



1362 US Highway 395 N Ste 102-200

Gardnerville, NV 89410

E-mail: bill@liferesource.org

Website: www.liferesource.org

Transcript

Love Your Neighbor – Part 1 – The Good Samaritan

July 14, 2023

We're starting a new series, *Love Your Neighbor*. The title of the first one in this series is *The Good Samaritan*.

The good Samaritan is a parable that Jesus told about what it means to live out the second greatest value of God – love your neighbor as yourself. Let's look at it. Let's read the parable first. It's in Luke 10:25.

Luke 10:25-35 – *And behold, a lawyer stood up to put him to the test, saying, "Teacher, what shall I do to inherit eternal life?"* The point is here that this man was testing Jesus – trying to trip Him up, maybe – not really sincere. He just wanted to know what Jesus was going to say rather than how to follow Him – possibly to put Him at odds with the Pharisees, who were the religious establishment at the time. *Jesus said to him, "What is written in the Law? How do you read it?"* Since he was a lawyer, Jesus started with the law and asked him a question he knew he could answer. *And he 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."* *And he said to him, "You have answered correctly; do this, and you will live."* But he – that's the lawyer – *desiring to justify himself, said to Jesus, "And who is my neighbor?"* So, would it be a Roman? Or, a Greek? Or, a Gentile? I guess the only answer that was appropriate in that society was another Jew, because Jews didn't speak with Romans and Greeks. They were not allowed to by the oral law – not the law that God made, but the oral law that the Jews had added. So, he wants to know who his neighbor is, and *Jesus replied, "A man was going down from Jerusalem to Jericho, and he fell among robbers, who stripped him and beat him and departed, leaving him half dead.* Half dead – did you know that phrase we use quite often came out of the Bible? It does. So, he was beyond seriously injured. So, maybe a grade 3 concussion, which would include unconsciousness, broken limbs or ribs, maybe internal bleeding, severely bruised and abrasions, ruptured internal organs, exposure. All this was possible. We don't know exactly, but half dead

doesn't sound good, does it? *Now by chance*, He continues, *a priest was going down that road, and when he saw him he passed by on the other side.* Just left him lying there. *So likewise a Levite, when he came to the place and saw him, passed by on the other side.* Now, these people were, generally, considered upper class. Jesus could have, just as well, said a lawyer. Many of them were hard-hearted and non-empathic and centered on their own schedules and work – too busy to care. *But a Samaritan, as he journeyed, came to where he was, and when he saw him, he had compassion* – that is, in Bible speak, he was soft-hearted. You see the term *hard-hearted* quite frequently. Well, this man was the opposite of that. He was soft-hearted. He was committed to help this vulnerable man, knowing that he would want someone to do that for him, if he were in the same situation – not because it was a part of Jewish law, because he was a Samaritan – he wasn't a Jew – but out of compassion, as Jesus explained. So, I think Jesus is pointing out here this law of God – love your neighbor – goes way beyond any written code – or, maybe, even oral code. But it's built into the fabric of human life. And He continued: *He went to him and bound up his wounds, pouring on oil and wine* – he administered first aid, we would say. *Then he set him on his own animal and brought him to an inn and took care of him.* He was traveling with an animal – probably a donkey, which indicates he was of the working class – not a beggar, had money, could afford an animal, but not rich either. *And the next day* – so he spent the night with him at the inn, right? – *he took out two denarii* – how much money was that in our time? It's hard to figure, but we think we know that a *denarius* was a day's wages for a Roman soldier. And I think back then, just like in today's military, salaries are not high, because many other things are provided for them. So, most working people today would make more than a military salary and, I think, probably true back then too. More than a couple days at an inn, which inns back then were *not* high-class accommodations – the Motel 6 of the day, maybe. Maybe a week's coverage? Possibly. So, it would seem that *half dead* might require more time than a week, even in today's hospitals. So, a fairly substantial amount of money anyway – way more than we might give a homeless person asking for food money rather than food, so that they can buy alcohol. So, maybe \$500.00? So, how hard would it be for you to fish \$500.00 out of your wallet or purse? Well, they didn't have credit cards back then, so they had to carry more money. We'd probably have to pull out a credit card, if we took somebody to a Motel 6 and said, "Take care of him till I come back." That would include food as well. So, Uber and all of that. We'd have to pull out a credit card. And going to the inn would mean that we would have to stop doing what we're doing to take care of this man, and maybe, late for work, or late for soccer practice, if we're taking our kids. *...and gave them to the innkeeper, saying, 'Take care of him, and whatever more you spend, I will repay you when I come back.'* Rather than saying, "It's not my problem," he made it his problem until this man was recovered enough to manage on his own. Now, he didn't suspend his whole life and stay there with him until he got well. He didn't give him everything he owned. He wasn't in the business of taking care of people. He didn't run a non-profit for people who were injured on the side of the road. But he stopped his life and took care of this man. Now, we would have called 911 from the accident scene and stayed with him until the ambulance arrived and gave our statement to the police, and then have been on our way, knowing that the hospital would have to take care of him – whether Medicaid or his own insurance would either pay or not, because hospitals today are required to do that. (We're going to talk more about this later in

the series, but in our society, that would be the best thing we could do.) Many people today, though, would not even do that, because they're too defensive to risk getting involved. "What if I get hepatitis from him? Or, maybe HIV, from his blood?"

There's a story I remember from years ago about a lady that lived in New York. She was on the street and she was being beaten – beaten to death. She died from her wounds, I believe. It was in a residential area with apartments. So, people had their windows open because it was hot summer time, and they could hear her screaming and begging for her life, and screaming for help, and nobody called the police. It seems, sometimes, in more urban environments, people are more defensive and more self-protective and less desirous of getting involved to help others. Not always, however. I'm not saying that everybody that lives in New York is that way.

Let's continue:

V-36 – *Which of these three – Jesus said – do you think, proved to be a neighbor to the man who fell among the robbers?" He said – the lawyer – "The one who showed him mercy." And Jesus said to him, "You go, and do likewise."* Remember this parable was the answer to the question, "What must I do to inherit eternal life?"

So, what is Jesus' point? Was it to take care of those who desperately need help? Well, yes, obviously. But, if that's all Jesus wanted to say, He could have just said that. There's more here to this story. This story contains the element of commitment to others – to sacrifice – and also to obedience to God. People say that they love God, but they haven't connected that with doing what God tells them to do as much as Jesus did. So, in a society, where we are sometimes not even willing to make a phone call to help others, the concept of seeing a stranger through a trial is *way* beyond what we're accustomed to thinking about.

I saw something in the news a few months ago, and it was quite remarkable. There was this young man – I don't know if he was a Christian or not, but if he isn't, it goes to prove something else we talked about. And that is that love your neighbor a big part of being a human being, as well as obeying God. So this young man entered a mall from a side entrance. You know how, when you go in a side entrance to a mall, you have to walk by a number of stores on either side, so it forms a hallway before you can get into the main part. Well, as he walking down this hallway, he saw, down in the main part of the mall, someone shooting a gun and killing people. He was killing people in this mall! So, this young guy pulls out his conceal-carry handgun, got behind a post to steady his aim, and at forty yards – which is *not* close range for a handgun – shot the perpetrator seven times before he went down. So, he put himself in harm's way – the guy could have shot back if he had known where the shots were coming from. He risked criminal action against himself, because here he is, trying to shoot somebody. He risked civil lawsuit from the perp's family, possibly – possibly even from the mall owners or even opportunistic bystanders. People who have been saved have sued the guy shooting. And he will have to live with the shooting of another human being for the rest of his life. Now, I don't know if he killed

this person, but I want to remind you that people who are trained to carry a handgun are trained to shoot until the attack stops rather than until the attacker is dead. It's about saving others, not necessarily killing the person who is trying to kill others. But, his sense of empathy for those being shot for no reason caused him to take protective action. That is *love your neighbor as yourself*. If you were out in the mall, and somebody's shooting at you, wouldn't you want somebody to protect you? Well, of course!

So, what's the point of this? I think one of the points Jesus is making by telling this story – the point about loving our neighbor as ourselves is the element of sacrifice – of commitment. Think about how Jesus lived His life. In John 4:34, we read:

John 4:34 – *Jesus said to them, “My food – My sustenance – the thing that keeps Me going – is to do the will of Him who sent me and to accomplish His work.*

So, He was completely involved in God's work. It was a total commitment. It wasn't something He just did on the Sabbath. Let's look in John 12:27. He said:

John 12:27-32 – *“Now is my soul troubled. And what shall I say? What am I going to do with that? ‘Father, save me from this hour’? But for this purpose I have come to this hour. Father, glorify your name.” Then a voice came from heaven: “I have glorified it, and I will glorify it again.” I think what He's talking about there – the Father is saying – “I was glorified when I brought you into the world and I'm going to be glorified again when You are crucified.” The crowd that stood there and heard it said that it had thundered. Others said, “An angel has spoken to him.” Jesus answered, “This voice has come for your sake, not mine.” Maybe it was to Jesus, because others couldn't understand it. But Jesus following His Father's will is definitely going to be in their best interest. Then He continued: “Now is the judgment of this world; now will the ruler of this world be cast out.” Fantastic things that are going to happen because of Christ's coming. “And I, when I am lifted up from the earth, will draw all people to myself.”*

So, the people that were listening were very familiar with that phrase – *lifted up*. That meant to be lifted up and crucifixion. And Jesus is saying that His death is the doorway in all people coming to Him to be saved from their sins and to have eternal life with God. So, He was fully committed to this. And He's saying, why should He ask God to save Him from that hour, no matter how frightening it was? Because He knew what He was going to have to do. He knew *why*. He knew that He and the Father created that plan together, and it was on Him now to do His part of that.

Let's look in 1 Peter 2:21. By the way, you talk about a commitment to do a terrible thing – to do something terrible and horrific – but for a huge good for everybody out of love for everyone else! So 1 Peter 2:21 – so now Peter's talking about *our* response to what He did for us:

1 Peter 2:21-25 – *For to this you have been called, because Christ also suffered for you, leaving you an example, so that you might follow in His steps. How to suffer: He committed no sin, neither was deceit found in His mouth. He didn't lie. When He was reviled, He did not revile in return. When He suffered, He did not threaten, but continued entrusting Himself to Him who judges justly. He himself bore our sins in his body on the tree, that we might die to sin and live to righteousness. Not live to whatever we want to do, but live to a commitment to obey God and follow His word, even if it costs us our lives. By his wounds you have been healed. For you were straying like sheep, but have now returned to the Shepherd and Overseer of your souls.*

A pretty powerful statement about how we're supposed to respond to Christ's sacrifice. It's not some ho-hum every weekend thing, or spend an hour at some charitable organization once a month, but a total life-involving commitment.

Romans 12:1 – here Paul says something about this:

Romans 12:1 – *I appeal to you therefore, brothers, by the mercies of God, to present your bodies as a living sacrifice, holy and acceptable to God, which is your spiritual worship.* There are lots of different ways to worship God, but total commitment is the most important.

So, in my Bible, there's a little number – a note – after spiritual worship, and it tells us that phrase also could mean *rational service* – that is, given Christ died for us, a rational, logical, Godly response would be to be willing to die for Him. And that could mean physically, but more likely in every moment of our lives. That could mean to give up all that we have, even our lives, like the apostles did and like Paul did. And by that comparison, taking time out of our schedule to help someone beside the road, who is unconscious, seems to be very little, doesn't it? And yet, it seems too hard for some of us.

Let's look again... what I'm doing now is I'm putting together a list of scriptures – there are way, way, way many of these scriptures – I'm just picking ones means something to me... but in Mark 9:42 – here's another one – where Jesus said:

Mark 9:42-47 – *“Whoever causes one of these little ones who believe in me to sin, it would be better for him if a great millstone were hung around his neck and he were thrown into the sea. So, a drastic action to picture the urgent need and Christ's seriousness about how to treat children and new people – people who are just beginning their Christian walk. So, if we want to avoid the millstone, we need a total commitment to that, don't we? And He says next then: *And if your hand causes you to sin, cut it off. It is better for you to enter life crippled than with two hands to go to hell, to the unquenchable fire. And if your foot causes you to sin, cut it off. It is better for you to enter life lame than with two feet to be thrown into hell. And if your eye causes you to sin, tear it out. It is better for you to enter the kingdom of God with one eye than with two eyes to be thrown into hell.**

So, I think we all realize that He's not being literal here. He's not talking about gouging out your eye, because God tells us our bodies are the temple of the Holy Spirit. We're not to hurt it deliberately. He's not telling that to gouge out our eye or cut off our hand, but to give up whatever is keeping us from obeying God. Those are the things that need to be cut off. The work needs to be done in the heart, not in our eyes, or our hands, or our feet. So, Christianity is a high-stakes game – not the soft Christianity we see around us so often today.

Let's look at another one – another thing Jesus said about how to be a Christian. He said...this is in Matthew 13:44:

Matthew 13:44 – *The kingdom of heaven is like treasure hidden in a field, which a man found and covered up. So, he found this treasure – whatever it was – a bag of cash? – and he covered it up. Then in his joy he goes and sells all that he has and buys that field. So, the operative phrase here is *sells all that he has*. “If I could just get that treasure, all my problems would be solved. I would realize all my most important desires.” And He says, it's worth everything we have to do that. So, that's another statement of total commitment, isn't it?*

But, do we really do that? Why do we do the things that we do? Are they all intentional efforts to move us toward God? Well, they *should* be. But, in some cases, there are things that *we* want and we kind of leave God out of the picture sometimes.

So, the question is: Are we fully committed? And this little parable tells us how committed we should be. We should be willing to give up *everything* to have that.

This next one might be a little bit off of what we normally would think of as commitment, but let's look in Luke 10, verse 38.

Luke 10:38-42 – *Now as they went on their way, Jesus entered a village. And a woman named Martha welcomed him into her house. And she had a sister called Mary, who sat at the Lord's feet and listened to his teaching. But Martha was distracted with much serving. And she went up to him and said, “Lord, do you not care that my sister has left me to serve alone? Tell her then to help me.” But the Lord answered her, “Martha, Martha, you are anxious and troubled about many things, but one thing is necessary – only one thing. Mary has chosen the good portion, which will not be taken away from her.*

So, even in little things, we need to focus on what's most important and put our attention on that. The point is, it's a good thing to have company, right? To fellowship and to be hospitable, if we can. It's good to have guests. And it's too good to make it as perfect as we can. But the main focus needs to be on the purpose we invited people over, which is to have fellowship and build relationships, isn't it? So, we need to prioritize things and learn how to focus on what's most important.

Here's something else Jesus said. It's in Mark 12:41.

Mark 12:41-44 – *And he sat down opposite the treasury and watched the people putting money into the offering box. Many rich people put in large sums. And a poor widow came and put in two small copper coins, which make a penny. So, not even a penny's worth. And he called his disciples to him and said to them, "Truly, I say to you, this poor widow has put in more than all those who are contributing to the offering box. For they all contributed out of their abundance – because they have so much, didn't miss it – but she out of her poverty has put in everything she had, all she had to live on."*

So, we ask the question: How is she going to live then? Won't she starve? Did you know that, in today's Christianity, the word *tithing* is used to designate donating money to the church? But the fact that a tithe literally means *a tenth* has been left out. Why do you think that happens? Well, because giving 10% doesn't fit in with Christianity anymore. It's the way most people practice Christianity today – and 10% is too hard, so water it down. Forget about what it really means. Don't teach people that that's what it really means – 10% is a tithe. Until you've given that much, you haven't tithed yet.

Let's look Psalm 37. Here's something else that's said about this very topic. David said:

Psalms 37:25-28 – *I have been young, and now am old – so, lived a full life – yet I have not seen the righteous forsaken or his children begging for bread. He is ever lending generously, and his children become a blessing. Turn away from evil and do good; so shall you dwell forever. For the LORD loves justice; he will not forsake his saints. They are preserved forever, but the children of the wicked shall be cut off.*

So, this is a totally down-to-earth observation right out of the Bible. If we give, and we commit ourselves to loving our brothers and sisters, God is going to commit to taking care of us. He just spells it out for us right there. And we respond to that statement by saying, "Well, if we give everything away, how will we survive?" We're hard hearted, aren't we? We just don't get it.

Here's another one: Mark 10:17.

Mark 10:17-22 – *And as he was setting out on his journey, a man ran up and knelt before him and asked him, "Good Teacher, what must I do to inherit eternal life?" And Jesus said to him, "Why do you call me good? No one is good except God alone. You know the commandments: 'Do not murder, Do not commit adultery, Do not steal, Do not bear false witness, Do not defraud, Honor your father and mother.'" These, by the way, are the commandments that follow the first four commandments. They're the last six – that have to do with loving your neighbor, aren't they? And he said to him, "Teacher, all these I have kept from my youth." And Jesus, looking at him, loved him, and said to him, "You lack one thing: go, sell all that you have and give to the poor, and you will have treasure in heaven; and come, follow me." So, He wanted this*

man to follow Him, but He was telling him that all the stuff that you have is going to get in the way. Give it away and you'll have treasure in heaven. And that's what you're really seeking, isn't it? *Disheartened by the saying, he went away sorrowful, for he had great possessions.*

So, we might ask, "God doesn't really require that of us, does He?" We have to make a living and support our families, don't we? Well, yes, we do. The Samaritan didn't have to give up everything he had to obey God. But this man wanted to follow Jesus. Apparently, he was young, so he was probably single. He didn't have a family to take care of. And he could have lived out of the same fund that all the other disciples were living out of, so he didn't need money. But his money got in the way of him being fully committed to God.

So, did you hear that? To love your neighbor as yourself doesn't always require us to give away everything we have, or to make a career out of taking care of the poor. Most of the examples we see in the Bible of people taking care of our neighbor has to do with coming across someone who is in need or difficulty – not that we go out to look for them, but that in the process of our lives, we run into people who need help. And it's always a surprise and it seems to be always inconvenient.

Let's look at Matthew 6:30 now. He said:

Matthew 6:30-34 – *But if God so clothes the grass of the field, which today is alive and tomorrow is thrown into the oven – the weeds get burned up – will he not much more clothe you, O you of little faith? So, this is a faith issue. Therefore do not be anxious, saying, 'What shall we eat?' or 'What shall we drink?' or 'What shall we wear?' For the Gentiles seek after all these things – in today's language, that would mean all the people who are atheists and not converted, who don't believe in God. They worry about that stuff, because they're all on their own – and your heavenly Father knows that you need them all. But seek first – there are two things here – the kingdom of God and his righteousness – so, love God and love your brother. And the way we love God is to seek His righteousness, which is loving your brother – and all these things will be added to you. Okay, that's a promise. That's right out of Jesus' mouth. God's not going to let you starve if you are fully committed to Him. "Therefore do not be anxious about tomorrow, for tomorrow will be anxious for itself. Sufficient for the day is its own trouble.*

So, yes, we are to make long-term plans, as we live through them each day. We take it one day at a time. That's the best way to work a plan anyway. So, this is the challenge Jesus lays out to us. Will we believe it or not? Will we do it or not? Humanly, this is extremely difficult, because we *don't* have faith, but with God, it's possible.

Let's look in John 14, verse 15 – this is toward the end of Jesus' physical life. He said:

John 14:15-21 – *"If you love me, you will keep my commandments." Oh! People like to forget about that one. And I will ask the Father, and he will give you another Helper, to be with you*

forever, even the Spirit of truth, whom the world cannot receive, because it neither sees him nor knows him. So, in another place, He says that the Holy Spirit is the Father and the Son coming to live in us. So, I like to think about it that way. So He says: ... *even the Spirit of truth, whom the world cannot receive, because it neither sees him nor knows him. You know him, for he dwells with you and will be in you. "I will not leave you as orphans; I will come to you."* So, He's getting ready to leave to go into God's Kingdom and be the head of the church from there. But He's saying, "I'm not going to leave you adrift. I'll come back." *Yet a little while and the world will see me no more, but you will see me. Because I live, you also will live.* So, I think He's talking about two things here. In this life, both the Father and the Son will live in us to help us accomplish what He wants for us. And then here comes the next part, in verse 20: *In that day – what day is that? Well, that's the day when we're resurrected – the last day – you will know that I am in my Father, and you in me, and I in you.* So, "I've told you all of this is going to happen, but you won't really get it until it happens. And then you'll understand how it works and what it means." The Holy Spirit is a mystery, in a way. *Whoever has my commandments and keeps them, he it is who loves me. And he who loves me will be loved by my Father, and I will love him and manifest myself to him* – in that day.

So, once you're born immortal in God's Kingdom, only then will you understand completely the new way that you are to be a part of the Father and the Son. I think He's say, "Remember, I said this, because it's coming! You can bank on it!

So, what can we make of all this? Well, if we love our neighbor – the second half of the Ten Commandments and the second major element of God's character and nature – then we're also loving God. "If you love Me, keep My commandments." We are to love others because we love God. And, if we love God, He's going to come and dwell with us *now*. And that's what makes this kind of commitment that's impossible for us to live out – loving our neighbor – this kind of commitment God wants to make it possible for us. He will! He'll come live in us and help us to follow that commandment. We don't have to do it all by ourselves. That's why this message is called the gospel, which means good news. It's Christ coming to save us from our sins and to help us obey Him.

But there is so much more to learn about loving our neighbor – deeper things, like what should we do *now*, and *how* do we do it in today's world? Well, next time, we're going to look at what God is doing with us and why, and why an all-out effort is committed from us – why He wants that. So, don't miss it.

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So, this is Bill Jacobs for LifeResource Ministries, serving children, families and the Church of God. We are a youth advocacy ministry.

One of the reasons we made this presentation is to strengthen you in the faith – not just for yourself, but so you can help *all* your congregation's children, who are a vital part of your spiritual family. Remember, as an adult member of a congregation of God's church, you are responsible to help promote peace, safety and inclusiveness of all the children there.

And, on a closing note, we're so thankful to everyone who has contributed into this ministry. We asked God, initially, to support us by laying it on the minds of those who find value to support this ministry, and it seems that He has been doing that all these years. We started in 2004. And, as a result, when a person contributes, we take it as a compliment of our work. I don't mean that compliments are what we're striving for or our goal. What we want most is to help Christians draw closer to God, because all the solutions to all our problems are found in Him. When people find our material helpful, it's satisfying to us in a profound way. So, thank you all for your generous support – both financial and spiritual!