

FIVE FORKS BRETHREN IN CHRIST CHURCH
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SERIES: On the Road With Jesus

SERMON: Loving Like Jesus

Scripture: Luke 10:25-37

Date: August 8th, 2021

(Acknowledgement to Tim Keller for his series of Sermons on "The Meaning of Jesus.")

Good morning! Our Scripture text for this morning is a passage that some of you have read many, many times, and I just want to encourage you to listen carefully and see if there is anything new that stands out to you. It's found in Luke's gospel, chapter 10, verses 25 through 37.

Luke 10:25-37 – On one occasion an expert in the law stood up to test Jesus.

"Teacher," he asked, "what must I do to inherit eternal life?"

"What is written in the Law?" he replied. "How do you read it?"

He answered, "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, 'Love your neighbor as yourself.'"

"You have answered correctly," Jesus replied. "Do this and you will live."

But he wanted to justify himself, so he asked Jesus, "And who is my neighbor?"

In reply Jesus said: "A man was going down from Jerusalem to Jericho, when he was attacked by robbers. They stripped him of his clothes, beat him and went away, leaving him half dead. A priest happened to be going down the same road, and when he saw the man, he passed by on the other side. So too, a Levite, when he came to the place and saw him, passed by on the other side. But a Samaritan, as he traveled, came where the man was; and when he saw him, he took pity on him. He went to him and bandaged his wounds, pouring on oil and wine. Then he put the man on his own donkey, brought him to an inn and took care of him. The next day

he took out two denarii and gave them to the innkeeper. ‘Look after him,’ he said, ‘and when I return, I will reimburse you for any extra expense you may have.’

“Which of these three do you think was a neighbor to the man who fell into the hands of robbers?”

The expert in the law replied, “The one who had mercy on him.”

Jesus told him, “Go and do likewise.”

Our sermon series is called **On the Road With Jesus**. It’s a series about **Discipleship**...Jesus on the road to Jerusalem, all along the way teaching us **what it looks like to follow Him**.

I shared last week how the Church Board has been talking a lot about discipleship these past few months, and we know that as a church, we have our work cut out for us. We know that Jesus is life-giving, and we say how can we be better when it comes to letting people know what Jesus has to offer.

In spite of what we know, the reality is that we’re living in a time where the church doesn’t have the greatest reputation. Every time I turn around it seems I’m reading about sexual misconduct on the part of pastors, worship leaders...I’m reading about this denomination and that denomination gathering to work through some of the challenging issues of the day, and rather than doing it thoughtfully and respectfully, there is bullying and harsh rhetoric....and then the church as a whole – with people watching to see if we really believe we have something real to offer – they see us speaking and acting in ways that stand in contrast to the very values we profess to hold.

That’s why I say that when it comes to discipleship, we have our work cut out for us. Here at Five Forks we want to be a church that lives by the values that Jesus holds up as good and right. Humility, kindness, gentleness, self-control...and you can think of many more.

It’s important then for our congregation to talk about Discipleship and what it really looks like to follow Jesus. In the midst of some of our ongoing discussion, I remember someone

suggesting that our best hope for getting people to listen to us and to give weight to what we have to offer, is by putting into practice what they referred to as “**Extravagant Love.**”

Putting into practice extravagant love for others will stand in sharp contrast to the sexual misconduct and the bullying and the social media posts that bash those who don't believe what the poster believes.

And this thought that extravagant love is the key is bolstered by a passage that we have zeroed in on, it's found in John's gospel, where Jesus tells His disciples...

John 13:34-35 “A new command I give you: Love one another. As I have loved you, so you must love one another. By this all men will know that you are my disciples, if you love one another.”

Now it's easy to focus on those three words, **Love one another** ...because here are three sentences, and those three words can be found in each sentence. But what you *don't* want to miss are two other very important things that Jesus says.

The first thing is where Jesus tells us how we are to love one another: “In the same way as I have loved you.” Unconditionally. Extravagantly. This is how Jesus is calling you and I to love.

And the second thing is where Jesus says, “Extravagant love...loving others as I have loved you...this is how your kids, your grandkids, anyone and everyone who is watching will know that you are one of my disciples.”

If discipleship is going to become important to us...if we really do believe we have something to offer, it will only ring true if you are loving others as Jesus loves you...extravagantly.

This morning's message is titled **Loving like Jesus**, and just like last week, we'll start by looking making sure we understand **What's Happening** in this passage...take a closer look

at **What We Don't Want to Miss**...and consider what Jesus would say is **The Next Step** that each of needs to take in order to respond to His teaching.

So first,...

1. WHAT'S HAPPENING

We know we're in the third and final year of Jesus' ministry and that opposition against Him is growing among the religious establishment. He shows little regard for their traditions, and so how could this man be from God?

We know that Jesus has set out on the road from Galilee (**map**) which is up north, headed to Jerusalem down south, where the Cross awaits. And we're joining Him and His disciples on this journey because we want in on this too....we want to know what it looks like to follow Him.

It's also important to know that this journey to Jerusalem is not a straight shot, because there are times when Jesus appears to do some backtracking along the way. It would be like all of us setting out for downtown Waynesboro, but first going over to Quincy, then Mont Alto, up to South Mountain, down to Rouzerville, back to Quincy, and eventually into Waynesboro. You see, He's not killing time...but there *is* a definite time that Jesus is planning to arrive in Jerusalem...what time would that be?

The week of Passover, when Jews from all over will converge on Jerusalem for this annual celebration of God delivering the Jews from slavery in Egypt.

And while we are not told exactly where Jesus is on the road when we come to this particular passage, we do know that He engages with a man who is described as **an expert in the law**. *On one occasion an expert in the law stood up to test Jesus. Luke 10:25*

He attempts to test Jesus, and this appears to have been a common approach among those who opposed Him, I imagine with the hopes of exposing Jesus as someone who does not respect the law of God.

The expert asks a simple question about what he must do in order to inherit eternal life, and Jesus throws it back to him: **“What is written in the Law?” “How do you read it?” (10:26).**

Jesus is fully aware that He is talking to a man who knows the law inside out, and Jesus is aware that there were hundreds of laws on the books. But Jesus isn't asking for that, He asking for a summary. *“How do you read it.”*

By this point in time, all those who were experts in the law would have known that a summary would consist of two key elements: **Love God and love others.** *“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, “Love your neighbor as yourself.” Luke 10:27*

And Jesus affirms the man, but the law expert isn't finished. Jesus affirms the fact that this man should love God and love his neighbor as himself, which leads to a follow up question on the part of the law expert: *“And who is my neighbor?”*

And Jesus says, *“Let me tell you a story”*...and proceeds to share what we now call **“The Parable of the Good Samaritan.”**

Then after telling this parable, Jesus has another question for the law expert, *“Who was a neighbor to the man left lying on the road?”* The law expert rightly recognized that it was the man who showed mercy, and our passage ends with Jesus telling the law expert to go and show mercy himself.

Are you familiar with this parable? Some of you might summarize it this way: *“Well, it's a story of a guy who gets beat up and is left lying on the road. One guy comes along who you would expect to help, except he doesn't. A second guy comes along who you would expect to help, and he doesn't. Then a third guy comes along who you would not expect to help, and he does.”*

And we wag a finger at the first two guys and talk about how nice it was of the last guy to help and say *“That’s a nice lesson...wouldn’t it be nice if everybody was like that third guy?”*

But I wonder how many of us have a follow up question for Jesus...something like, *“What is it that you want me to see here Jesus...what is it that you don’t want me to miss?”* And so let’s take a couple of minutes to talk about...

2. WHAT WE DON’T WANT TO MISS

When people look at this passage, it’s easy to go right to the parable and focus solely on that. But one thing we don’t want to miss is...

A. The First Part of the Exchange

Before we move on and look at Jesus’ teaching about extravagant love, look at verse 27 where Jesus and the law expert are talking about loving God with all of your **heart, soul, strength and mind**. *“Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your strength and with all your mind”... 10:27*

I imagine that there is no doubt in the mind of the law expert that He loves God. I imagine that He is committed to doing all that he can to show his love for God...reading, studying and memorizing the Torah (his Bible). At the synagogue whenever the doors are open. Praying and tithing and doing just about everything that one would expect when showing love for God.

Just about everything.

Because his follow up question may indicate that he’s feeling a bit uneasy about the second part...that is, God’s command to love others. Was it at this point that he moved from wanting to trap Jesus, to asking an honest question: *“Jesus, who or what do you mean when you use the word, neighbor?”*

I don't want us to miss this because it's something that many of us may be able to identify with. When it comes to loving God, gathering and worshipping Him together, giving Him praise and thanks for His many blessings, we know we're not perfect, but we are looking to show our love for God. He is worthy of our love.

Don't we feel a bit uneasy about this second part, God's command to love others? Because while I find God extremely lovable, I cannot say the same for those that Jesus calls my neighbor.

We'll come back and address this when we talk about the next steps that Jesus would have us to take, but before we do, another thing I don't want us to miss is the...

B. The Extravagant Love

...that Jesus teaches about in this parable. And He addresses the questions of "who?" and "how much?" When it comes to extravagant love, who receives it, and how much do they receive?

Let's talk first about who receives it. Just to recap the story, Jesus places a man on the road who was on his way from Jerusalem to Jericho...so the implication is that this man is a Jew. He gets beat up and is lying there half dead, when a priest comes along. We expect that Jesus will say that he immediately came to the aid of this man – he's a priest after all – but Jesus has the priest avoid him by moving over to the other side of the road.

The next man that Jesus has come along is Levite, and because they had a certain religious status we would expect Jesus would have this man come to the aid of his fellow Jew lying there...but Jesus has him do the same, avoid eye contact, walk over here. And the third guy is a Samaritan, and what Jesus does here is masterful. Because here on the road is a Jew, and here on the road is a Samaritan, representing two groups that literally despise each other. The Jews and Samaritans were bitter enemies, holding on to different beliefs.

And so here's Jesus, talking to a Jewish expert in the law, and He picks the most extreme example – a Samaritan – and inserts him into the story. And by doing so Jesus is teaching the law expert that extravagant love isn't limited to those who are like him and believe what he believes...but it's to be extended to those who are not like him and don't believe what he believes.

Jesus also addresses the question of how much love we are expected to display. Now in telling this story, Jesus has it take place on a stretch of road that everyone would know about. He didn't just say this assault happened on a road, He had it take place on the road that connects Jerusalem to Jericho.

Lots of hills, lots of caves, there was a pass on that road called "The pass of blood" because it was a particularly dangerous section where people would often get jumped and robbed.

So Jesus describes the man on the road as half dead, which means he's half alive...which means the attack may have just occurred. And so the priest and Levite know the robbers may still be around...need to keep moving.

When the Samaritan stops, he's risking everything, including his life. And yet Jesus has him tend to the man's physical needs, emotional needs and financial needs and gives us the answer when it comes to how much, and that answer is..."Whatever it takes."

Third thing we don't want to miss...

C. Where Jesus Places the Law Expert

I never picked up on this until I was listening to a podcast by Pastor Tim Keller, but it's interesting how Jesus goes about telling this parable.

Jesus could have said to the law expert, *"You are asking who is your neighbor. Let me tell you a story: A man just like you was walking from Jerusalem to Jericho, and he came*

along and found a Samaritan lying on the road who had been robbed and left for dead. And even though the man on the road was a Samaritan, a man - just like you - went over and tended to his needs. Go and do likewise. Don't be racist. Don't take into account how people look, dress or act."

That's the point isn't it? The law expert is asking Jesus, "Who is my neighbor?" And Jesus, using as extreme as an example as possible, let's the law expert know that it includes those he might despise.

Except...that's not how Jesus told the story. It's not a Samaritan lying there half dead on the road. It's a Jew, just like the law expert.

In other words, **instead of having the law expert see himself as one walking on the road, Jesus wants him to see himself as the one lying on the road.** In need of help. In need of mercy.

And so after telling the parable, Jesus doesn't ask the law expert, **~~"Now tell me, who is your neighbor?"~~**—He asks him, **"Which of these three was a neighbor..."**

And the law expert appears to get it, he doesn't answer by simply saying, "The Samaritan" or "The third guy to come along". He actually says, **"The one who had mercy on him."** (10:37)

Before the law expert can recognize and see that anyone and everyone is his neighbor and thus should be extended extravagant love...Jesus is wanting him to envision himself lying on the road, in need of help, in need of mercy, in need of grace.

And if the law expert can grasp the extravagant love that God has shown and continues to show to him, he will be better able to extend extravagant love to others.

Where Jesus places the law expert in the story is something we don't want to miss.

Okay, in light of what we have looked at this morning, what do you sense is...

3. THE NEXT STEP

...that Jesus is asking you to take? How do you apply this, how do you take what Jesus is teaching and put it into practice? How do you and I live as disciples?

Remember how the expert in the law talked about the need to love for God with heart, soul, strength and mind, and he appeared confident that he was doing this? Have you ever thought about what this might look like today?

What do *you* think it means to love God with all your heart, soul, strength and mind? One way may be to **Invite God into your moments of solitude.**

Tim Keller asked this question to those in his congregation: *“When you find yourself somewhere and you have nothing to do; nothing to read, nothing to listen to...**“When your mind is not forced to think of anything, where does it go?”***

Keller asks, *“Does it go to God, His attributes, His excellency, His beauty?”* *Because wherever your mind goes, that’s your real god, that’s your ultimate concern.”*

Let me say this...I find it extremely difficult to be sitting around with nothing to do and continually talk to God about His attributes and His excellency and His beauty. How many times and in how many different ways can I tell God that His is Almighty, All knowing, Ever Present, excellent and beautiful before it becomes rote...before it becomes “just words”?

Having said that, when my mind is not forced to think about anything, my mind will often go to something enjoyable...a pleasant conversation from earlier that day, something I’m looking forward to in the future...and I have far less difficulty bringing God into the picture and thinking about His goodness and excellence relates to whatever it is I’m thinking about...wherever my mind has gone.

It goes back to what I talked about last week...Jesus is not looking for opportunities to wag His finger at us...He is looking to assume His rightful place in the midst of our lives...the things we enjoy, the things our hearts and minds are set on.

An awareness of His presence helps us to think and live in such a way that is consistent with His teaching...and will help us be grateful for and appreciate the good things that life has to offer.

And so the next step for some of us to love God with all our heart, soul, strength and mind by inviting Him into our moments of solitude.

Perhaps the next step of some of us is to **look for ways to extend extravagant love to others.**

And maybe the starting point is by recognizing any limits we've been placing on ourselves. Recall how Jesus – in getting the expert in the law to see how there were no limits when it came to “who”, used the extreme example of a Samaritan?

What is the extreme example that Jesus would be using in your case? Those with different religious views? Those with different political views? Those with different views when it comes to current issues of the day?

Invite Jesus to speak into your heart, be honest, be open...would it be those of a different race...or social class...political party...of a group that simply believes different than what you believe.

Remember, all along the road to Jerusalem Jesus is teaching what about discipleship, and what it looks like to follow Him. And so let's look for opportunities to extend extravagant love to anyone and everyone, including the most extreme example that you can think of, or the most extreme example that Jesus brings to mind.

Others are watching you...for some it's your sons and daughters, for some, it's your neighbors or those you work with. How will they know if you're a follower of Jesus? It's not because you go to church. It's because they see you loving others as Jesus loved you.

John 13:35a “By *this* all men will know that you are my disciples...”

Let me suggest something practical that you might want to consider doing. For years I have carried \$20 around in a compartment of my wallet. I don't carry hardly any cash in the main section, and so I always want to have at least \$20 if I would need a small amount of cash for a place that doesn't take credit cards for example.

A while back I started carrying around \$20 in another compartment in order to give to anyone that I come across where Jesus prompts me to help. And I would encourage every disciple of Jesus in here to do something similar...maybe a different amount, whatever works for you. And be ready when you come across someone who is hurting, or who looks like they're in need.

And if they ask you “*Why?*” you might say, “*The church I belong to...we want to follow Jesus' example and serve people in this community. I've done this for others, and today would like to do this for you. If you're interested, it's Five Forks, just north of Waynesboro, and you're more than welcome to join us.*”

For those of you who are still raising children, they're watching you, looking to see what you really believe. One day we're going to die, and our children will plan our service and may choose to talk about us during the service or privately when people come to pay their respects.

Whatever they say publicly, inside they will know who we were and what we were about. “*My dad, he was a pretty good dad, but you know, he did a lot of grouching, a lot of griping about people in this world.*”

Or they could say, *“You know, growing up, I remember times when Dad would come across somebody who looked they were hurting or in need, and he’d take out his wallet and pull out a \$20 and just hand it to the person and speak a word of encouragement to them. Didn’t matter their race, the way they were dressed, how clean they looked...and after giving it away, when he got home he’d put another \$20 in his wallet. Not sure how much Dad ended up giving away over the years, but he looked to extend love to others because of the love that Jesus extended to him. Some might say that many of those people didn’t deserve it...but Dad knew that he didn’t deserve what God had done for him.”*

The thing is, **who lives this way?** And the answer is, none of us, all the time. There are times when I struggle when it comes to “Who” and when it comes to “How much.”

And so if you’re like me, then your next step may be to **See Yourself Lying on the Road.**

We want to be careful that we don’t read the parable of the Good Samaritan and miss the most important point. Yes, it’s about extravagant love and not walking to the other side of the road. But Jesus knew that in order to get the expert in the law to be a good neighbor to those on the extreme opposite end of his belief system, He had to get the law expert lying half dead on the road and recognize his need of mercy and grace.

Jesus is approaching us the same way...He doesn’t want us to leave here thinking that this is only about showing extravagant love to others. It’s really hard to do on a consistent basis unless we are able to see ourselves lying on the road and realize that God came and picked us up, and began the process of healing what is broken in our lives and restoring us back to health.

Because this is our experience, may each of us leave here this morning ready to respond to Jesus’s instruction to...

Luke 10:37b “Go and do likewise.”