

## Luke 10:25-37

### Introduction

What kind of a love will be a testimony to the world of God's radical compassionate love? = a love without fences

### The Passage

#### I. The lead up to Jesus' parable (v. 25-28)

- A. Expert in the law wants to test Jesus
- B. There was a huge scholarly debate about how to prioritize the 613 commands of the law
- C. Jesus and the law expert agree that Deut 6:5 and Lev 19:18 are most important
- D. The expert wants to "justify" his interpretation of "neighbor" and his lifestyle  
He wants to create a fence around "neighbor" to limit who he has to love

#### II. Parable of the Good Samaritan: A love that breaks through all the fences (v. 29-37)

##### A. Background and summary

1. v. 30: The Jericho Road was dangerous 17 mile journey (lot of thieves)
2. v. 31-32: 2 religious people pass by
  - a. Levites were one of 12 tribes responsible for the religious life of Israel  
--temple, sacrifices, worship services, religious holidays
  - b. Priests were the highest class of Levites  
Very religious, moral, highly respected
  - c. They are most likely returning home from their Temple duties
  - d. They both: "come across, see, pass by on other side"
    - 1) Why don't they stop?  
It's dangerous  
Purity issues (touching dead bodies)  
It's an incredible hassle
3. v. 33: Along comes a third
  - a. Not a religious leader, probably a merchant, Samaritan (enemy of Jews)
  - b. He "Has pity/compassion"
  - c. His compassion leads him to radical loving action that reflects God's compassionate heart of love

##### B. A love that breaks through the "when" fence

1. v. 31: "happened" = "By chance": for each person, this encounter was not planned or expected, it was an interruption in their regularly scheduled lives
2. We often put up the "when" fence  
"I will love . . . when I'm on duty, when it's convenient, when it lines up nicely with my schedule, every 4<sup>th</sup> weekend, etc"
3. The Samaritan loves even when it's a massive interruption in his life

##### C. A love that breaks through the "how much" fence

1. The Samaritan loves this man radically at great risk and cost to himself
  - a. risks his own safety

- b. risks being exploited financially by the inn keeper
- c. costs him his time and many opportunity costs
- 2. We often put up the “how much” fence
  - “I will love . . . to extent that it doesn’t cost me anything significant, to extent I don’t have to risk, etc”
- 3. The Samaritan loves even when it costs him a lot

D. I love that breaks through the “who” fence

- 1. In the context of Leviticus 19:17-18, it’s possible that neighbor = fellow Jew, but Jesus’ story assumes something larger than that
- 2. History: Jews and Samaritans were bitter enemies. Samaritans were half Jew, half Gentiles who had corrupted Israel’s religion. See Luke 9:51-54 for a sense of the animosity between these two groups.
- 3. We like to put up the “who” fence
  - “I will love . . . people who are like me, who I like, who are easy to love, who think like me, etc”
- 4. Jesus’ story shouts at us: “neighbor” includes even your enemy!  
See Matthew 5:44-47

E. Jesus changes the nature of the law expert’s question to change his focus

- 1. v. 29: who is my neighbor? v. 36: who became a neighbor?  
The question is not “who is my neighbor?” but rather “will I choose to be a neighbor or not?” Jesus takes this man’s focus off labeling people out there and puts it on his own heart to see whether he will reflect God’s heart or not
- 2. v. 30: “a certain man”: notice the man in need is never given an identity. He is the only anonymous character in the story. The reason is this: his identity is not the issue. The issue is the hearts of the three people who pass by.
- 3. We ask questions like: -Is this person in circle of my responsibility? Does this person deserve my help? Will they appreciate my help? Will they be responsible with my help? Will they be likely to help me in return?  
Jesus takes focus off all that and puts it on our hearts: will I love or not?

F. Jesus switches the roles in the story from what you’d expect

- 1. We expect: a story of a Jew who helps even a Samaritan. We then would be left wondering, “if I came across my enemy in need, would I help or not?”
- 2. Jesus: tells a story of a Samaritan who helps a man in need. We are left wondering, “if I was half dead on the street and my only help was my enemy helping me, what would I want him/her to do? And what if he/she showed me radical compassion and love?”
- 3. The first story is a moralistic story about doing good, but Jesus’ story is a story of grace (receiving grace from the last person you’d expect it)
- 4. When you receive that kind of radical grace, you are more likely to offer it to others in return (even your enemies)

G. The Good Samaritan story is our story

1. Romans 5:8-10: when we were God's enemies, he sent his son to die for us
2. Spiritually, we were half-dead on the road, and Jesus came along and had compassion that moved him to radical love on our behalf. He was our good Samaritan. He broke through every fence to love us.
3. When we truly experience his compassion and grace, that will begin to overflow into the lives of those we encounter (even our enemies)

### Conclusion

- I. Do you need to repent of a life that has been too narrowly focused, that has put up too many fences?
- II. Do you need to receive God's radical grace and love in a fresh way at this time in your life?
- III. How can you cross a fence to love someone this week?

### **Discussion Questions**

1. Opening questions: What struck you most about the sermon/the passage? What surprised you? What confused you? What did you disagree with?
2. In v. 36, Jesus rephrases the law expert's original question in v. 29. Explain in your own words how Jesus' rephrasing changes the nature/focus of the issue.
3. Of the three fences we put up that keep us from loving others (the "when," "how much," and "who" fence), which do you relate to most? How specifically do you see that playing out in your own life?
4. Describe a time when you've experienced surprising love and grace from someone you considered an "enemy." How did you respond to that? Or, describe a time when you showed surprising love and grace to an "enemy." How did they respond?
5. As you consider your own life, what's one way you might cross over one of those fences to love someone in the next month? Is there a specific situation that God is bringing to mind?