Jesus was saying that everyone is my neighbor and that is why I must be a good neighbor to them!**
- ✓ **We become bearers of love and aloha everywhere we go!**
- ✓ **If our hearts are full of grace, mercy, compassion, and aloha for GOD and everyone else—**then we won't ask, “Who is my neighbor” because it doesn't matter: the question become irrelevant if you are already **being** a neighbor!

Doing the Word

So what is the Word of God for us this morning?

1. ONE: FOLLOW THE WORD OF GOD AND RESPOND TO THE PROBLEM AND CHALLENGES

RIGHT IN FRONT OF OUR NOSES WITH SIMPLE, BASIC, TANGIBLE HUMAN DECENCY!

- ✓ The Samaritan was the outsider, regarded as apostate, one who didn't follow the right religious beliefs and was unfit by religious standards.
- ✓ But the Samaritan fulfilled GOD's law—which the priest and Levite failed spectacularly!
- ✓ **Mercy is the primal and basic mark of genuine neighborliness!** (10:37)

2.TWO: WHEN WE LIVE COMPASSION AND ALOHA WE PARTICIPATE IN GOD'S GREATNESS AND GRACE!

- ✓ Compassion is a genuine distress over another person's suffering accompanied by a firm desire to relieve that suffering (and then to actually relieve that suffering if possible).
- ✓ Compassion involves a deep, gut-level, emotional response to another person's hurt followed by a desire to relive the person of that hurt.

3.THREE: SO WHO IS YOUR NEIGHBOR?

- ✓ Where do your gifts, vocation, and calling create opportunities to bless the lives of others around or near you with the steadfast aloha of the Gospel of the Kingdom of GOD?
- ✓ Where does your church time, talent, and treasure offer corporate and community opportunities with others in your family and our Church?

- ✓ Where these answers lead us—is where we can validate and confirm GOD’s steadfast aloha to us by extending it out to others and out to our neighborhoods!

TALKING STORY

Sent in the Word

And so we learn that aloha/love know no bounds:

- ✓ That love overflows even among our supposed enemies!
- ✓ That the compassion our enemies show us puts us to shame—for we tend to narrow the scope of GOD’s care—drawing a circle of belonging ever smaller, ever less generous!

In recent weeks around our country, a number of controversial and divisive political questions have dominated the news:

- ✓ Race and voting rights.
- ✓ Immigration.
- ✓ Abortion in Texas.
- ✓ Marriage Equity at the Supreme Court.

In this conflicted political sphere around us today, the Samaritan’s bold compassion is a needed reminder for all of us today. So let’s remember to be kind to the stranger.

- ✓ Imagine yourself not as the Samaritan seeking to Love GOD and neighbor.
- ✓ Imagine yourself as a person in need!
- ✓ A man on the brink of death!

- ✓ A woman with no hope!
- ✓ **Imagine yourself at your most vulnerable—deep in despair with only one hope: perhaps someone will help me!**

Now imagine that the stranger who is most kind, most loving is not the upstanding citizen who looks and thinks like you. Imagine that she or he is that person you dismiss as a bigot and hypocrite or a heathen, a racist or a baby killer. Imagine that the person who helps us, who helps you—is someone who you would never consider to be your neighbor, your friend, your sister or brother in faith. Image that your greatest needs—got filled by such a person!

What would that teach you about the meaning of loving GOD and loving neighbor? Now go and be a good neighbor!