

Happy mid July to everyone! Hot enough for you yet? A week of 90 degree heat is too hot for me! Hope your week is going good. Stay cool and live for God. Being a Christian is a "cool" thing in itself!

God bless and keep you!

Pastor Don

"Be a Good Neighbor" Luke 10: 25-37 July 14, 2013

A young Scotsman went to study at an English university and was living in the hall of residence with all the other students there. After he'd been there a month, his mother came to visit him. "How do you get along with the other students?" she asked.

"Mother," he replied, "they're such terribly noisy people. The one on that side keeps banging his head on the wall and won't stop. The one on the other side screams and screams all night." "That's terrible" says his mother. "How do you manage to put up with these awful noisy neighbors?" The student answered "I just ignore them and sit here quietly, playing my bagpipes.

A little boy always went next door to play even though his mom had warned him against doing so. This worried his mom so badly that she asked him why he was so disobedient.

He replied that Satan tempted him so bad and he did not know what to do. His mom then advised him to say 'get behind me Satan' whenever he was tempted. She then built a fence around the house. This worked for a week, then one sunny afternoon his mom looked out the window and there was her son playing on the neighbor's lawn having cut a hole in the fence. She yelled for him to come home. She then said "did I not tell you to say 'get behind me Satan' whenever he tempted you?" "Yes", the boy replied, "I said, 'get behind me Satan', then he went behind me and pushed me through the hole in the fence."

The lawyer asked Jesus a good question didn't he? Just who is my neighbor? Most of us would agree that our neighbors are those who live next door to us, or across the street as well as those who live behind us. Some would even claim all those who live in the same block as them. Small towns and rural communities include every one who lives there as their neighbors.

A neighbor is more than just someone who lives near us; a neighbor is someone we can count on to help us when we are in need. We are all in need at some time in our lives.

Are we good neighbors? Can those in need count on us for help? In today's parable, Jesus is telling us that everyone we come into contact with is our neighbor; even those who we don't know; even those who we don't like. How do we treat our neighbors? Would they describe us as good neighbors? Do we always look out for our neighbors? As we contemplate these questions, let us look to our Lord in prayer.
(Pray)

Every where Jesus went, He attracted a crowd. Today's text is no exception. The crowd is always filled with various and assorted people. Some are there because they believe Jesus is the Messiah and want to learn more. They want to see and hear Jesus for themselves. They want to worship Him. Some come because they aren't sure who Jesus is. They wanted to experience His teaching and preaching for themselves. Others come just to be entertained; to see the show; to see if he'd perform any miracles. Still others come just to cause trouble. Why did we come to church today?

This lawyer was from the latter group. He is not a lawyer like we would think of today in a court room; he was a scribe who specialized and was an expert in biblical law. He asks Jesus a question, just to tempt him. He asks what he must do to inherit eternal life. This question is a test because if Jesus gives an answer that differs from the Law, this lawyer can get Jesus in trouble with the Jewish rulers, but Jesus knew this mans thoughts, just like He knows ours. Jesus is smarter than we are and He is smarter than this lawyer. So, just like He usually did, Jesus answered this question with one of His own. He asked the lawyer to tell Him what the law says and how he understands it.

The lawyer quotes Deuteronomy 6:5 "You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, with all your soul, with all your strength and with all your mind." Then he quotes Leviticus 19:18 "you shall love your neighbor as yourself." Jesus tells him he has answered correctly. Jesus says do these things and you will live. Let's not misunderstand,

Jesus is not preaching a doctrine of works here; he is basing his answer on faith. Heaven can not be earned; it can only be received by faith through grace. The Law does promise that if we keep it we shall live. In Ezekiel 20:11 God says "In Leviticus 18:5 He says the same thing, "You shall therefore keep My statutes and My judgments, which if a man does, he shall live by them: I am the Lord." The problem is that no human can keep the whole law. We have all sinned and fallen short of the glory of God Paul tells us in Romans 3:23. Only Jesus ever kept the whole Law. The Law is meant to point us to Jesus. He fulfilled it. Gal. 3:22-25 "But the Scripture has confined all under sin, that the promise by faith in Jesus Christ might be given to those who believe. 23 But before faith came, we were kept under guard by the law, kept for the faith which would afterward be revealed. 24 Therefore the law was our tutor to bring us to Christ, that we might be justified by faith. 25 but after faith has come, we are no longer under a tutor." The law doesn't save, Jesus does! Ephesians 2:8-9 says "For by grace you have been saved through faith, and that not of yourselves; it is the gift of God, not of works, lest anyone should boast." If we love God with every ounce of our being, we will put our faith in Him. If our faith is in Him, we will obey Him. If we are obeying Him we will be working for Him; not to get eternal life, but because we have it. Do we love God with every ounce of our being? Are we working for Him? Are we living for Him? Are we being good neighbors?

To love God with all our heart means that we are ready, willing, and able to do anything that He asks us to do. This means that we are willing to give up anything He asks us to give up; it means that we are willing to go through any experience He leads us through; it means total and complete obedience. Do we love God with all our heart?

The soul represents life. To love God with all our soul means that our lives are supposed to honor and glorify God. It means that everything we do and say is to bring God glory & honor. Do they? To love God with all our strength means to use everything we possess to glorify God; do we use our time, our talents, our wealth, our bodies, our occupations, and our hobbies to glorify God? To love God with all our mind means to think Godly thoughts. Colossians 3:2 says "Set your mind on things above, not on things on the earth." Philippians 2:5 tells us to "Let this mind be in you which was also in Christ Jesus". If we want to have Christ's mind and think like God, we need to know what God thinks. The bible tells us His thoughts. We just need to read it. Daily prayer and bible study will help us to think Godly thoughts. There is a lot of junk out there just waiting to fill our thoughts. Proverbs 23:7 says "For as a man thinks so is he." To act like Jesus we must think like Jesus. Right thinking leads to right actions. Our actions are the fruit our thoughts produce. The fruit we produce tells people about us and about our God. What kind of a witness are our fruits producing?

Most of us are happy when the teacher says we have given the right answer, but this lawyer wanted to justify himself. Being a good Jew, he felt only Jews were his neighbors.

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Now the road to Jericho was a 17 mile, bandit infested, public thoroughfare by which many, many people traveled; especially Priests and Levites. A lot of Priests and Levites lived in Jericho and traveled to Jerusalem when they were needed in the Temple. It seems odd that such a well traveled road would be subject to highwaymen, but the numerous caves along the way made good hiding places. This poor Jewish traveler was beset upon by some of these ruthless highway men. He was beaten, robbed, stripped, wounded, and left to die a slow painful death in the hot sun. He must have been glad to see his fellow Jews come along, especially a priest and a Levite. A priest was the one who offered the sacrifices for the people; a Levite was a man who assisted the priest. How disappointed he must have been when they did not offer to help him in any way. As a matter of fact, after they saw him, they both crossed the road and passed by on the other side. These 2 men of God, these 2 men with public character and station in life failed to love their neighbor as themselves. These men were trained in the commandments and laws of God. Laws like love your neighbor as yourself. For these men, compassion

and tenderness were tools of their trade. Yet they did not use them on their neighbor. They had an obligation to lead by example. What kind of example did they display?

What kind of an example do we display? In Deuteronomy 22 God sets some laws and gives us certain responsibilities concerning helping our neighbors when they are in need. In v3 God says we must not hide ourselves; to hide oneself, means to ignore the problem and the people it affects. Gal.6:2 tells us to bear one another's burdens. This priest and the Levite hide themselves from the man in need; they did not help him or lift his burden. Do we hide ourselves from our neighbors, or do we try to help them out?

Finally, the wounded man got some help. His help came from a very unlikely source; it came from a Samaritan. The Jews despised the Samaritans and the feeling was mutual. Samaritans were Jews who had intermarried with people of other religions and from other countries. They were a mixed breed of people.

Most Jews would have no dealings with Samaritans. They would not talk to them.

Most Jews would go out of their way to avoid them; they would not even travel through Samaria. Yet it is this despised Samaritan who stops and helps the man. The Good Samaritan did not care who the man was or what his religion was; all he cared about was the fact that this man needed help. He did indeed render that help. He poured oil and wine on the wounds. The oil soothed the wound, the wine disinfected it. Then he bandaged his wounds, placed the wounded man upon his own animal and led him to the nearest inn.

Upon arrival, he rented a room and took care of the man all night long. The next morning, he had to be about his own business, so as he left, he paid the inn keeper 2 denarii; the typical room rate at that time was 1/12 of a denarii per day, so basically he paid for 24 days. That should be sufficient time for the man to recover and make it home. If it was not the Good Samaritan promised to pay whatever difference there might be on his next visit to this inn. How is that for helping out a neighbor! But remember this wounded man was a stranger to the Samaritan, and a Jew to boot. What a lesson to this lawyer and to the priest and the Levite, and to us.

Then the lawyer correctly answered Jesus' final question about who was the neighbor to him who fell among thieves. He answered he who showed mercy on him. Notice that the lawyer hated the

Samaritans so much he would not say the word Samaritan? Then Jesus told the lawyer and us to go and do likewise. This command is for us as well.

Are we good neighbors, even to the Samaritans?

This story teaches us 3 things about loving our neighbors. 1st, Lack of love is never justified even though we can make lots of excuses for it. The priest and the Levite were probably on their way to serve in the temple; touching a dead body would have defiled them and they would not have been able to serve. The priest crossed the road as soon as he realized it was a man lying there; the Levite looked upon the man before he passed by on the other side of the road; maybe they did not know he was still alive and did not want to take the chance by touching him to find out.

Perhaps they were late and did not have time to stop and help someone. Are we too busy to help those in need? There is no excuse for not doing what we know we should do. As a matter of fact, James calls it sin. He tells us in James 4:17 "to him who knows to do good and does it not, to him it is sin." Are we guilty of the sin of not being a good neighbor?

2ndly we need to realize that our neighbor is not just the people who live near us or in our community; they are every one regardless of race, creed, or nationality whom we have contact with and is in need. And 3rdly we need to realize that love means acting to meet people's needs whenever we can, as best we can. There are always people with needs near us. Do we try to meet their needs? Are we good neighbors? Does that insurance company's slogan describe us? Like a good neighbor, are we there?

Go and do likewise. This is not a suggestion that Jesus is making, it is a commandment that he is giving us. Are we obeying it?

On hot summer day, a young man was out selling things door-to-door, working his way through college. He was down to his last nickel and he was hungry, hot and tired. He decided he would ask for a meal at the next house, but then he changed his mind and only asked for a cold glass of water instead. A very pretty, young woman answered the door and said of course he could have a glass of water.

Only she thought he looked a little hungry too and brought him a big ice cold glass of milk instead. He drank and enjoyed every drop. He asked her how much he owed her for the milk, she said why nothing; my mother always taught me not to accept money for doing a kindness to someone. He thanked her profusely and was on his way once again, feeling very refreshed, both physically and spiritually. He had been ready to give up and quit, but 1 little act of kindness had restored & strengthened his faith in God as well as in man. Many years latter, this same lady contracted a rare disease. No local doctors could help her and she was sent to the big city. The hospital called in a specialist, the same salesman she had been so kind to many years before. He recognized her right away, but she did not remember him. He worked hard to taking care of her and eventually, she was healed. This specialist requested that her bill be given to him before it was given to her. He took and wrote upon it paid in full by one glass of milk. When they lady got her bill, she cried upon reading the words he had written. Then she remembered that hot summer day so many years before and she prayed thank you God that you spread your love throughout the world by human hands and hearts.

We have all heard that old saying what goes around comes around. Some would be surprised to learn that this is biblical. Ecclesiastes 11:1 says "Cast your bread upon the waters, for you will find it after many days". Christians spread God's love by being good neighbors. The Brethren motto is "For the glory

of God and my neighbors good". Isn't that what we are here for; to glorify God and help people? That is what Good Neighbors do. Are we good neighbors? Do we show God's love to the world through acts of compassion? All 4 men walked the same road; any of them could have been attacked. But for the grace of God, there go I. We are all in this world together. We all face risks and dangers. We need to be good neighbors. Galatians 6:9-10 "Let us not grow weary while doing good, for in due season we shall reap if we do not lose heart. Therefore as we have opportunity, let us do good to all, especially to those who are of the household of faith."

The good deed that we do today may benefit someone we love in the future; but even if it does not, at least for one day, we have made the world a better place. This week, let us be more aware of opportunities to do good to those in need. Let us show the world God's love through random acts of kindness. Now Go and do like wise. Amen; let's pray.

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