

Serve Them – By Being a Neighbor

Get on the Bus – I don't want this text to be common-place or comfortable for us – we are so familiar with this story, even those that haven't grown up in the church when you hear the Word Samaritan you think "Good" – there are even Good Samaritan laws (Memorialized in the last Seinfeld episode –)

- **But this story would have been shocking! And it's story all about questions – Life is all about questions:** Why are we here? Where are we going? What's this world all about? *And this shocking text actually answers those questions*

Interview – Megan Hartsfield – Now as we've done each week... **as she comes – I want to challenge us** – let's not come to the text overly familiar or comfortable, let's let the text land on us afresh!

Prayer – pray for Harvest

Opening Illustration – You all know I love sports – Shocking huh

- You know there has been a lot of conflict/heat surrounding the NFL and it's culture of Violence particularly against women – (**Ray Rice Video**)
- **In the wake of this, one of the things that shocked me was hearing men call into sports radio shows making statements like, "well you know sometimes women hit men"** or sometimes "**Women deserve it**"
 - o **It was Shocking to me** – and I realized essentially they were raising scenarios trying to get the radio personality to answer "**When is it ok to hit a woman?**" *They were trying to find a way to justify their behavior in "some" situations*

We all do this in our lives:

- As Teenagers we think: *"I know the Bible calls for sex in the confines of marriage, but what if it is a certain kind of sex?"*
- Adults: *"Well I know I shouldn't commit adultery, but what if my husband doesn't pay attention to me?"*
- *"Well I know I am supposed to love Muslims, but what if my son was paralyzed by Muslims in Afghanistan?"*
 - o **We all do this where we ask questions, but they aren't questions to learn, they are questions to justify** – *We all fall short, and thus deep in the human heart is **the temptation to avoid guilt by asking questions!***

That's what we see here in this text – Context – Jesus has set His face like flint towards Jerusalem and He and His disciples are making their way there and along the way he has been sending out his disciples to preach and then teaching them

- **And then Imagine this scene – In the midst of all of these miracles and teaching you see a Lawyer stand up to put him to the test – and what we see is this story is every bit as much about a Lawyer as a Samaritan,** a Lawyer who seeks to justify himself with clarifying questions

This text wants us to ask ourselves 3 questions:

Who inherits eternal life? (25-28)

READ Verse 25 – The Lawyer is not a lawyer in the sense we think – This isn't Matlock (Andy Griffith playing a lawyer) – **he's an expert in the Mosaic law and would have been well-versed in the scriptures** (he's a theologian), and he stands up to trap Jesus

- **And he stands up to test him by asking a common question, indeed the most important of questions – a question that was asked of the Apostles in Acts** – essentially asking is there a greater life to come and how do I get in on that?
 - o **This is the most important question any of us can answer** – whether we believe in Just or we do not – **What if this life isn't the end?** How can I be made right with my Creator and be

saved? (*And this is common because King Solomon tells us that God has set eternity in our hearts*)

And we have heard this language of TEST before – *the accuser was told in the wilderness that he is not to put the Lord your God to the test and now this expert in the Torah steps up acting like the serpent to trap Jesus...* not a good move (**like on some of these fail videos on YouTube** – when you see the guy like reaching up to put his hand in the Fan... not a smart move bro)

- He is likely doing this to see if Jesus will contradict the Law – **he is not genuinely seeking to be taught by Jesus** – *he's more concerned about embarrassing Jesus than getting the answer!* And how sad is that such a weighty question is trivialized by such poor motives

READ VERSE 26 – Jesus is so Jesus here... answers a question with a question – you have to love this about Him, He turns the question back on the man! *I do that, but often cause I cant answer the question*

- *Jesus is saying you are the expert in the Law, what does it say?*

READ VERSE 27 – The expert in the Law responds with the Law (Deut 6 and Lev. 19) – the greatest commandment and the one like it – *These two on which all the Ten Commandments hang! (1st 4 and final 6)* – he

- He quotes the Shema and Lev. showing that the true command is love – that has both God and others as its objects
 - o *In relation to God it is to be wholehearted (total devotion of the entire being) and in relation to neighbors equal in love and cares as for oneself*

Lets these 2 sit for just a second – **We are to have faith in God and delight in Him above all else with our whole being – and this vertical love must play out in horizontal love for neighbor that is equal to how we care for ourselves...** we hear that so much but just let that sit “**AS SELF**”

VERSE 28 – Jesus commends his answer and then commends the life characterized by the answer – *Jesus Himself puts these two texts/commands together to reply in our brother Matthew's gospel when asked what is the greatest commandment!*

Something to note here: **For Jesus the Scriptures are the unerring standard of faith and practice** – He never questions them!

- **This is instructive for us as contemporary Christians** – He doesn't just hold them in high regard, He holds them as the standard for faith and practice – we have contemporary Christian leaders doing this, *be weary of ones that say they have a High View of the Scriptures but wont say they are inerrant or infallible*

There is nothing wrong with his answer (though there is a problem) – clear knowledge of what it takes is insufficient – You must do this to live!

- **Jesus is about to show the lawyer that he falls short and show him his need for another** – *He doesn't rebuke him based on his orthodoxy, he said you answer right, but just like he does with the rich young ruler he will expose for this man that he cannot live up to the commands*

Is it true if you do that you will live? Yes! Jesus isn't a liar

- **So is Jesus saying if you do these two things you will be saved?** YES! Well in fact you wouldn't need to
- **Here's the problem – no one does this – have you 100% of the time loved God with total devotion and loved neighbor with the same speed, joy, power, and heart as you have yourself?**
 - o One young girl asked Keller if loving your neighbor as yourself meant that you should be "just as excited for your neighbor when they succeed as when you succeed." – He said. "I

never thought of that, but yes. That's a powerful application of this." She said, "That's a pretty unreasonable religion you have." In other words, who can do this?

And Jesus is exposing this for the Lawyer (and the lawyer gets this with his next question) and us that we have fallen short of the Law – **he does this in order to prick his conscience (expose that he cannot do them) and drive him to the mercy of God**

- This is not as the great theologian Tony Merida says "Salvation by Roadside assistance" – Thank goodness, I would be in trouble! (TIRE LAST WEEK) – *Jesus isn't setting His face like Flint toward Jerusalem so that you can be saved by being "like a good neighbor"* He is pointing us to a justification by faith!

Jesus (just like the NT) never sets aside the moral demands of the OT – **rather it affirms them and expands on them giving expression of God's character and what His people's character should be – ultimately pointing us to the one People of God, the man from Nazareth who will fulfill the law and show us what Sinai was all about who will give us the power to live this kingdom life out!**

- The kind of life that marks God's people out, not to become part of God's people but that characterizes those that are already God's people – *the law drives us to the gospel for our justification and the gospel drives us back to the law to see what the justified life looks like* (which is consistent even in this chapter as Jesus says great works aren't grounds for rejoicing but that your name is in the book of life!)
 - o *Jesus is crushing his self-righteousness here or any sense that we can earn this on our own!*

What should the lawyer's response be? What should our response be? It should be that of the Tax Collector later in Luke's gospel – *seeing the Holy Demands of God and seeing his own sin he cant even lift up his head but only say "Lord have mercy upon me a sinner"* – and Jesus tells us that man went home justified!

- **This Lawyer knows he cant even on his best day live out this command and so what is his response?** *Instead of asking for mercy he seeks to justify HIMSELF by asking a 2nd question!*

Who is my neighbor? (29 – 35)

READ VERSE 29 – Jesus' answer is not satisfactory for the man because he is less interested in answers and more interested in justifying himself – **you get this picture of that smug student who always says, "Well actually" – and expert in the scriptures now looks for a THEOLOGICAL LOOPHOLE** (this should be a warning for those of us that have been or are now bible students)

- *So that he can he justify not caring for some as neighbors that may be a little harder to love or that he doesn't want to love he hopes to make some "Non-Neighbors"*
- **We should ask ourselves tough questions like: Have we ever used the bible to defend ourselves against some of its demands?**

This desire to justify and vindicate ourselves is deep within us – **it is one of the temptations our Lord faced when Satan asked Jesus to throw Himself off the temple – which at first glance doesn't seem like much of a temptation – hey Tony why don't you go jump off Millbrook** – he should probably seek to have me arrested)

- But the temptation is essentially prove that He was really the Messiah, to justify it to vindicate himself – *this is deep within in us, when we are tested, when we are questioned our immediate instinct is to justify* (when I taught I noticed this – you're late, well my friend was upset)
- And even on this front there are some that we are uncomfortable treating as a neighbor (muslims, homeless, etc) – and we justify it (ask in GG)

Jesus has now exposed what is really going on here – *the Lawyer wants eternal life, he wants the Justified life, but he doesn't want the life that comes with the justified life (one of repentance and faith and obedience) – is that any of us? I want salvation, to pray a prayer, but I don't want obedience to my King?*

- **As Alex said last week, we are saved by faith alone, but not a faith that is alone** – and He exposes that for the Lawyer of his need for mercy but instead of asking for it he tries to protect himself with Theology

And now we will see what the justified life does and does not look like in three men:

READ VERSE 30 – *half dead (reminds me of Princess Bride – Mostly Dead)*

Jesus answers the question and you have to love how He does, with a story – Imagine if I did that, Tony asks me to preach and I say “*Well Tony a priests walks into a bar...*” or Nathan would you like Steak tonight, “Well Tony does a bear poop in the woods?”

- **He is so wise in how he responds, not with a theological duel (in which he would have power-bombed the lawyer), but not trying to win an argument, but to convert a heart** – *he is like the better Nathan (the prophet who by a story convicts King David) and so now Jesus will confront this man's misplaced theology with a story* – Beware of winning an argument and losing an opportunity

Here's the scene – A man (A Jew likely, if wasn't we would have probably been told) walks outside the camp in Jerusalem down a dangerous but very familiar strip of Road going down to Jericho (about 17miles) that is curvy and rocky and on his way he runs into a group of Robbers *who brutalize him, strip him, rob him and leave him for dead ...*

- When you hear the story and hear robber don't think pickpocket, hear a gang

Put yourself in the story – Imagine walking up on this man: (**My story in the neighborhood** – Stopped the car started to get out... **I was like yeah that's right** – it was like the line in SANDLOT I walked a little taller that day)

- **But really imagine this Imagine today a man walking down a well-known road like CAPITAL and a group of guys jump out and beat him and rob him and you come up on him lying in his own blood looking as if dead** – And this would have been a well-know scenario to those hearing it (in fact neither Luke nor Jesus say this is a parable) this was likely a common occurrence and so Jesus paints what could have been an actual event.
- **And here now lies an Imago Dei in need** – Will anyone come to the rescue of this man?

Notice Jesus makes this mission personal, this isn't humanity, it is a man – *it's easy for us to love causes (easy to sport the wristband from Sudan or the Tshirt for Tibet and there is nothing wrong with those things as long as it doesn't end there) but the question is do we know anyone personally?*

READ VERSE 31-32 – “**By chance**” – **This situation happened in the ordinariness of life** – *and along come two of the Religious Elite* – a priest and then what would be a priests helper come upon this man naked and covered in blood

- **And the text says “When they saw him” (saw him is a key phrase) these 2 that are normally the commended in society, PASSED BY** – *they saw him, sort of like seeing those people you really don't want to talk to so you navigate your way out of the room to avoid them...I mean I've been told* – that's the length and strategy they employed to avoid showing neighbor love!

Christians for centuries have tried to answer the question why they walked to the other side – Maybe they were trying to stay **ritually clean** (though they were leaving Jerusalem) **maybe they were afraid** (*I mean you walk up on the side of the road and see a man who looks nearly beaten to death you at least have to consider how he got like that and you probably don't want to stick around to see*)

- Ultimately the bible doesn't tell us why, because in the end it doesn't really matter! They walked by – They refused to even check if he was alive and they refused him mercy and the commands of the Law! They just didn't want to get involved, sound familiar? **And if that's been us passing by someone in need maybe thinking I am too busy or someone else will help...** it ultimately doesn't matter what our excuses are in that moment

READ VERSES 33 – Now Jesus completely shocks the audience and the Lawyer by introducing a Samaritan – *they were despised by the Jews seen as both racial and spiritual half-breeds*

- **This one of whom the Jews would actually have their children pray “bless mommy and daddy and don't remember the Samaritans in the Resurrection” it says of him** – WHEN HE SAW HIM, he had compassion – let that sink in!

An what compassion – he doesn't just check on him, nor say a quick prayer “Lord please help this man” – *instead of moving on with life, he sees someone in distress an doesn't pass on by nor excuse himself, he stops and helps someone he was normally at odds with* – this cuts at the Lawyer's pride and racism as neighbor love has no national boundaries

- **Who is that you've built up boundaries towards?** Muslims? Pro-Choicers? Jehovah's Witnesses? Those who struggle with SSA? Those of a different Socioeconomic status? **Jesus has exposed the Lawyer's heart!**

His compassion here isn't an owe bless your heart – he is extravagant in his compassion – “*went to him*” *treats his wounds with wine and oil (antiseptic and soothing ointment), puts him on his own donkey (beautiful picture of the man walking while the brutalized sits atop his animal), provides shelter, and then more in taking care of him even after he leaves* – giving 2 days wages and saying whatever debt he gets past these 2 denarii I will repay! **This is extravagant mercy and care! It is comprehensive Care!**

- **If we are going to undertake this kind of ministry it will be inconvenient and costly at times (it will take sacrifice)** – a lot of what we are telling you in this series is ways to maximize what you already do for the sake of the gospel, but at times we will have to be inconvenienced for the sake of neighbors – *he didn't just treat wounds and say this is where my responsibility ends I've already done so much my duty is done, no he was extravagant!*

This Samaritan is treating his man like family... like self as Jesus gives us a picture of the justified life!

We see several characteristics worth noting in the Samaritan (READ THIS): He put himself in the path of neighbors (we must not avoid the Jericho Road), he observed, he acted, he risked his life because robbers could have been close by (Eric Thomas Duncan), gives financially, didn't let his schedule keep him from helping, and he cares for someone who can give him nothing in return

- **There are many ways we can love neighbor (PEACE Plan list)** – consider that this week in GG
- **So when we see people in our path** – *will we see them as Neighbors or nuisances?*

Are you a Neighbor? (36-37)

READ VERSES 36 – 37 – **The Lawyer was more interested in seeing who is not my neighbor Jesus flips it around and asks – are you the neighbor?**

- **And the lawyer cant even bring himself to say the “Samaritan”(he says the one who showed mercy) (and we have noted why)** – Catch the force of this: Jesus says go and act like him... would be like me saying to you right now go and act like an ISIS Terrorist, go and act like a Drug Dealer

This would have been shocking but Jesus has completely flipped the script on the Lawyer by asking who proved to be a neighbor and using a Samaritan to do so? Now go and do likewise – and as we do we are shouting to the world this is what our God is like. this is what His kingdom is like and we bring the future into

the present giving just a glimpse for a moment of the future when there is no brokenness and peace and righteousness dwell!

- **The question we must come to grips with is not who is my neighbor: but am I being a neighbor to those that the Lord has put in my path?**

So what are some ways we justify ourselves:

- Don't have the means to do this?
- Seminary student might say I am pushing this off for future ministry? *As I heard one say, who cares if you have orthodox and have knowledge if all it helps you do is say be warmed and filled in perfect Greek... This is not the Christ life!*
- **Some affix labels to people so they won't have to deal with they avoid the sting of it actually being a person – that's an embryo**, that's a victim of sex trafficking, that's an orphan, but in your life who are the actual individuals around you that are in need of neighbor love? Single mom serving you coffee? Boss whose marriage is on the rocks?
- **And the question is will we see them and will we have compassion or will we justify ourselves?**

(QUICKLY) I think Evangelicals as a whole have tended to justify ourselves on this issues with theological arguments – Tony addressed this some last week, *but our tribe has tended to say we only need to be about verbal proclamation and not neighbor love because being saved is there greatest need!*

- **Should we be about Proclamation or feeding the poor? YES!** They are not at odds! We should say an **EXTREME** amount of both – BFM2000 – Jesus doesn't allow in this text for the dichotomy!

Mission speaks to people as people in all aspects of human life – if we are going to love neighbor as self it means integrative mission

- **CF Henry spoke of this and asked the simple question: *If I am to love neighbor as self do I love myself in only this way ...*** Do I refuse to feed myself because I have the gospel Do refuse to close myself because I have the gospel? I HOPE NOT! No
- ***We are to love God and neighbor which means the gospel is being proclaimed verbally as you are digging those well, or hugging that AIDS patient, or caring for that homeless man who hasn't felt dignity in years***
- ***We are to love God and neighbor as self because we understand it is a gospel about a Kingdom of life that rolls back the curse, we love and show mercy because the gospel is true – Lets be careful to not justify our actions with theology while people around us are sold into brothels!***

Lets take this to heart here in Raleigh – Heard Thabiti say a couple of weeks ago that we have hoods because neighbors moved out of them – so all that's left is the hood – only if neighbors move back in will we see hoods become neighborhoods

Conclusion – what is the hope for us that are self-justifiers? Another Samaritan, a greater neighbor!

- There will be another Samaritan, who just like the Samaritan in this passage **when he sees the people it says in the book He has compassion on them** because they are sheep without a shepherd
- Another Samaritan who **doesn't just help the lame, He heals them... who clothes the naked and** one who doesn't just help the mostly dead, He brings the dead back to life
- Another Samaritan, **Who so cared for the poor** that He gave up His riches so that they might become Rich!
- Another Samaritan that would have **compassion on His enemies saying Father forgive them...**
- Another Samaritan who would be despised and rejected by even His own people
- Another Samaritan **who did not just risk His life to help the broken, He gave his life...** no greater love than this (no greater compassion) than one lays down his life

- Another Samaritan **who always kept love of God and neighbor and imputed to us... as hour after hour...**
- And this one would ultimately be **vindicated as on a Sunday morning** like this a heart that was stopped starting beating again... and Jesus of Nazareth the GREAT Samaritan walked out of a grave!

Unbeliever – what if your only hope is an act of free grace from someone else who doesn't owe you anything? What if someone who only owed you rejection showed you an act of radical neighbor love?

Would you want it? *Well Jesus the Great Samaritan is reaching out His hand to the weary saying come to me and I will give you rest – Realize your sin and cry out for mercy!*

Believer – You know the next time this man passed a man in need he helped – and so it is with us – Until we see that we have a neighbor who at infinite cost cared for us and did for us the exact opposite of what we deserved we won't have the right motivation or power to be a neighbor

- Oh see His work! You were there on the side of the road, undone... and along comes this one who is different than the Samaritan cause he knows who you are, he knows everything you have ever thought, and all that you are... and He decides anyways to rescue you at the cost of being separated from His father
- When we let this melt our heart... when we see the cost at which he paid for us, and forgave us of infinite debt, we can then turn around and be the generous and the sacrificial
- Aren't you glad this one didn't see us as an inconvenience or drain on his time?

The Christian church has said that we need to see Jesus as the Samaritan and indeed he is but more than that Jesus is the maybe we will go to Jerusalem he will step outside to get it he will fall among thieves and be stripped and beaten! And priests and Levites and even the Samaritans will walk along the road and pass on by of this man is hung up on the side of the road to drowning in his own blood. The crucified one shows up mysteriously in the least of these and the question is when we see them do we see his face...

- However, Jesus says on the last day some will still be asking questions
- But in your story and my story who are the ones who are the broken ones who are the hurting ones the hungry Who are the ones that you do not remember even enough to consider right now? Who are the ones that you have now been moved with compassion to speak the gospel to and to embrace with the embrace of a neighbor - because the Bible says that we will hear from them again on the day that exposes how much of our gospel is the power of God to salvation and how much of it is just theology. A day in which all the secrets of the heart will be exposed we will see those faces and we would hear those names on a day in which every secret of the heart is exposed. Every hatred every indifference is brought into the tribunal of God... and on that day we will stand as either those who are seeking to be justified in Jesus are those that are seeking to justify ourselves... and then the questions will stop!

Instead let's rest in our justification and let it remind us of the lavish Grace our King who on our behalf got on the road... so that now it can melt our hearts so we can do likewise so that on the last day it is said of us well done good and faithful servant... blessed are the merciful for they will receive mercy!