

Luke 10:25-37 (ESV/NIV/KJV)

ESV: "And behold, a lawyer stood up to put him to the test, saying, 'Teacher, what shall I do to inherit eternal life?' He said to him, 'What is written in the Law? How do you read it?' And he answered, 'You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your strength and with all your mind, and your neighbor as yourself.' And he said to him, 'You have answered correctly; do this, and you will live.' But he, desiring to justify himself, said to Jesus, 'And who is my neighbor?'"

NIV: "On one occasion an expert in the law stood up to test Jesus. 'Teacher,' he asked, 'what must I do to inherit eternal life?' 'What is written in the Law?' he replied. 'How do you read it?' He answered: 'Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your strength and with all your mind; and, Love your neighbor as yourself.' 'You have answered correctly,' Jesus replied. 'Do this and you will live.'"

KJV: "And, behold, a certain lawyer stood up, and tempted him, saying, Master, what shall I do to inherit eternal life? He said unto him, What is written in the law? how readest thou? And he answering said, Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy strength, and with all thy mind; and thy neighbour as thyself. And he said unto him, Thou hast answered right: this do, and thou shalt live."

Jesus then told the parable of the Good Samaritan (Luke 10:30-37), illustrating the true meaning of "neighbor." A man was attacked by robbers and left for dead. A priest and a Levite passed by without helping. A Samaritan, considered an outsider and despised by Jews, stopped, cared for him, and paid for his care. Jesus concluded:

"Which of these three, do you think, proved to be a neighbor to the man who fell among the robbers?" He answered, "The one who showed mercy." And Jesus said to him, "Go and do likewise."

Theological Insights

1. Testing Jesus versus Genuine Faith

The lawyer's question was not seeking truth but attempting to justify himself (Luke 10:25 ESV). This illustrates prideful religiosity, a common theme in Scripture. Intellectual knowledge alone is insufficient for salvation; God values faith in action (James 2:14-17 NIV, KJV).

2. Knowledge of the Law vs. Heart Obedience

As a lawyer (Torah scholar), he knew the Law thoroughly:

- Deuteronomy 6:5 (NIV): "Love the LORD your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your strength."
- Leviticus 19:18 (ESV): "You shall not take vengeance or bear a grudge against the sons of your own people, but you shall love your neighbor as yourself: I am the LORD."

This shows that correct knowledge of God's Word must be paired with

practical obedience. Mere intellectualism without action is spiritually empty.

3. Redefining "Neighbor"

At that time, "neighbor" was often interpreted narrowly, meaning only fellow Jews. But Jesus' parable expands this:

- A neighbor is anyone in need, even a foreigner, enemy, or outcast.
- The Samaritan, a non-Israelite, becomes the example of true love, prefiguring God's covenantal inclusion of Gentiles (Ephesians 2:11-22 NIV).

4. Mercy over Ritual

The priest and Levite represented religious formality and ritual purity, yet ignored the man in need. Jesus emphasizes that mercy (*e/eos*) surpasses ritual (Matthew 9:13 ESV; Hosea 6:6). True obedience to God integrates compassion with law.

5. God Uses the Unexpected

The parable highlights that God's instruments of grace are not always those we expect:

- Outsiders and nonbelievers can demonstrate love and kindness, sometimes more faithfully than religious insiders.
- Acts 10:34-35 (ESV): "God shows no partiality, but in every nation anyone who fears him and does what is right is acceptable to him."

6. Contemporary Applications

- Beyond Denominationalism: Love must transcend race, religion, and tribalism.
- Love in Action: Practical care—financial support, hospitality, and

visiting the sick—is essential (1 John 3:17-18 NIV).

- Humility in Knowledge: Knowing Scripture is valuable, but obedience and mercy reflect God's heart.

7. Christological Significance

Jesus, as the fulfillment of the Law and the Prophets (Matthew 5:17 KJV), demonstrates that love — not ritual compliance — is the true measure of righteousness. By redefining neighbor, He reveals the universal scope of God's love, foreshadowing the inclusion of all nations in His kingdom.

Conclusion

The parable of the Good Samaritan teaches:

1. Love God fully with heart, soul, strength, and mind.

2. Extend love to all neighbors, including those outside our culture or faith.
3. Demonstrate mercy through concrete action, not mere knowledge.
4. Recognize that God often works through unexpected people to fulfill His purposes.

The ultimate answer is love—for one another and for those beyond our immediate circle (Matthew 22:37-40 NIV).

May God grant us grace to live out this radical, Christ-centered love daily.

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