

"LifeGroups 2.4" Luke 10:25-37

Introduction

- [Slide #1] One of the great joys of going on the Czech trip, or of any kind of cross cultural short-term missions experience, is knowing that you are on the front line of the mission Jesus launched. When you're on the field Jesus' mission isn't theology or theory. It's real, it's tangible, and it's exciting; one of the most exciting parts about following Jesus. Once you've tasted the mission firsthand anything less just won't do. As the old Steve Camp song goes, "Some people want to live within the sound of chapel bells but I want to run a mission a yard from the gates of Hell."¹
- If you are new here and still trying to figure out what we're about as a church let me try to summarize what we're doing. We want every follower of Jesus to experience the mission firsthand. We want every follower of Jesus to move beyond the comforting sound of church bells, to break through the walls of church, to be on the mission Jesus launched. That's it. Jesus never intended that mission to be done alone. You have to do it with others followers who are committed to the same goal. We call those small witnessing communities LifeGroups. LifeGroups aren't bible studies. They are a way of deploying and mobilizing people for Jesus' mission.
- A couple of weeks ago we looked at 2 Corinthians 5:14-21. God's love for us is what compels us to be on the mission Jesus launched. His love for us, not our love for him, his love for us is what moves us from being content with the sound of chapel bells and consuming religious products to wanting something more, to actually be on Jesus' mission.
- And that 2 Corinthians passage gives two results of being compelled by God's love. First his love changes the way we view people. Second, his love gives us a specific message to share. Next week we are going to talk about the message. This morning I want us to really think about and chew on the first result of God's love—the way we view people. If we are going to be successful at having every follower of Jesus on the mission that Jesus launched it will mean radical changes in the way we view people, the people we come across as we go about our day.

Transition

Please open your bibles to Luke 10:25-37, one of the passages I referenced a few weeks ago. Jesus' parable in Luke 10:25-37 describes how we are to view people when we are compelled by God's love. What we see here is that...[Slide #2]

Proposition

- **Being on the mission Jesus launched means sacrificial love for everyone we meet**
- Treating people who stumble into our lives less than this, short of this, different than what Jesus describes here will leave the mission stillborn—stuck in the gate.

¹ Steve Camp, *Run to the Battle*, 1981.

Main Points

- Look at [verse 25](#). Jesus' parable about how we are to view and respond to people is set up by this encounter with an expert in the law—most likely a Pharisee.² In Jesus' day a [lawyer](#) or Pharisee was a scholar, an expert in understanding and teaching the Torah—the first five books of the Old Testament. This Torah expert approaches Jesus to bait him, test him to see if he can give the correct answer to a question.³ *"On one occasion an expert in the law stood up to test Jesus." "Teacher," he asked, "what must I do to inherit eternal life?"*
- I liken this lawyer guy to the person nowadays who loves all things churchy. They love rules and boundaries. They are the watchdogs, the guardians who make sure that others do not cross lines they have drawn in the sand. For fear of becoming tainted or impure, they're the ones who eat, sleep and breathe life in a Christian bubble. Christian conferences. Christian radio. Christian bumper stickers. And they exude a holier than thou attitude. They're also the ones who love theological arguments. They're the ones likely to ask you your view of the rapture or what version of the bible you read not because they care about you but because they're looking for an argument or an opportunity to show off their superior knowledge. And on top of all of this they are the ones who want nothing to do with anyone not like them. This, in a nutshell, is the guy who approaches Jesus.
- Although this guy is baiting Jesus, and buttering him up with the title *Teacher*, the question he asks Jesus is a good one. *"Teacher," he asked, "what must I do to inherit eternal life?"* But Jesus sensing his ulterior motive throws a second question back. [Verse 26](#). *"What is written in the Law?" he replied. "How do you read it?"* In other words, dude, you're the so-called expert, what's your interpretation?
- And the lawyer gives an absolutely textbook answer. If this were an oral examination the lawyer would get a perfect score. [Verse 27](#). *"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."* Eternal life means vertical love for God, delighting in God above all else, and horizontal love for your neighbor. From Jesus' perspective this summarizes what it means to live by faith and please God.
- And if the conversation had ended right there with the Pharisee content to live out by faith the full implications of his textbook answer Jesus assures him he would have walked away with life. *Do this and you will live* Jesus says. Instead, something else happens.
- Look at [verse 29](#). *"But he wanted to justify himself, so he asked Jesus, "And who is my neighbor?"* See, the lawyers in Jesus' day defined a neighbor very narrowly—members of the same religious community, fellow Jews, people like them.⁴ The fact that the lawyer asks this question implies he's actually "trying to define and restrict who his neighbor is."⁵ His question implies his belief that some people weren't his

² Osborne, p. 67.

³ Osborne, p. 67.

⁴ Marshall, p. 444.

⁵ Bock, p. 1026.

neighbors. And if he is able to get Jesus to agree with his definition of a neighbor then all his past, unloving behavior is justified. As we'll see, Jesus flat out rejects the Pharisees definition of a neighbor by explaining with a story that there is no such thing as a non-neighbor.⁶

- Listen to me. The problem then and the problem now is that we, like the Pharisee, care more about justifying ourselves, about looking like good religious people than actually doing and living out what God requires of us. Somehow, we have gotten really good, and really content with the theology of the mission and talk about the mission and questioning the mission, “what is the mission Jesus launched,” and debate of the mission so much so that we, without even realizing it, have circumvented the mission completely. We never do what we say we believe. If you are going to be serious about being on the mission Jesus launched you are going to have to stop asking Pharisaical questions and move beyond talk and correct answers to actually doing what Jesus says we need to do.

Transition

Look at [verse 30](#). Jesus says that one half of fulfilling all that God requires of us is to, by faith, sacrificially love every person that comes across our path. And I think its fair to make a jump from what God requires of us to the mission Jesus launched. One half of the mission Jesus launched is, by faith, **sacrificially loving everyone we meet**. The story Jesus tells explains what this means.

- *"In reply Jesus said: "A man was going down from Jerusalem to Jericho, when he fell into the hands of robbers. They stripped him of his clothes, beat him and went away, leaving him half dead.""* The journey from Jerusalem to Jericho was notoriously dangerous. Starting in Jerusalem at 2,600 ft. above sea level the road ran 17 miles to Jericho and an elevation of 825 ft. below sea level. The road was rocky, passed through the desert and was surrounded by caves which made perfect hideouts for robbers.⁷ When Jesus says *a man was going down from Jerusalem to Jericho*, we're supposed to go, “ooh, what's he doing that for.” And sure enough, what we think might happen does; the man is ambushed, beaten, robbed and left for dead.
- Optimistically, [verse 31](#), by chance, by pure dumb luck, a priest, a really religious guy, a religious leader stumbles upon the beaten man. *"A priest happened to be going down the same road."* Good thing for the beaten man, right? Wrong. *"When he saw the man, he passed by on the other side."* Jesus seems to say that when the priest saw the beaten man he purposefully made his way to the opposite side of the road with every intention of passing him by. No compassion. No concern. In fact, he actually goes out of his way to avoid helping the injured man. Jesus is purposefully stressing the total lack of concern on the part of a man, a religious leader, we all expect to show great compassion and concern.⁸
- In [verse 32](#) a second chap enters the story, a Levite. A Levite was a temple assistant; they helped around the temple. Again, think well respected religious leader. Jesus

⁶ Bock, p. 1028.

⁷ Bock, p. 1029.

⁸ Osborne, p. 68.

says, "so too, a Levite, when he came to the place and saw him, passed by on the other side." Another supposedly religious person treats the beaten man with the same shocking result. What's interesting is that the words Jesus chose to use here indicate the Levite not only saw the half-dead man and passed him by, but saw him, walked up for a close inspection, and then passed him by. Again, Jesus' point is that two people we most expect to understand and do what God requires completely blow it.

- Which brings us to [verse 33](#). By this point in the story the lawyer would have been all ears because the lawyer would have expected the third character in Jesus' story to be a Pharisee, a layperson like himself. But instead of hearing about a fellow lawyer Jesus tells us about a Samaritan, the last person the lawyer would have expected to be the climatic figure, the example in the story."⁹ Look at [verse 33](#). "*But a Samaritan, as he traveled, came where the man was; and when he saw him, he took pity on him.*"
- To miss the irony and the shock of Jesus illustrating what God requires with the example of a Samaritan is to miss the entire point of what Jesus is trying to say. Jews and Samaritans hated each other. The prejudice ran deep. We're talking as bad as, if not worse than black-white relationships in this country. Flip back to [Luke 9:52](#). Look at the response of Jesus' disciples in [verse 54](#) when they pass through Samaria and Jesus isn't welcomed—he isn't shown hospitality. *When the disciples James and John saw this, they asked, "Lord, do you want us to call fire down from heaven to destroy them?"* Here's the deal. Unlike the first two religious guys, the Samaritan, the one least likely to overcome his prejudice is the one who finds the compassion necessary to help the beaten man—a man who's most likely a Jew.
- A couple of weeks ago we specifically looked at the compassionate, merciful response of the Samaritan here. I'm not going to repeat all those details other than to say the Samaritan goes out of his way, sacrificially above and beyond, to take care of the beaten man. What is absolutely essential if we are to be on the mission Jesus launched is a willingness to sacrificially and compassionately love everyone we meet—everyone who comes across our path, everyone who accidentally stumbles into our life. "People in our culture take notice when we care for the needs of others."¹⁰
- What I want to focus this morning is the prejudice that keeps all this from ever happening; the prejudice that shuts down and locks up the compassion and mercy. In order for you or your LifeGroup to be on the mission Jesus launched you are going to have to break through the prejudices and stereotypes that normally isolate people. You are going to have to mix and spend time with and associate with and meet the needs of people you normally wouldn't give the time of day. [2 Corinthians 5:16](#) *So from now on we regard no one from a worldly point of view. Though we once regarded Christ in this way, we do so no longer.*
- If your LifeGroup is a bunch of married, upwardly mobile, middle class, white people then are you sacrificially loving, showing compassion to the poor? To Latinos? To single moms? To drug users? To the elderly? To those stuck in sexual sin? And even more of a gut check, if your love for them prompted them to find out more about

⁹ Bock, p. 1031.

¹⁰ Don Argue, *Leadership*, Vol. 14, no. 2.

the God you delight in and serve would they feel welcome in your home or in your LifeGroup? If there is no such thing as a non-neighbor, as Jesus suggests, then you don't get to choose the people you are asked to love. You love whomever God brings across your path.

- By the way if you see your brother or sister in Christ trying to live this out, trying to associate with someone Christians shouldn't associate with, whatever that means, you need to assume the best of them. Assume they are trying to put God's Word into practice, assume they are trying to love their neighbor and withhold making a snap judgment about them.
- And pay close attention to the words and phrases that spill out of your mouth as you speak about people different than you. If phrases like "those people" or "they can't help themselves" are part of your vocabulary maybe you're more prejudiced than you realize. See, I think we think we're better in our minds at this than in practice. We're more like the Pharisee than we think. Our love is conditional and it is selective. We do what the poet [Carl Sandburg](#) said, "Love your neighbor as yourself; but don't take down the fence."¹¹
- Again, the proper question isn't "who is my neighbor," but am I being a neighbor to those I am not normally expected to love. The point of Jesus' story here is that you can't define a neighbor, you can only be a neighbor.¹² And to be a neighbor is to show compassionate, sacrificial love for everyone you meet. That is a huge part of what it means to be on the mission that Jesus launched.

Conclusion

- After Jesus finishes the parable he asks the lawyer one final question in [verse 36](#). "*Which of these three do you think was a neighbor to the man who fell into the hands of robbers?*" At this point, the answer's obvious. The lawyer gets it. Do you? [Verse 37](#), "*the one who had mercy on him.*" "Jesus told him, and he's telling us now "*Go and do likewise.*" Let's pray.

¹¹ Carl Sandburg, American poet, novelist, and historian (1878–1967)

¹² Marshall p. 450 quoting (H. Greeven, TDNT vol 6., p. 317.)