We are in a short series on the nature of our mission at IDC called "Love Your Neighbor." We see that command in this popular story typically referred to as "The Good Samaritan." Part of the problem with talking about "love" is that people have a misunderstanding about what love is. I think of the 80's song by Foreigner, "I wanna know what love is." It's truly a miracle anyone was saved in the 80's! Love is normally confused with one of four ideas:

- **Tolerance** — There is a place for tolerance of course. But the Christian is never to replace truthfulness for what many today call "tolerance." Rather we are to speak truth in love.
- **Sexual** — (eros). Love is like the magic word you use to get your girl to break the commandments with you. You go watch Batman, do the Cupid Shuffle, say the word and there you go. That's not love.
- **Diminished** — we just use it to describe a love for anything, like ice cream or a donut. "He loves me..." like a donut. His hot light is on.
- **Sentimentalism** — "warm fuzzies." "hallmark love."

But the Bible cuts threw the confusion. John, for example, says in 1 John 3:16a, *"By this we know love,"* that he laid down his life for us. For the Christian, we don't have to guess at what love is. It's not mystical, philosophical, nor just "being nice" (whatever that means). It's about the cross of Jesus. I like to describe love as:

A passion that leads to action

Jesus' (com)passion lead him to act. He just didn't say he loved us, or had compassion and mercy, he demonstrated it. You need a Christ-centered, cross-centered passion to act in a way that glorifies Christ. That's what love is. (cf., Eph. 4:32, 5:25). "Let us not love in word or talk but in deed and truth" (1 John 3:18).

The discussion about "love your neighbor" is followed by a story about a Samaritan's mercy and compassion moving him to action. Notice 33, "compassion" and 37, "the who showed "mercy"; then
Jesus says, "go and do likewise." Go do mercy ministry to anyone on need."Clearly a central lesson of the parable is that believers are called to show compassion to anyone in need." (Blomberg, *Preaching the Parables* 58, see also Darrell Bock, *Luke*, Baker).

**Mercy Ministry: Vision for IDC**

Tim Keller has written two books that address this topic: *Generous Justice* and *Ministries of Mercy*. I commend them both to you.

Keller’s first book *Ministries of Mercy* is based on this text. He arranged all of their justice and ministries to the poor and needy under this title: mercy ministry. Also, their *diaconate* is particular focused on this ministry, as I hope our deacon ministry will be in the future.

His definition for mercy ministry is "meeting needs through deeds."

Our CJA team is in the process of identifying such needs in our area, and we are going to pray for them today.

**As we display mercy and justice, we are saying to the world,** "This is what God is like." "This is what the kingdom is like." "These are signs of the kingdom of God to come." In the new heavens and earth we will experience full Shalom, total wholeness, where peace and righteousness dwell, and this is a glimpse of what’s to come.

Two texts that come to mind: Micah 6:8 and Matthew 23:23.

*He has told you, O man, what is good; And what does the LORD require of you but to do justice, and to love mercy, and to walk humbly with your God.*

Micah 6:8

Jesus probably had this verse in mind as he told the Pharisees:

"You have neglected the weightier matters of mercy, faithfulness, and justice."

(Matt. 23:23)

**What Do These Terms Mean?** They’re really impossible to separate.
• *Chesed* – attitude, heart – mercy. Our attitude toward our neglected neighbor, to the poor matters.

• *Misphat* (justice) – action word. It involves social responsibility. It involves **fighting against oppression, perjury, and bribery.** It means **exposing darkness.** It means **to care for the vulnerable and the weaker members of society (orphan, widow, stranger, and poor).**

*Misphat* involves, but is not limited to, **punishing the villains, as well as protecting, and caring for the vulnerable.** This is how justice and mercy go together: justice for the villain, mercy for the vulnerable.

**Who are the vulnerable?**

- Bible: widow, the orphan, the immigrants, and the poor.
- Today, there are many who are vulnerable and weak: Orphans, widows, single mothers, unborn, disabled, elderly, disadvantaged children (slaves, abused/neglected), sick, grieving, the functionally fatherless. Love and support the weak: Love your "orphan neighbor," love your "widowed neighbor," "Love your abused neighbor," “Love your unborn neighbor,” “love your grieving neighbor….”

**LUKE 10**

The religious teachers were out setting traps to get Jesus (Luke 11:54). A few weeks ago our family went to the vacation. We had many memorable events: Joshua losing his shorts riding a wave, or as he said, “Let’s get a surfboard and catch a river.” One of James’ favorite moments was when he trapped me in the sand. He was out setting traps. When I stepped it was *victory.*

The lawyer who approaches Jesus in this parable is doing this. Some people have good intentions in the gospels, when they ask Jesus questions, but not this lawyer. But Jesus also has an agenda. He **traps the lawyer!** But "**Jesus' traps are always traps of love.**" (Keller)

In a similar type of story, Jesus looks at the Rich Young Ruler and Mark says that he “**loved him**” and told him to surrender all and follow him.
Let's walk through this story, using three of the questions that arise from it…

**Question #1: What Shall I Do to Inherit Eternal Life?**

**V. 25** - He is like a Bible lawyer. Religious professional.
**V. 25b** – The question is a good one. Eternal life. **Pirates of the Caribbean, and other films have the theme of never dying. "Arrr Ye Fearin' the Hereafter?"**

Solomon says, "*God has placed eternity in man's heart.*"

But the question is a bit bizarre and more problematically, it has the wrong motive. His concern is not with eternal life, but with trying to "test Jesus."

He may have thought that Jesus was diminishing the law, and wanted to show him that. However, Jesus will show him that the lawyer doesn't have a high enough view of the law.

**V. 26** – Jesus asks an interpretation question. How do you read it?

In passing, Jesus’ approach is worth noting when dealing with unbelievers. When a non-believer comes with questions, he does not blast them and try to win the argument. He dialogues with him. This is all through the gospels.

**V. 27-28** – The man can’t state the entire first five books of the Bible, so he summarizes them. **They are summarized elsewhere in the NT, and the other teachers probably had the same summary.** The first is taken from **Deut. 6:5 (cited twice a day), and the other Lev. 19:18 (look at who it: poor, sojourner, handicapped, also v. 19:34).**

**These two commands are central in our mission.** Bartholomew says that you can enter God's mission either through the Great Commission or the Great Commandments. They are like two doors entering the same Cathedral.

But Jesus' point to the lawyer is not show the imperative of doing of these commands (though he affirms them), but rather to first show
the **impossibility** of keeping these commands in our own power and goodness perfectly.

V. 28 – If you have a **sense of humor**, you chuckle at Jesus as he says, “okay. Go ahead. Do it. Do it and you will live.” *Do this (entirely, perfectly, constantly) and you will live.* Yeah right.

Loving **God** 100% of the time? “**Your religion is what you do with your solitude.**” (William Temple)

Love Your Neighbor as yourself 100% of the time? Come on. *Love them in ways that you yourself need love.*
- You need food, clothing, shelter, friendship, encouragement.

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? She's on the right track.

By showing this man, the impossibility of perfectly living out these commands, what is Jesus doing? **He's humbling this man.** He is crushing self-righteous, human pride with law in order to cure him with the gospel.

In saying, “Do this and live,” he isn't pointing to the law as an end in itself, but rather, **as a means to an end.**

The law is intended to send us to the gospel (cf., Rom. 3:20, 7:7-ff; Gal 3:11; James 2:10).

"The law drives us to the gospel to be justified, and the gospel drives us back to the law to see what is our duty in being justified."

These two commands are to be kept – that's mercy ministry – **by justified people. Not as a means of justification, but as a result of our justification.**

Because of the Gospel, through Christ, we are under no **condemnation**, and now we have power to live them out.
Point: No one keeps the law perfectly. Salvation is a gracious gift.

This is consistent with this chapter in Luke: Luke 10:20-ff. Jesus says even great works should not be your grounds of rejoicing – but that your name is in the book of life (Luke 10:20). They weren't saved by their ministry but by God's mercy. Lloyd Jones in his dying days, "I am perfectly content."

In the next paragraph, Jesus says God saves people by his own gracious will (10:21-22), not human performance.

The question is a bit bizarre because he uses the word "inherit." You don't do anything to inherit something. You are simply part of a family. And you don't choose your parents. It's by grace that you have an inheritance.

Further, prior to Luke 10, we have a very important verse in Luke (9:51). Jesus sets his face to Jerusalem. The rest of Luke then is under the shadow of the cross. Jesus isn't setting his face to Jerusalem to suffer and die and then say, "You can be saved by being a nice neighbor."

No, Luke is showing us that we are saved by grace alone through faith alone, in the Crucified Christ alone. So what role does deeds play? Let's press on…

Question #2: Who Is My Neighbor? (29)

By asking this question, the man is showing that he is unwilling to humble himself and beg for mercy. Instead, he tries to look for a theological loophole.

What should you do when you hear that you can't keep God's law and you are guilty before an infinitely holy God? You should do what the tax collector did in Luke 18:9-14 and say desperately, "Will you be merciful to me a sinner?" That's the question he should have asked. Luke says, "This man went down to his house Justified rather than the other." Then he says, "whoever exalts himself will be humbled, whoever humbles himself will be exalted"
But the lawyer wants to "justify himself."

Justifying oneself is the opposite of Christian doctrine. But people do this all the time. This is the default mode of the human heart. We want to feel superior to others. So we try to justify ourselves. We want to measure ourselves against others.

Point: We can't justify ourselves. We need God to justify us by his grace.

The Christian knows he can't justify himself before God. Our only hope is that God would justify us. That's what he has done! (cf., Gal. 2:15-21). Trust in Christ's righteousness, not your own.

You can't do it by your works. They are filthy rags.

Do you understand this? Do you see that you can't save yourself? This is a religious professional coming to Jesus, and Jesus is crushing him that he might save him.

To become a Christian, you must repent not only of your sins but also your perceived "goodness." This guy is self-righteous. Salvation is about coming to God as a poor beggar, and having God bestow infinite riches into our account. Saving faith is about saying something like this, "I am nothing. Be my everything." Have you done this?

The previous text tells us that if you have, it has only been by God's grace and you should praise him for it.

#3: Which of These Three Proved to Be a Neighbor? (30-37)

There are two ways to get around the command to love neighbor: isolation (avoid people, but you'd commit sin of omission), or go the route of interpretation, give pious arguments about why you shouldn't love neighbor.
To show this guy his sin, Jesus decides to tell a story. In the story he places a Samaritan as a hero. It would be an oxymoron to say "Good Samaritan."

There was long standing tension between these two groups (cf., John 4:9; 8:48). You can read about that in many places. They even prayed (from the Mishna) basically, "Bless mommy and daddy and don't remember the Samaritans in the resurrection."

But Jesus makes a Samaritan the hero.

He could have put a Jew as a hero, and perhaps a Jew helping a Samaritan to get at the idea of loving your neighbor. That would have worked, right?

By placing the Samaritan as the hero, Jesus does several things. He hits confronts the lawyer’s self-centeredness and idolatry. He hits on his racism.

The Parable

V. 30 – "A man" – We don’t know who he is. That’s part of the point. Love doesn’t discriminate. Anyone in need is worthy of neighbor love. One would assume a Jewish man.

"down from Jerusalem to Jericho" – That's about 20 miles, over 3000 feet drop. It was notorious for crime. This is the hood.

"fell among robbers" – This wasn't like a pickpocket; more like a terrorist or a gangster.

"beat him and stripped him" – Clothes were worth lots of money, so they took those as well. They "left him half dead."

Jesus paints a picture of an actual person. This actually could have been a true story! Neither Luke nor Jesus says this is a parable.

Even if it is a parable, it points to something important. Jesus is showing the lawyer (and us) that "loving your neighbor" is not merely an abstract idea. The lawyer wanted to exegete "neighbor" instead of "embrace his neighbor."

• Many avoid responsibility to the poor and vulnerable, using their pious sounding theology as an excuse. "It's a slippery slope to
liberalism." Really? "That's the job of the Christian not the church." What?

- While you have your pious arguments on your blogs, people die of lack of food, water and basic care, go to bed orphaned, get sold into brothels and more... Ignore such people who reject this ultimate command in the name of "theology." Woe to you Pharisees! Hypocrites! Repent of your theology & your sin of omission. You are just like this lawyer trying to justify yourself, whittling down God's Word.

- Others put on a front. Today it is easy for people to love a cause. It's easy to get the Sudan bracelet or the justice t-shirt, or whatever good cause we can and should be involved in. There's nothing wrong with these things, so long as they don't end there.

Jesus wants to know, "Who will help this dying man?" It's not complex. It's not philosophical. It's practical. We can discuss things like "poverty" and "job opportunities" and yet never personally help feed a hungry family or help somebody find a job. That's not neighbor love.

- Whom are you loving? Who have you welcomed? Give me a name.

- Help One Now Opportunity

V. 31 – "By chance" – Notice something else here. This situation happened in the ordinariness of life. It just happened on a given day.

- God's people are to show God's mercy and justice in everyday living, not merely on a short-term mission trip. "I put on righteousness as my clothing; justice was my robe and turban" (29:14). He wears justice! It's always on his mind. He gives examples in Ch 31: poor, widow, fatherless, generosity, & more.

- Priest – Again, the priest would have understood neighbor as one of his own. He also had purity laws to obey; and he was probably scared. Robbers could be near.

- Levite – He was sort of like the J.V. He passes by also. Both of them chose to follow their religious traditions, and seek their own comfort rather than get involved.
However, the point of the story is not so much an indictment on the religious professionals, but on the amazing compassion of a Samaritan.

v. 33 – The Samaritan – He was a merchant it seems; a man of means. He is on a donkey, and he is carrying a lot of supplies.

He shows us some characteristics of compassionate disciples.

- **He was in the right place**, “where he was” (33b)
  Part of our problem, friends, is that we are not where the man is. People don’t want to live or be around the Jericho Road.

- **He went from observation to compassion to action**, “saw him and had compassion” (33c)
  - The others "saw him" but didn’t act.
  - He didn't ask, "How can God let this happen?" He asked, "How can I sit back and watch it happen?"

- **He made an inconvenient sacrifices (34a)**, "he went to him, bound up his wounds, pouring oil and wine...”
  - Donkeys are problems enough! Oil and wine – expensive!
  - Most people hear this and immediately think "roadside assistance." But remember this is broader. I’ve stopped before, but I’m actually no help. **I can check the washer fluid!**
  - Think after school tutoring of functionally fatherless kids.
  - Think visiting the roughest part of town in Raleigh.
  - Think caring for victims of abuse...
  - Think nations: poorest of the poor in Haiti...
  - Think battered women’s shelter – pedicures...
  - Think adopting a school as a growth group….
  - Think foster care...

- **He did something personally**, “own donkey... brought him to an inn” (34b) - Not Marriott, but okay
  - To the thieves, this traveling Jew was a victim to exploit, so they attacked him.
To the priest and Levite, he was a nuisance to avoid, so they ignored him.

But to the Samaritan, he was a neighbor to love and help, so he took care of him.

- He give financially, "two denarii" (35a) – That's two days salary! He was committed to his recovery, “I will repay when I come back” (35). He was also keeping him from possible slavery...

What a picture of sacrificial love for someone in need.

V. 36 - Which of these three proved to be a neighbor?

V. 37 - Answer: The Samaritan! The lawyer refused to say his name! It would be liken to our day of saying a particular race, or personality, or political party.

- We should we show mercy to those in need, including (especially?) our "enemies" in need. (Luke 6:32-ff)

- The Samaritan loved the Jew; the Jew was to love the Samaritan.

- Our enemy may be our most important enemy to love because it shows that Jesus has changed us. Otherwise we're no different than pagans (Luke 6)

- Objection: “Well that's just the way I was raised. That's just the era I was brought up in. I'm from the south.” God's word makes no exceptions for you.

Point: While we are saved by grace alone through faith alone, the grace and faith that save are never alone.

While good deeds definitely can't save you; they do result from saving faith.

An important question is "what kind of faith saves you?"

A classic text to answer this is James 2:14-26. There, James (who previously wanted to burn up the Samaritans) tells us about three types of faith: dead faith, demonic faith and dynamic faith.
Dead faith (2:14-17) is illustrated by a person who lacks food and clothing and is seeking someone's help, but that person responds with, "Go in peace, be warmed and filled" even though they say they have faith. "Faith without works is dead" (2:17).

Demonic faith is just a belief that there is a god. James says, Good for you – so do the demons. (2:19).

Dynamic faith is a faith that trusts in Christ work alone, that results in a new heart filled with compassion obedience. James illustrates this with Rahab's hospitality and Abraham's obedience.

Saving faith is a "following faith." It's a "take up your cross and follow me" faith.

Let me summarize so far:

- Keeping God's law perfectly is impossible. See the importance of it and the impossibility of it, and let it lead you to Jesus.

- You can't justify yourself. Repent of your sins and your self-righteousness and cry out for mercy to be justified by God.

- Real faith leads to real deeds. W aren't saved by them, but it leads to them.

Go and Do Likewise. Jesus does want us to act justly and love mercy. So let me say three words about mercy ministry.

Application

#1: Let's embrace mercy ministry under the shadow of the cross.

a. Proclamation of the cross and compassionate deeds go together.

St. Francis of Assisi's quote "Preach the gospel and if necessary use words" is problematic. The gospel means good news. You announce news! No newscaster says I'm going to give the news and if necessary I'll use words. We must use words.
Remember that this parable is given within the context of Jesus going to the cross. Every story in the gospels must be read in light of Golgotha. "He bore our sins in his own body on the tree." And this message that must be proclaimed. A lot of people want to do mercy but not talk about substitutionary atonement. Mistake.

**Proclaim the gospel and love people.**

A few things to remember about proclamation and mercy:

- In some places the greatest place of injustice and poverty and need are **also** the least evangelized areas. We need to shine light into dark places.

- Sometimes victims can’t hear our proclamation until we pick them up off the road, and care for them. "They did not listen to Moses BECAUSE of their harsh slavery and broken spirit" (Ex 6:9). **Example:** Human Trafficking victims, and others who are oppressed.

b. **We need a compassionate sensitivity.**

I don’t think Jesus woke up and said, "*Should I do proclamation or mercy.*" He just loved people. The **same instinct** to feed a person in Jesus name is the same instinct that proclaims Jesus' name: love. We care for the whole person. Passion that leads to action.

**Matthew 25** – Jesus isn’t saying that social workers alone are going to heaven. He’s saying that his people possess his compassion.

Some just want to turn the mission into physical maintenance. There will also be those who just want to turn the mission into the "hyper spiritual" and not be concerned with if people are dying of hunger today, just be concerned with individual transport from earth to heaven. Jesus doesn’t allow these things.

To "love neighbor as self" means to **love every aspect of human existence.** Carl F.H. Henry on this matter of speaking "only to the spiritual" not including the aspect of mercy, ask “If I’m to love my neighbor as myself, do you minister to your self in only the 'spiritual way’? Because you have the gospel, do you refuse to feed yourself? Do you refuse to clothe yourself? Do you refuse to give proper
medical care to yourself?" You love God and neighbor, as you give the gospel.

- As you purify water systems, you tell them the gospel.
- As you hug the AIDS patient, who hasn't felt a human touch in years, you give the gospel.
- As you ladies, go mentor that homeless prostitute, share the grace of Jesus.

The Good Samaritan was moved with compassion, like Jesus. That's the life of a disciple: walking as Jesus walked. He walked the Calvary road, and calls us to do the same.

a. Get involved personally.

The compassion of Jesus wasn't just about sentiment. It was about action. "Let us not love with word or talk but in deed and truth" (1 John 3:18)

The Samaritan
- Ripped up his schedule
- Got his hands dirty
- Gave financially
- Stayed the night (it seems)
- Gave love, advocacy and friendship

Mercy ministry is very broad. Everyone can get involved.
- Single Mother
- Widows
- Orphans
- Abused kids
- Grieving
- Lost
- Hungry
- Dying
- Enslaved
- Diseased
- Imprisoned
- Hospitals
- Tutor a struggling student
- Support an international student
- Support a student
- Serve with the children
- medical mission trip
- Adopt kids

They're all around us; let's be the church and go do likewise.

#2: Let's be moved ultimately by the gospel of grace, not by guilt.

God cares not only about our deeds, but our motives.
How can we be “moved with compassion?” That comes by dwelling on the compassion of Christ. “The love of Christ compels us” (Paul).

Guilt doesn’t last. People change the channel. I’ve used it. I’ve been the victim of it. It leads to either pride or despair. The gospel should melt our hearts and move us to action.

Examples of Mercy Ministry motivated by the Gospel:
- **Generosity** – 2 Cor. 8:9 – Paul doesn’t appeal to
  - The poor saints condition. He doesn't say, “How could you not give.”
  - He doesn’t appeal to guilt. “How could you sit there when they’re starving?”
  - He does the gospel. Until you get this, you want to be a generous-kingdom giver. Once you realize you’ve been forgiven of an infinite debt, you will be generous person.

  The gospel makes you open handed. Once you realize you were forgiven of an infinite debt, you become generous.

  McCheyne boldly highlights this: “I fear that there may be many hearing me who may know well that they are not Christians, because they do not love to give. To give largely and liberally, not grudging at all, requires a new heart. An old heart would rather part with its life-blood than its money. Oh my friends, enjoy your money. Make the most of it. Give none of it away. Enjoy it quickly, for I can tell you, you will be beggars throughout eternity.”
- **Hospitality** – We have already noted about an understanding of God’s welcome of us, must move our welcome of others.
- **Patience** – When you understand God’s patience, you are patient with others.
- **Poor** – When you understand that you were helpless, and bankrupt but have received infinite riches, then you will care for the poor.
- **Enslaved** – Those who have experience liberty in the gospel, should be those caring for those enslaved.
- **Orphan, Widow, Stranger**

  Only Luke has this parable. He is known for speaking most about the poor, lepers, marginalized, but it's not because he was more
progressive, but rather because and understanding of justification by grace alone should lead to mercy and justice to people.

#3: Let's remember that mercy ministry has a tremendous impact on people.

We don't know what happened to this lawyer, but he was surely impacted by this type of love. Perhaps he was converted. The world is impacted by it by mercy as well. It removes objections, and glorifies God before a watching world (Matt. 5:16).

Julian "the Apostate," an early Roman Emperor who tried to stamp out Christianity, was angry because Christianity was growing. He said this was the reason: "Nothing has contributed to the progress of the superstition of the Christians as their charity to strangers...the impious Galileans provide not only for their own poor, but for ours as well, all see that our people lack aid from us." He says, "That's why Christianity is spreading." The Jews take care of the Jewish poor, and the Greeks take care of the Greek poor, and Romans the Roman poor, but the Christians were "promiscuous" in their care. This ministry of mercy arose out of the Christians experience of the grace of God and had a great impact on others.

The greatest impact of the ministry of mercy has been the ministry of Jesus.

By putting the Samaritan as the hero, and asking "Who was the neighbor?" Jesus made the lawyer the receiver of mercy rather than the giver of mercy. He essentially asks, "Wouldn't you want this person to care for you if you were dead and dying in the road?" The answer is yes.

What we would want done for us, we do for others.

Luke shows us that Jesus was the Great Samaritan.

There is a famous interpretation of this passage, popularized by Augustine in the fifth century. For him this was an allegory of the fall of humanity, and he tried to say everything in this story stood for
something else. It was common to handle the Bible like this in his
day, and it was a mistake. He said
• Jerusalem – Heavenly city
• Dying Man – Adam
• Priest and Levites – Law and Prophets
• Samaritan – Christ.
• Inn – Church
• Oil and Wine – Baptism and Communion
• Inn Keeper – Apostle Paul.

We laugh at this today because it ignores many interpretation rules,
but… one insight that is worthy, and others have pointed this out
(including Carson & Blomberg) is the Samaritan is a picture of
Christ.

Did Luke intend this? Did Jesus intend this? Perhaps. It's certainly
ture.

Jesus most certainly is the greatest model of compassion, as he is the
greatest model for holiness, truth telling, and humility.

Jesus was a "better Good Samaritan." He was the neighbor to us. He
showed us infinite mercy, who came to us in our desperate need, who
himself was despised and rejected, who paid the ultimate price to
save us.

Jesus is the "Great Samaritan." He was the neighbor we desperately
needed.

"Who was our neighbor?" Jesus.

You see, before you can be a neighbor, you need
to have had a neighbor.

And that's what you have in Jesus.

Until you know you have had a neighbor, who at infinite cost cared
for you, when he owed you the exact opposite for your hatred of him,
only then will you go love anyone in need.
Because we have experienced such mercy, let's go show mercy.