

Bible Study Guide: Week of 7-4-2022

1. Read through the passage below
2. Read my notes and commentary
3. Read the questions at the end and ponder or discuss with others

Pastor Andrew

Luke 10:25-37

²⁵Just then a lawyer stood up to test Jesus. “Teacher,” he said, “what must I do to inherit eternal life?” ²⁶He said to him, “What is written in the law? What do you read there?” ²⁷He 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.” ²⁸And he said to him, “You have given the right answer; do this, and you will live.” ²⁹But wanting to justify himself, he asked Jesus, “And who is my neighbor?” ³⁰Jesus replied, “A man was going down from Jerusalem to Jericho, and fell into the hands of robbers, who stripped him, beat him, and went away, leaving him half dead. ³¹Now by chance a priest was going down that road; and when he saw him, he passed by on the other side. ³²So likewise a Levite, when he came to the place and saw him, passed by on the other side. ³³But a Samaritan while traveling came near him; and when he saw him, he was moved with pity. ³⁴He went to him and bandaged his wounds, having poured oil and wine on them. Then he put him on his own animal, brought him to an inn, and took care of him. ³⁵The next day he took out two denarii, gave them to the innkeeper, and said, ‘Take care of him; and when I come back, I will repay you whatever more you spend.’ ³⁶Which of these three, do you think, was a neighbor to the man who fell into the hands of the robbers?” ³⁷He said, “The one who showed him mercy.” Jesus said to him, “Go and do likewise.”

²⁵Just then a lawyer stood up to test Jesus. “Teacher,” he said, “what must I do to inherit eternal life?”

Just before this passage the seventy disciples whom Jesus had sent out in pairs to bring good news to villages on the road ahead returned. After their return, Jesus pulled them aside privately to bless them. This expert in the Jewish law apparently stands up to put Jesus to the test. The questioner was a person whose role in society was the interpretation and application of the Law of Moses. He asks the question, Luke tells us, as a test. He evidently wishes to hear Jesus’ opinion on the subject to see if it aligns with his understanding of the Law. It is as if the man says to himself, “They say that Jesus is pretty good—let’s see how good he really is! I have a question that will really stump him.”

²⁶He said to him, “What is written in the law? What do you read there?”

Jesus, however, seems to perceive the trap and preempts it, turning the question back on the man. Rather than saying, “Here is what you must do to possess eternal life...” Jesus instead asks the man, essentially, “Hey, you’re an expert on the law. You tell me what it says. How do you read it?” That last sentence: “How do you read it?” or “How do you understand it?” is a better translation than “What do you read there?” Jesus isn’t asking the man the same question twice; rather, he asks him two questions: “What is written in the law?” and “How do you interpret it?”

²⁷He 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.” ²⁸And he said to him, “You have given the right answer; do this, and you will live.”

The man gives the same answer Jesus himself gives to a similar question in Matthew 22:37ff. Indeed, this is a quote from Deuteronomy 6:5 and was long recognized by rabbis and teachers of the law as a central commandment that encapsulated all the other parts of the Law. If one truly loves God and neighbor, one has fulfilled the law. Of course, living this out is easier said than done. Still, Jesus affirms the man’s response. We can almost sense the lawyer’s

deflated ego upon realizing that Jesus wasn't going to engage with him on the terms the lawyer had hoped. Jesus didn't fall for the test or trap.

²⁹But wanting to justify himself, he asked Jesus, "And who is my neighbor?"

The man evidently couldn't let Jesus off with an easy win. He "wanted to justify himself." The Greek word for justify here is indeed the same word used to mean "to make righteous" or to "justify." Here, however, it seems to mean something along the lines of "wanting to vindicate himself" or, perhaps more idiomatically, "Wishing to save face." The man wanted to win the argument with Jesus. He came in order to test Jesus and so far the trap he laid has gone to waste. Perhaps, the man figures, if he presses Jesus further to define neighbor, he can still come off as the better expert.

³⁰Jesus replied, "A man was going down from Jerusalem to Jericho, and fell into the hands of robbers, who stripped him, beat him, and went away, leaving him half dead. ³¹Now by chance a priest was going down that road; and when he saw him, he passed by on the other side. ³²So likewise a Levite, when he came to the place and saw him, passed by on the other side. ³³But a Samaritan while traveling came near him; and when he saw him, he was moved with pity. ³⁴He went to him and bandaged his wounds, having poured oil and wine on them. Then he put him on his own animal, brought him to an inn, and took care of him. ³⁵The next day he took out two denarii, gave them to the innkeeper, and said, 'Take care of him; and when I come back, I will repay you whatever more you spend.'

Here we get into one of Jesus' most famous parables. Although the man asks Jesus "Who is my neighbor?" notice Jesus doesn't answer that question directly. If he had, the parable would have said, "A man walked down the road from Jerusalem to Jericho. On the way he passed a priest, a Levite, and a Samaritan, all of whom had been beaten and left for dead. The man helped all three. Go and do likewise." Or, perhaps, as the Lawyer was expecting, Jesus would have said, "A man walked down the road from Jerusalem to Jericho. On the way he passed a priest, a Levite, and a Samaritan, all of whom had been beaten and left for dead. The man helped the first two, but not the Samaritan. Go and do likewise." But Jesus, of course, doesn't do this. Rather than answer the question the man asked: "Who is my neighbor?" Jesus prompts the Lawyer to consider this question: "Am I neighborly?" Jesus uses the Samaritan, an unlikely hero, to illustrate a kind passerby going above and beyond the call of duty to care for a person in need. The motivation of the Samaritan is described as pity—literally, he had a gut feeling of compassion; his heart was moved with fondness and concern for the beaten man.

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The main attribute ascribed to the Samaritan is mercy. The Lawyer can't even bring himself to call the hero of the story a Samaritan as Jesus did in the parable. Rather, he identifies him by his actions. Jesus urges the Lawyer to go about his life showing mercy in the same way. This interaction shows the brilliant reversal of a test by Jesus. Rather than allowing the Lawyer to test him as the Lawyer intended to do, Jesus turns the test around on him and reveals to those looking on that the Lawyer—this expert on the Law of Moses—was not exactly living out the mercy of the Law in his own life.

Discussion/Reflection Questions:

- 1. Why do you think the Lawyer asks Jesus about what he must do to inherit eternal life? Why this question?**
- 2. What answer do you think the Lawyer expected to his question, "And who is my neighbor?"**
- 3. What are some ways you do or can show mercy to those in your life?**