

The Good Samaritan - which one are you?

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Date: 04 July 2021

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[0 : 00] If you have a Bible, would you open it, please, at the chapter that we read, Luke chapter 10 and from verse 25.

I want to look with you tonight at the story of the Good Samaritan and to ask the question, who are you? Who are you in this story? One night, I ran out of diesel in a van in a country road.

And a man called Fraser, who I sort of recognized, stopped and asked me what was wrong. And I told him I'd run out of diesel and he humped and he hawed and he drove away.

He didn't help me. So I went to somebody's house, somebody I knew just about as well as Fraser, and I asked them if they had any diesel. The person gave me diesel and then I went back to put it in the van.

As I was pouring the diesel in the van again, Fraser came back and said, where did you get your diesel? I got it from Alistair up the road.

[1 : 04] How did you get it from Alistair? Well, I did a name drop to Fraser. I told him who I was and Fraser said, if I'd known that's who you were, I'd have given you diesel.

Do you think Fraser's offer of help was unconditional? Well, obviously not. He needed to know that because of someone else, I might have deserved to get diesel.

When we look at the story of the Good Samaritan, we love to think we're the good guy or we would be the good guy in the story. But I want to ask, who are you like?

Who are you like? This man came with a question. And what I want us to see as we think of all the people is that we should be like the person who came with the question.

What must I do to inherit eternal life? But actually we see a little bit of everybody in the story in us. We're the man who asks questions.

[2 : 08] We are the robbers hiding in the hills. You don't want to be them, but you are like them in some way. You're like the priest. You're like the Levite, the people who walk by on the other side and don't deny that you've walked by people who you could have helped at times.

We're like the person that gets beaten up. We're in a helpless state. We can't help ourselves in some way. And we might be like the good Samaritan, the person who helps out.

But what I really want you to see, as I've said, is that we should be like the person who has this really big question, this question of what must I do to be saved?

He is to inherit eternal life. It's a great question. Let's just look at the story briefly. We've read it and you know it, but let's just say it again.

Thinking of the scene, we've got this man. He asks Jesus this question. What must I do to inherit eternal life? Has he got a right to ask that question? Yes. It's kind of his job to ask that question.

[3 : 20] He's an expert in the law. He knows what the law says. And if you think of Jesus coming onto the scene, Jesus is a young man. Jesus is fresh on the ground.

And this expert in the law might have been around for a long time. And this man has different ideas that people are maybe confused by. And so he asks this question, what must I do to inherit eternal life?

He's not trying to be awkward. He's trying to figure out, does Jesus really know the right answer? And so Jesus gives this man, not the answer, but the opportunity to answer his own question.

You know the law, what's written in the law. You're the expert, he says. What is the answer to this question? Well, the man gives the answer he should.

And it's the answer that we should be able to give when we ask what God wants from us. What must I do to inherit eternal life? Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your strength and with all your mind.

[4 : 28] And love your neighbor as yourself. Well, we know that's what God wants from us. And so the man seeks to justify himself. He wants to find out who his neighbor is.

He asks, I think, what he thinks is a killer question that's going to put this story to bed. And so Jesus tells this story. In our NIV Bible, it's called the parable of the Good Samaritan.

But it's not actually known if this is a parable. Jesus doesn't say it's like a man who did this or that. He tells it as if it's a story. As if it's something that could actually have happened.

So, I'm not sure. I'm not sure it didn't happen. And I don't think you should be sure it didn't happen either. But Jesus tells the story of a man going from Jerusalem to Jericho.

Thirteen-ish mile journey. And he's going there. And he was attacked by robbers. We don't know the situation. We don't know whether he had a big badge on saying, I'm carrying money.

[5 : 31] Rob me or whatever. But he was attacked and left. He was beaten up. Nearly dead in a ditch is the kind of impression you get from him.

Two men saw him and should have helped. The priest and the Levite. And then the Samaritan comes. And what's he like? Well, the Samaritan is somebody who the Jewish people, the experts in the law and people like that, they don't like him.

Why? Because of the way that they've interpreted the law. Because they've had a disagreement centuries ago about how to interpret a certain part of the law.

And so, people like the expert in the law, people like the priest and the Levite, they think this Samaritan is unclean. He's not a nice man. But the Samaritan, the one the Jews don't associate with, is the one who goes to this man, who tends to his needs, who takes him to a place where he's looked after, and he commits to him.

And the story is, Jesus says, go and do likewise. So, I want to ask you, who do you think you are in this story?

[6 : 45] Well, you are people who should know what God wants from you. You are people who should love others. You are people who should love God.

You are people who should know what God wants. But you are also people, every single one of you, boys and girls, old people. You should have this question.

And if you've never had this question, you should have this question. What do I need to do to inherit eternal life? Can you see that for everybody in the story, it's a good question to have?

Just say, you're the man who's been beaten up, lying in the ditch. A lot of people tend to ask that ultimate, final question once things go wrong.

Once they think, oh, well, what do we call it? We call it curtains, the end. Once they think they're nearing the end, they think, what must I do to inherit eternal life? What's going to happen after this if I don't get out of this situation?

[7 : 48] The priest, the priest, he's obviously tried to figure out this question, what must I do to inherit eternal life? He's given his life to serving God. Why would he give his life to serving God if he didn't think that something good was going to come from it after he died?

What about the Levite? His job is to serve, and he serves. He's doing perhaps these good works, these works of obedience, hoping and trusting that God would accept them.

The good Samaritan, I wonder is he just Mr. Do-Gooder? Is he one of these people that you could have said, what does God require from you?

You know, you've met these people, perhaps people who think that God will always show them mercy because at some stage in their life, they showed other people mercy.

They said, I've never harmed anybody. Have you ever met people who think that God should accept them because they've never harmed anybody? I have. And they think that by doing these things, God might accept them.

[8 : 54] And so we find that this is a really good question. What must I do to inherit eternal life? It's a question that outweighs most other questions in sense of importance.

What are you going to be when you grow up? Is that a big question for you? What are you going to be? Bigger. A what? A policeman. That was the most important question, wasn't it?

At some stage in life, what am I going to be when I grow up? And hopefully you'll be a policeman. Maybe you'll change your mind. Some people are wondering, will I get married? Some people are wondering, will I change career?

Some people are wondering, what's this lump? Some people spend all their time wondering whether we should be in Europe or out of Europe or a United Kingdom or a separate independent kingdom.

And we give these questions big importance. But ultimately, this question is the most important question. What must I do to inherit eternal life?

[10 : 04] But you can only get to that question by asking, I think, a first question. What happens when I die? And if we ask what happens when we die and we come to the right answer, we can only come to it if we go to the right place.

The Bible tells us what happens when we die. There is either heaven with God's eternal reward or there is hell with God's punishment forever.

And it's the Bible that tells us that. And if we come to the Bible and find out that there are two options facing us, heaven or hell, then it's a really important question that the next question we ask is, well, what do I need to do to inherit eternal life to get to heaven?

Well, who do you think you are? Who are you? You're someone who asks, what must I do to inherit eternal life? And you know the answer because the answer is given to us in the Bible.

It's here. Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your strength and with all your mind.

[11 : 25] And love your neighbor as yourself. That's what we need to do to inherit eternal life. That's the answer Jesus is giving. So let's not argue with it. What does God want from us?

God wants perfection. Thinking of school children again, looking forward to going up a year, primary three, four, five, six, seven, first year, sixth year, whatever it is you go.

But imagine, imagine when we were in school, the teacher said to us, you can't go from primary four to primary five unless you make no mistakes in primary four.

None of us would ever have got to primary five, would we? This perfection is too demanding. We can't meet perfection even in school. We can't meet perfection in any aspect of our life.

God asks us to love the Lord your God. Love the Lord. Love the covenant-making, promise-making, promise-keeping God.

[12 : 25] Love the Creator. Love Him with everything that you have. Always love Him. And when you hear that God says you've always to love me, well, be honest.

Was there ever a time when you questioned if God existed? Was there ever a question in your mind as to whether God was true or real?

There has been, hasn't there? And so we all know that we haven't loved God with all that we could have. And then when we find out that He demands perfection of us, we say, hey God, I know you demand perfection of me, but would you kindly overlook the misdemeanor of 3rd March 2004 or 4th July 2021?

Would you just turn a blind eye to it? Would you calm down a bit? Would you be a bit less serious about what sin actually is? What do we do about the wrong that we've done?

You know, if a teacher said you must have perfection and we didn't have perfection, what would you do? Well, I'm sure as children we'd say, come on, be reasonable.

[13 : 48] As parents, you'd go to the head teacher and you'd start to plead. And that's what we have to do. We have to start to plead. We have to see that we haven't had perfection.

And where do we go with our pleading? Well, we know the story. The story is not that we have to twist God's arm and say, overlook this just by lowering your standards.

We go to God who has sent His Son, Jesus Christ, and we see that our misdemeanors, our wrong, our failing to hit 100% all the time has been paid for by one who did hit 100%, who never missed the mark.

And we ask how we ask how we inherit eternal life. And we know that another answer is given in Scripture when somebody says, what do I need to do to be saved?

The answer is not, you've got to be perfect. The answer is, believe in the Lord Jesus Christ and you will be saved. Well, how can that be? Because God has taken His Son's perfection and substituted your imperfection when He punished it on the cross in Jesus Christ.

[15 : 04] And so, we can go to God through Jesus. And so, the simplicity of the good news story is given to us in John 3, 16. For God so loved the world that He gave His one and only Son, so that whoever believes in Him would not perish but have everlasting or eternal life.

We have it through Jesus Christ. So, who are you? You are people, every one of you are people and me who should love God completely.

We should, that's what He's asked us to do. But you're also people who should love others like the Samaritan did. How did he love the one who was mugged?

Well, it's a lovely story. The first thing he did when he came was that he saw Him. He saw Him. As he traveled, he came to where the man was.

And when he saw Him, he took pity on Him. Now, if you look at the Gospel of Luke, you see Jesus at different stages. He sees people.

[16 : 11] Like he saw Levi sitting in the tax collector's booth. And the way that it speaks about Jesus seeing Him is not that just he saw Him, but he looked, he saw, he took Him in.

And I get the impression that this Samaritan must have done something similar when he sees this man. Because the other two people, they saw Him. And they quickly skedaddled off to the other side of the road.

They didn't want to be anywhere near Him. But this man, he sees Him in a similar way to Jesus. He sees Him and he goes to Him.

He takes pity on Him. Verse 34, He went to Him. So, He puts effort into going to Him. He bandages His wounds. He does everything that's needed.

I wonder, have you ever seen anybody in need? And before your mercy and pity led you to go to them, before that happened, you judged them.

[17 : 21] Has it happened? Or am I the only one? I'm not the only one. We say this person doesn't deserve it. We prejudge why they're there.

Let's take the obvious cases of people who sit on our streets. Academic papers are written on why we should help them. Academic papers are written on why we shouldn't help them.

Do we ever think of the story of why somebody has arrived there? Nobody wanted to do that when they were a child, did they?

But something's gone wrong. And people like Samaritans have gone to. And this man, he goes and he tends his wounds. Danger of becoming unclean.

He pours on oil to clean, to help. He gives that wine. It's going to sting. And then this man, he must touch him.

[18 : 28] He must bend down and lift him up and get him onto his own donkey and make sure he's safe. And he takes him to the premier inn and he says, Two nights on me.

I don't even need your special rate. Don't mind about breakfast. It's going to cost about 100 quid to do this, isn't it? Two nights in an inn is going to cost a little bit of money. He's generous.

Undeserved love. What had this man that ends up mugged done to deserve this from the Samaritan? And he doesn't just say, this is the extent of my love, two nights in a hotel.

He says, look after him. And when I return, I'll pay for anything extra. So that's how he loves him. Who are you like?

You're people who know what God requires. You know that you should love others. And you know why you should love others. God wants it from us.

[19 : 32] A few years after Fraser never gave me diesel, I was driving to church one morning. And there was a pickup in the ditch. And it was Fraser.

So I wound down the window and went, ha ha, and drove away. No, I didn't do that, did I? I wouldn't do that. I'm just checking you're awake. I towed Fraser out of the ditch.

And do you know what was even better than me towing Fraser out of the ditch? There were some people from church behind me and they saw my good deed. Yeah? That's what we're like, isn't it?

Or is it just me again? Why should we help people? Often we help people so that others will see how good we are. But why should you love your neighbor?

Well, the first reason you should love your neighbor is because this is the law of God. Deuteronomy chapter 15 and verse 7 has these words.

[20 : 29] If there is a poor man among your brothers in any of the towns of the land that the Lord your God is giving you, do not be hard-hearted or tight-fisted towards your poor brother.

Rather, be open-handed and freely lend him whatever he needs. It's written into the law of God. We should love our neighbor.

We should be kind, especially to those who have needs. What does it say in Proverbs? Whoever mocks the poor shows contempt for their maker.

When we prejudge, say you deserve it, say it serves you right, whatever, we're judging them.

But the Bible says we're laughing at God as well. And you don't want to do that, do you? So the first reason we should love our neighbor is because the Bible says so.

[21 : 26] The second reason we should love our neighbor, like the Samaritan did, is I think the one that if you're a Christian, it should resonate with you most.

You should say, yes, I get this. When we asked what happens when we die, we were told we needed to be perfect. And we'd get to heaven.

And we weren't perfect. We aren't perfect from what we've done. We realize that we deserve God's anger and God's punishment.

God should say to us, because of what we have done, depart from me, you who are cursed. But he will not say that if we've received the love of Jesus Christ, if we have gone to God through Jesus.

If we have received that redemption through his blood, the forgiveness of our sins. And we should say, Jesus has loved us like this.

[22 : 35] How has Jesus loved us? He saw us. He saw us in our need and he came to us. And he came to us when we could not help ourselves.

We cannot save ourselves. And he has come and he has bandaged our wounds and poured oil on us. Well, you say he hasn't. He has come to where your injury is.

He has come to the place where you're broken and he's fixed it. He's made you whole. He's perfected you. He's taken away what was wrong. And not only has he done that, he has provided for your ongoing care.

He's given you all that you need for this life. You're the person who's able to sing, The Lord's my shepherd. There's nothing else I need. He leads me. He's with me.

He's prepared a table for me in the presence of my enemies. And after all, goodness and mercy will follow me all the days of my life. It's a love that's dealt with the brokenness.

[23 : 43] It hasn't just said, we're so good at giving a cup of tea and maybe a listening ear. But Jesus' love has come to us and it has done everything that we need it to.

It's love that picks us up. It's love that carries us and will carry us all the way. It's love. Jesus' love has said, I'll come back and he will come back and he'll bring his people to be with him forever.

How should you love? Well, you should love because the Bible says you should love. But, well, you should love. Please, please see that you should love because of the love that you have received.

It's everything that you need and it's undeserved. So, what do we do with this story? Well, in the church, there tends to be two responses.

The first response is that we take this story as if it's all the Bible says. What do I need to do to inherit eternal life? Well, I've got to love God and I've got to love my neighbor as myself.

[24 : 55] And I will try hard at both. I will try to do that and God will accept me because of the good that I have done. That's sometimes how this story is taken.

And it leads towards this thing that we call works righteousness. That God accepts me because of the good that I have done. But when we ask the question, what do you want from me, God?

And he says perfection and we don't have it. We should see that that doesn't work. So, we can't take it as if this is all the Bible says and ignore the story of God sending us a Savior to cover our sin.

But the second response does the opposite. It tends to take all that the Bible says and leave out stories like this. And it's more likely found in evangelical churches like ours.

It's more likely found in places where we believe that people need to be saved from their sin. And it's found in places where we know that people have nothing good to give that we had nothing good to give.

[26 : 03] It's taken by people who know that, well, we're not actually saved by trying harder. We're saved because of what God's done. And so, we tend to forget that what this man is commended for and Jesus instructs the other man to do is something that we should do simply in obedience to Jesus.

There it is. Not, that should be your motivation. Jesus says, go and be like this. Don't be a Pharisee.

Don't be looking down on people because they're unclean. But go and help them. Evidence that you love God? Well, let's think of what our neighbors think.

What do you think your neighbors think? You love God because you go to church. Is that maybe what they think? Or do they think you love me because you've helped me?

What do your family think? How have you shown them all these things? How do you do what Jesus says here?

[27 : 25] Now, I don't know your situations. I don't know who's going to work tomorrow, who's staying at home. I don't know all your situations. But I think sometimes it's easier to fall on the back of what the church organizes.

We show mercy with our club for people who can come and have a cup of coffee on a Saturday afternoon. That's how we do it in this church. Well, good.

But how do you do it? How does your mate know that you love Jesus and love them? Are your neighbors looking at you and thinking, why don't they help me?

Here's a question that hurts us all when I ask it. But when was the last time you saw somebody in need? You went to them.

You gave them your time and your money. And you said, I'll do more if you need it. Go and do likewise, said Jesus.

[28 : 28] Yeah, Jesus, I'm sure you had a cap of a tenner on that, didn't you? That's what we're like. But Jesus says, go and do likewise.

It's a challenge for us. So, who are you? Well, you've got to be like this man who had the big question. What must I do to inherit eternal life?

You've got to ask that question. If you've never asked that question, young person, old person, ask that question. What do you need to do? And you've seen you can't do it all on your own.

So, you have to trust in Jesus who has done everything that God requires. And he goes in your place. And that's him showing that love that we should have.

And we shouldn't need to be ashamed. We shouldn't need to be ashamed, sorry, into acting out this story, into going and meeting people who have need. This should be part of the way we live out our Christian life.

[29 : 30] I used to know a man who was very, very kind. He was just so kind. If an old person needed something fixed, he'd fix it.

If he saw the kids walking down the street, he'd stop and he'd give them sweeties. It wasn't in any way like you told children not to take them. But this man did it to everybody. If he saw you carrying a bag that was too heavy, he would help you carry your bag.

But he never came to church and his wife did. And we always used to say, poor man, I really hope he doesn't think he's going to get to heaven because he's so kind.

But wasn't that stupid of us? Wasn't that us not seeing that actually we're supposed to be the really kind ones? He did need the good news.

But he was good news to lots of people with the help he gave. And we weren't. We were standing back saying, we're a bit better than him because we know we need Jesus.

[30 : 33] He doesn't know that. Wasn't that foolish of us? Are your neighbors watching you? Do they see just religion? Or do they see that you're trying and showing you love Jesus by the good works that you do?

And then firmly, I think I maybe told you last year, not last year, the last time I was here, but we have a verse for the year. I should be able to remember it if it's a verse for the year. But it's 1 John chapter 2 and verse 6.

And these are the words. It says, this is how we know we are in him. This is how we know we're in Jesus. Whoever claims to live in him must live as Jesus did.

Do you claim to live in Jesus? I claim to live in Jesus. Jesus came to me in my need, paid for everything that I could possibly want and need and promises to give me more.

And if I claim to live in him, I must walk as he did. So when Jesus says, go and do likewise, he's speaking to me.

[31 : 47] He's speaking to you. Let's go from here. Can you go from here? I don't know what it's going to look like. But put your faith into action and go and be like the good Samaritan, a neighbor to those around you.

Let's pray. Lord, it's so easy for us to make excuses. I've got hundreds. But help us not to.

Help us instead to be obedient. And help us not to belittle this command, this instruction from Jesus. Forgive us because in the past we have.

And we pray that in Aberdeen and wherever we are, people would know that we have been like Jesus to them.

As we've come to them in their need and given out of all that you've given us. Knowing that we are still to receive more and more from your hand.

[32 : 53] Because you are a generous God giving us not the punishment that we deserve. But that love that will never leave us or forsake us or let us go.

That love that is yours. Help us then. Change us. We pray in Jesus' name. Amen.