

Session 4

September 23, 2018

INTENTIONAL LOVE

Luke 10:25-37

It's easy to love those who are loveable. It's easy to love those who love us back. That's the kind of love that just happens; our response to someone's affections toward us. But if loving others is easy, then why does the Bible spend so many verses *commanding* that we do it?

Our lesson this week deals with the idea of "intentional love," something I equate with *compassion*, that heart-felt care and genuine concern for the wellbeing of others, especially those who are hurting. The popular Hillsong chorus *Mighty to Save* begins with the words, "Everyone needs compassion...a love that's never failing..." How true! Such love does not come naturally, but supernaturally. It's not love as a reaction, but love put into action. It's not accidental or incidental, but intentional.

Compassion explained (vv. 25-28). In this introduction to the story of The Good Samaritan, Jesus is confronted by an expert in the law who stood to "test" him. That he is a lawyer indicates that he knew the "official" answer to the question already but had something to prove by squaring off against Jesus. The exact nature of the "test" in this case is not stated. Some suggest the lawyer (a more specific title than the generic "scribe") simply wanted to know how orthodox Jesus was in His teaching. But there is an underlying arrogance on display. His standing up to address his question to Jesus, his adequate rendering of the Great Commandment (see Matt. 22:34ff), and his follow-up question in verse 29 all indicate that this lawyer was attempting to boost his own status. Nevertheless, Jesus had the lawyer answer the question for himself, and he got it right. The command to love God supremely and your neighbor selflessly does not save; but only a saved man can do it! Love is always God-centered. God *is* love (1 John 4:8). We love Him because He first loved us. But 1 John 4:19-21 goes on to say that if we fail to love others, we really don't love Him after all! Intentional love, then, begins with loving God supremely. Only then, can that love be turned toward others.

Compassion illustrated (vv. 29-37). The arrogance of the lawyer is further displayed in verse 29. To "justify himself," in this case, means to *vindicate* himself. Not wanting to leave everyone with the impression that he was somehow guilty and deserving of the Lord's rebuke, the lawyer quickly asked for a definition of "neighbor," which in the Jewish mindset excluded gentiles generally and Samaritans specifically. This prompted the story of The Good Samaritan. The story is familiar and bristling with jabs at the hypocrisy of the Jewish religious establishment. But for our purposes, the story illustrates true compassion: the unconditional and intentional love that transcends ethnic bias and personal prejudice...and costs us something along the way.

Compassion commanded (v. 37). Jesus—the master teacher—presented such a compelling lesson that the lawyer asking the questions ended up answering them both himself. In certain resignation, even the arrogant lawyer had to admit the obvious. Though he would not mention him by name, the despised yet benevolent Samaritan was the hero of the story. Yet as always, the Lord forces him to apply the lesson learned. It's not enough to know the right thing to do; it must now be put into action.

The lessons for the church are many. First, our love for others is predicated on a genuine love for God. Second, godly love expresses itself in acts of compassion. Third, those acts of compassion can never be limited by ethnic bias or personal prejudice. Finally, intentional love must be *active* love. Romans 5:8 reminds us that, “God *demonstrates* His own love toward us, in that while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us.”