

March 9th, 2025
Devotional
“The Gospel of Luke: The Good Samaritan” - Luke 10: 25-37

Monday: “Gain Eternal Life” - Luke 10: 25-26

When the lawyer asked Jesus what he had to do to gain eternal life - his definition was a bit different from ours today. When we think of eternal life, we are often referring to heaven, or where we will spend eternity. For Jews during Jesus’s time, eternal life was having the best possible life here and now, blessed by God.

When we think about our definition of eternal life, sometimes we can get just as confused as the lawyer, however. Some people think you gain eternal life by being a good person. Other people think you can earn your way into heaven. Still others believe once you have accepted Jesus you can act however you want. The truth is, we cannot earn our way into heaven, but the love and grace of Jesus should so change us that we desire to serve God and make God’s name known. Therefore, eternal life, isn’t just about getting to heaven someday, it’s also about sharing about God and God’s kingdom here and now.

What do you believe about eternal life?

How are eternal life and daily lives connected?

Prayer: Jesus, we come to you today, just as the lawyer did so long ago, and ask what we must do to inherit the gift of eternal life. Open up our hearts to your guidance and grace and then send us out to proclaim your love, here and now, dear Lord. Amen.

Tuesday: “Love” - Luke 10: 27-28

When you think of the law what words do you associate with it? Is the first word that jumps to your mind about the word law “love”? Probably not. Yet for ancient Israel, law and love were deeply connected. The law was a sign of the covenant between God, who brought the people out of slavery in Egypt, and the chosen people. The law wasn’t just a list of do’s and don’t’s, it was a sign of everlasting relationship.

Further, when the lawyer asked Jesus what he must do to gain eternal life, Jesus responded with his own question -asking what the law said. The two laws that the lawyer responded with both are about love - love of God and love of neighbor. *You must love the Lord your God with all your heart, with all your being, with all your strength, and with all your mind, and love your neighbor as yourself.*

Sometimes we get a bit confused about love - thinking it’s a feeling or emotion. But really, love is an action. We are to love God with all we have and all we are, and love our neighbors as ourselves. This isn’t something that varies from day to day, based on how we feel. Rather it’s a law - a constant.

What does love in action look like to you?

How do we love God and love our neighbor?

Prayer: Lord, we thank you for your law, which is given to us as a sign of your abiding love for us. Let us share that love with the world, through both our word and deed. Let your love shine through us, we pray. Amen.

Wednesday: “Neighbor” - Luke 10: 29

For the lawyer, being told to go and love God and love one's neighbor was not a simple enough answer. Or perhaps it was too simple for him - something that he could not see himself doing. So he pushed Jesus further, asking who is my neighbor.

Included in the question 'who is my neighbor?' Is the list of everyone who isn't one's neighbor. If I say that this person is my neighbor, then I also exclude that person from being my neighbor. If its people who live on my block, then does that mean that it isn't people the next town over? If its people I work with, does that mean I don't have to act neighborly to the person in front of me at the grocery store that I don't really know?

Perhaps we all have a little bit of the lawyer inside of us. We want Jesus to tell us who we have to love and who we are excused from loving. We want to know the perimeters that both bring people in and take people out. We want Jesus to clarify that we don't really have to love everyone. But of course, that isn't what Jesus does.

How do you define who your neighbor is?

How does your definition of neighbor compare to Jesus's definition?

Prayer: Lord, we confess that sometimes we would like to have stark lines that include some people and exclude others. We don't like to think that when you tell us to love our neighbor that you mean everyone, even those who we do not like or those who are not like us. Forgive us, we pray, and open our hearts to what you truly means when you tell us to love our neighbors as ourselves. Amen.

Thursday: "A Samaritan" - Luke 10: 30-35

In repose to the lawyers questions, ones that he was so sure that he had an answer to before he met Jesus, Jesus told a story. A story of what it means to be a neighbor - and also what it means to not be a neighbor.

Only nothing in the story goes as expected. A man is robbed and injured along the road. The people who should stop and help him, the religious folks, do not. But who does stop to help? The enemy. The one no one likes. The Samaritan.

When we are thinking about this story from afar, it is so easy to judge the lawyer. To judge the priest and Levite in the story. But then we start to think about hard questions - like who would I pass by? Or perhaps, more hard hitting, who have I passed by before? The truth is, it is not easy to show love as the Samaritan did, yet, that is the example Jesus has given us. What does it look like to be a neighbor? To love those who would never love you in return.

Who do you most identify with in this story? Why?

Prayer: Lord, we come before you today, asking ourselves hard questions and turning to you to examine our hearts. Illuminate to us those dark spaces within us Lord, where we are not good neighbors, and heal us from broken relationships. Heal us so we can heal others, most merciful Lord. Amen.

Friday: "Go and Do Likewise" - Luke 10: 36-37

At the end of the story, Jesus has a question of his own for the lawyer - which of the people in the story was a true neighbor? You can almost imagine the lawyer not being able to look Jesus in the eye, just as he is not able to bring himself to say the Samaritan. He could not even bring himself to say the name - so instead he just said the one who showed mercy.

Showing mercy is a mark of being a neighbor. Showing compassion. Granting forgiveness. Love in action.

Jesus then told the lawyer to go and do likewise. We are not told whether he did or not, but we can imagine that this story was a challenge to him, especially when he was so sure when he started to test Jesus that he, the lawyer, had all of the answers.

We too, sometimes act like we have all the answers. We act as if there are categories of people we are to show mercy to and those we can simply ignore. But this is not the case. Just as the lawyer was told to go and do likewise, so are we, as Jesus's followers today.

What does mercy look like in action?

Prayer: Lord, help us to break down the walls that we build between ourselves and other people. Build us up to be people who show mercy and love. Amen.