

The Parables

Part 9 – The Good Samaritan

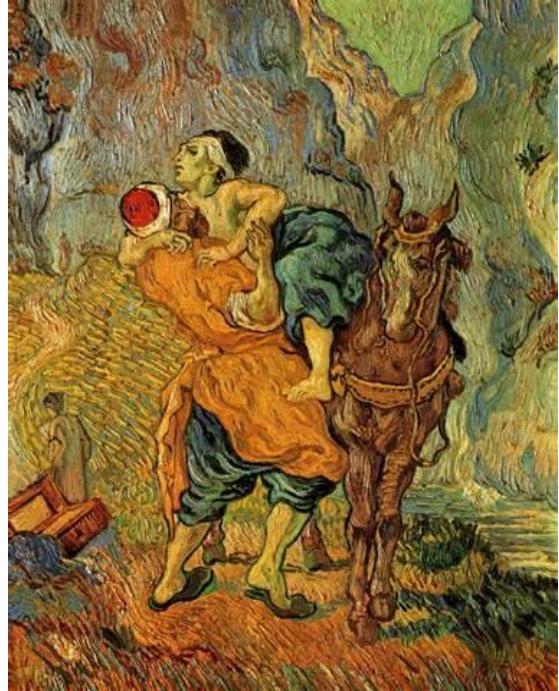
Luke 10:25-37

By the time Jesus delivered the Parable of the Good Samaritan the enthusiasm that characterized the earlier stages of his ministry had peaked and he had become the target of growing hostility, especially on the part of the religious leadership. The passage is introduced by the appearance of an expert in the law, who came with the intention of catching the Lord in some controversial or erroneous statement that could become the basis of an accusation against him.

It may be fairly said that the Parable of the Good Samaritan has two central purposes: 1) To expose sinners to the demands of God's law and 2) To teach God's people how to live lives of love.

For sinners who believe they can justify themselves, God's law expounded in the parable reveals the overwhelming requirement of self-forgetful, risk taking, sacrificial love for neighbor. It is the recognition of this extraordinary demand of God's law that leads the sinner to realize that he cannot gain eternal life by keeping the commandments of God. The standard of God's law is too great for any sinner to be justified by it. "What must *I do* to inherit eternal life?" was the wrong question.

For the people of God; for those who have been justified by the merits of Christ the law of God is a means by which they learn to live lives worthy of the gospel. The salvation of God is both the free gift of Christ's righteousness to the unrighteous *and* the transformation of our lives into lives of loving obedience. And how do we sum up obedience to God's law? To obey the law of God means to love Him with all of our heart, soul, mind and strength and to love our neighbor as ourselves.



Main Idea: The God who justifies by grace alone calls his people to live lives of sacrificial love.

Vs. 26 – The religion of the Jews had become a religion of self-justification. They had lost their prophetic expectation of a Redeemer who would die for their sins.

Vs. 27 – The Lord Jesus quotes from Deuteronomy 6:5 and from Leviticus 19:18 as the two greatest commandments by which he meant the two commandments that sum up all the rest.

Vs. 28 – Jesus is not giving a prescription of righteousness via the law. Rather he is seeking to expose the man to the overwhelming demands of God's law which will become more clear in the parable.

Vs. 29 – The typical Jew of the day believed the law of God could be kept well enough to earn salvation — the rabbis even spoke of people who kept the law from A to Z — and, so naturally, they talked at great length about precisely *how* to keep the law. The lawyer therefore wanted to know precisely what Jesus thought neighbor love required. He and his contemporaries did not include Gentiles among their neighbors.

Vs. 33 – The Lord's audience would expect next a Jewish layman to follow behind the priest and Levite. Instead, to their shock, the third man on the road to come by the wounded man was a hated Samaritan. To the Jews the Samaritans were the dregs of the earth. The Samaritans were heretics and schismatics, people whose religion was a mixture of Judaism and other things. Centuries of animosity lay behind the Lord's choice of a Samaritan in a story he was telling to a Jewish audience.

Vs. 36 – Jesus turned the tables on the law expert. He fundamentally changed the standard set by the original question. Now Jesus demonstrates that the important question is "Who is my neighbor?" but "Am I a good neighbor?"

1. An Important but flawed question

Vs. 25 – “What must I do to inherit eternal life?”

- Questions about eternal destiny are important and worthy. But the man’s question was fundamentally flawed for he was seeking a self-justifying prescription for eternal life. It is ironic that although the expert in the law knew the answer to his own question he nevertheless did not yet understand the full extent of the law’s demands.

2. The Bible’s answer

Vv. 26-27 – “What is written in the law?”

- Jesus takes the law expert to the Bible. God’s Word is the final authority. The man answered correctly by pointing to the laws’ summary statements: “You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, soul, strength, and mind, and your neighbor as yourself” (Deut 6:4-5; Lev 19:18). Upon these two statements hang the sum of God’s moral law.

3. An impossible demand

Vs. 28 – “Do this and you will live.”

- Jesus is pointing out the impossibly high standard of God’s law. What Israel should have learned generations earlier is that justification by means of obedience to the law was impossible.

4. A foolish effort

Vs. 29 – “But he, desiring to justify himself, said to Jesus, ‘And who is my neighbor?’”

- The man’s heart is revealed in his attempt to “justify himself.” He was operating on the assumption that his only neighbors were his fellow Jews. He most likely believed himself to be a faithful keeper of the law in this respect. But all attempts at self-justification end in disaster.

5. God’s extraordinary standard

Vv. 29-35

- The parable of the Good Samaritan holds forth God’s standard of neighbor love. It is meant both to bring self-justifiers to the end of themselves and to hold forth for God’s people a standard worth imitating.

6. A way of life

Vv. 36-37

- For God’s people who have been justified by the dying and rising of Christ, the law of God no longer terrifies with its demands. Jesus has met the law’s demands. Rather, for God’s people, the law of God is a tutor teaching them how to live for God’s glory. God’s people can hear Jesus’ “go and do likewise,” not as a requirement for justification but as a call to live a life of love.