

Session 1

July 24, 2022

WHO IS YOUR NEIGHBOR?

Luke 10:25-37

Anyone can tell you the three most important factors when considering real estate are: “location, location, and location.”

No one wants a house in a bad neighborhood! Bad *neighborhoods* consist of bad *neighbors*: “noisy,” “dirty,” “trashy,” “different;” in short, they are *undesirables*.

As believers, we are supposed to *love* everybody. But that doesn’t mean we necessarily *like* everybody. And we certainly aren’t required to treat everybody the same...*are we?*

Unfortunately, those kinds of rants are still far too common, even among Christ-followers. I have often mused about church members who call each other “brother” and “sister” at church on Sunday but won’t even speak to each other in the Walmart on Monday! Alas, such disparities are nothing new. They were apparently far too common in Jesus’ day as well. And for that reason, Jesus introduced us to the story of *The Good Samaritan*.

A question (vv. 25-28). The issue was raised by a *lawyer*; not one who tried cases in a court, but rather an expert in the Old Testament law. His question was a *test*, designed to gauge the Lord’s understanding and application of the law. The language is straightforward, but there is the clear indication that this man wanted to both exalt his own position (see v. 29) while exposing some flaw in Jesus. The lawyer’s premise, however, was flawed from the start. He made the mistake of assuming there was something that *must be done* to be saved. In verse 26, Jesus simply turned the tables on the man, by having him answer his own question. The *Shema* (found in Deut. 6:4-5) was recited twice a day in the Jewish home. But with the recitation came the knowledge that such devotion could never be truly demonstrated. For reflection: *If salvation could not be earned by keeping the law, why would Jesus affirm this man and his answer? What significance do you see in Jesus’ words, “Do this and you will live?”*

An illustration (vv. 29-32). While loving your neighbor as yourself was not part of the *Shema*, it was stated in Leviticus 19, and the two laws were apparently linked in early tradition (Jesus certainly did so in Matthew 22:37-40). The lawyer’s reaction was awkward. Wanting to be seen as blameless, the man no doubt hoped that Jesus would vindicate him by using the time-honored, traditional definition of neighbor: other Jews. But Jesus used the man’s self-righteous attitude to highlight his actual selfishness. The story itself is classic. Those who saw themselves as spiritual elites (the priest and the Levite) avoided the injured man intentionally (vv. 31-32). This was clearly violating the law they were required to keep, even in the case of injured animals! (See Deut. 22:4; Ex. 23:4 et al.). For reflection: *Jesus was speaking to a lawyer specifically. Why do you think he mentioned the priest and Levite as examples in the story?*

An application (vv. 33-37). If the priests and Levites represented the holiest men of the day, the mixed-race Samaritans represented the most detestable. Notice the selfless characteristics of this traveler. He was on a journey, so he didn’t reside in the area. He felt compassion (v. 33). He treated the man’s wounds; he placed him on the animal the Samaritan himself had been riding;

he took him to an inn; he stayed there and took care of him (v. 34). He secured care for the man in his absence; he provided payment for any extra expenses (v. 35). Jesus' question at the end of the story (v. 36) forced the self-righteous lawyer to admit that his own traditional definition of neighbor had been bested by a despicable Samaritan. Yet Jesus let him off the hook! Rather than shaming him further, He encouraged him with the words, "Go and do the same" (v. 37). For reflection: *Why do you think Jesus let this man off the hook? How does this ending compare to the story found in Mark 10:17-22?*