**Luke 10:25-37**

I. Setting the scene for the parable

A. This expert doesn’t have the purest of motives

1. He is seeking to test Jesus (v. 25)

2. He is seeking to justify his own life (v. 29)

B. He lives a very measured life with lots of “fences” dividing neighbor and stranger

 C. We all do this

1. We identify people who are our “neighbor” (share our ethnicity, political views, religious beliefs, sexual orientation, socio-economic level, etc.)

2. We create fences that identify our kind of people and identify the kinds of situations in which we feel responsible to love

 D. But Jesus’ parable blows apart all the fences we create

II. Notice the key difference between the 3 travelers who pass by the wounded man

A. The priest and the Levite (v. 31-32)

1. These are the religious elite of the day—well respected, moral people

 2. There are several reasons why they might not stop to help

a. Ritual purity: In Jewish culture, contact with a dead body made priests ritually unclean

b. Danger: This was a very dangerous stretch of road, and they may have been concerned for their own safety

c. Convenience: The man in the ditch represents an overwhelming need that will require them to completely abandon their plans/agenda for that day and week

 3. Whatever the reason, this situation didn’t fit within their fences

4. Martin Luther King Jr.: "If I stop to help this man, what will happen to me?”

C. The Samaritan

1. The key difference is compassion (v. 33)

2. MLK Jr.: “What will happen to him if I don’t stop?”

3. His compassion leads him to cross every fence/boundary imaginable

 a. He crosses the safety fence

b. He crosses the convenience fence (totally abandons his plans and cares for this man at the cost of his time and money)

c. He crosses the neighbor fence

 1) Jews and Samaritans were sworn enemies

 2) See Luke 9:51-54

3) Consider Jesus’ command to love our enemies (Mt 5:43-46)

III. Notice the key difference between the expert’s framing of the question and Jesus’ re-framing of the question

 A. The reframing of the question

 1. The man asks, “who is my neighbor”? (v. 29)

He is looking outside himself and asking about how to categorize people, how to put fences between the in and the out.

 2. Jesus reframes it to, “which one proved to be a neighbor?” (v. 36)

Jesus forces the man to look at himself and his own heart. His point is that the only fences/barriers to love are the ones we construct in our own heart. Who the person out there is is totally irrelevant.

 B. The surprising reversal

We might expect a story of a Jew who comes along a wounded Samaritan and helps him. But Jesus tells the story of a Samaritan who comes along a wounded man (his audience would assume a Jewish man) and helps him

 C. Jesus’ story is far more convicting

It forces us to deal with the fences within our own hearts, and shows us that even “no good Samaritans” can have hearts that are closer to God’s than our own

 D. Jesus’ story is far more disarming

1. In his story we identify with the man in the ditch, and we’re invited to consider if we were in desperate need what would we want from even our worst enemy?

2. His story is not just another moralistic lesson; it’s an experience of receiving grace from your worst enemy whom you’ve treated with contempt

3. His story invites us to ask: what would happen to my heart if I received that kind of grace from an enemy? How would that change the fences I’ve constructed in my own heart?

E. The gospel is: we are that man in the ditch! (see Eph 2:1-3)

1. Jesus, our enemy at the time (see Ro 5:8-10), saw us and had compassion

2. His compassion led him to cross every fence imaginable in order to love us

3. Question: Has my heart been changed by that experience of radical grace? Has it broken down those fences in my own heart?

IV. Where is God calling you to cross over a fence in order to love someone?

 1. Example: the neighbor fence, an emotional fence, a fence of time/convenience, etc.

2. You don’t have to get creative to cross fences to love people. Needs present themselves every day and the only question is will we have eyes to see and hearts of compassion (see v. 31: they “happened” to be passing by)

3. Ephesians 5:1: Be imitators of God, therefore, as dearly loved children and live a life of love, just as Christ loved us and gave himself up for us as a fragrant offering and sacrifice to God.

**Discussion Questions**

1. The Parable of the Good Samaritan is a very familiar passage. How did hearing it again on Sunday change or add to your understanding of a familiar passage?

2. The brilliance of Jesus story is that he puts the Samaritan on the road in the place of power and the man (most likely Jewish) in the ditch in the place of need. How did considering that surprising twist impact you on Sunday?

3. The key difference in the Samaritan was a compassionate heart that was moved to help a person in need. Has God given you a particular compassion for a particular group of people (e.g. the poor and needy, those who don’t know the gospel, those in challenging marriages, etc.)? What would it look like to let that compassion drive your life more fully?

4. On Sunday we talked about the fences we create dividing “neighbor” from “stranger” or even “enemy.” As you consider those fences in your own life, is there a person or type of person that is really hard for you to identify with and love?

5. We were challenged to cross fences in order to love people well. What fence is God challenging you to cross right now (e.g. the fence of convenience, an emotional fence, a fence identifying certain types of people as being outside your concern, etc.)?