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The Good Samaritan (Part 1)



The Life and Teachings of Christ - Steve Gregg

Steve Gregg explores the well-known parable of the Good Samaritan in Luke 10, highlighting the importance of measuring true goodness and the standard by which it should be measured. He also discusses the two great commandments of loving God and loving your neighbor as yourself, as well as the significance of adhering to the Ten Commandments. By using the rich young ruler and the lawyer as examples, Gregg shows how these teachings apply to all believers and how they can guide one's path towards salvation.

Transcript

Alright, in this session we're going to turn to Luke chapter 10 and look at the well-known parable of what we usually call the Good Samaritan. Jesus didn't call it the Good Samaritan. He didn't even call the Samaritan good.

He just said a certain Samaritan. Obviously, the things that the Samaritan did were good things, and for that reason, he is called the Good Samaritan. Though some have pointed out that there is nothing particularly good, that is, exceptionally good about what he did.

He just did what anyone ought to do in a situation. I guess any good person would. The reason the Samaritan seems good is because of the contrast in the story between him and two other parties who had passed by a man in need without giving assistance.

I would say they were particularly bad people, and the Good Samaritan was a decent fellow. But, you know, I guess when we talk about people being good, we're always speaking relatively. In one sense, Jesus said there's none good but God only.

Yet, the Bible does use the word good to speak of certain people. In the book of Acts, it says of Barnabas that he was a good man, and he encouraged the people and so forth. I have no doubt that there are appropriate uses of the word good when affixed to people, when they do a good thing, or when they're good in comparison to somebody else who's worse than they are.

Certainly, nobody is good in the sense that God is good. Nobody is completely righteous.

But, it is possible, and not only possible, but incumbent on Christians to be as much like God as possible, as Ephesians 5.1 says, as dear children, be imitators of God.

And, to the degree that we do what God would do, or we do what God has commanded us to do, we're doing a good thing. We're doing the right thing. And, if that is so, then if we do such things consistently, I guess there's nothing wrong with our being described as good people, so long as that is understood to be a relative term, and not an absolute term.

As soon as a man begins to think of himself as a good person, he is distancing himself from true goodness in actuality, because he's starting to lose sight of the standard by which he ought to be measuring. We're going to begin at verse 25 in Luke 10. It says, And behold, a certain lawyer stood up and tested him, saying, Teacher, what shall I do to inherit eternal life? He said to him, What is written in the law? What is your reading of it? Now, this man is a lawyer, and it says that he asked this question, testing Jesus.

It resembles very much another passage in Matthew, which is undoubtedly a different lawyer on a different occasion, it would seem. At least the setting in the book of Matthew is much later than the setting in the book of Luke, and there are certain things that are different about it. But in Matthew 22, verse 34, it says, But when the Pharisees heard that he had silenced the Sadducees, they gathered together, then one of them, a lawyer, asked him a question, testing him, saying, Teacher, what is the great commandment in the law? Now, there are several similarities between the passage in Matthew and the one in Luke.

In both, for example, it is a lawyer who asks the question. In both, we're specifically told that he asked a question testing Jesus. And in both cases, the two great commandments, to love the Lord your God with all your heart, mind, soul, and strength, and the command to love your neighbor as yourself, come up as the central issue in the passages.

There are differences, however. In Matthew, the lawyer simply says, What is the great commandment of the law? And it is Jesus who cites the two great commandments and says, On these hang all the law and the prophets. In the story before us, however, the question is not what is the great commandment of the law, but what shall I do to inherit eternal life? And Jesus allows the man to answer his own question.

Rather than Jesus giving those two commands, Jesus said to him, What is written in the law? What is your reading of it? And in verse 27, the lawyer answered and said, You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, with all your soul, with all your strength, with all your mind, and you shall love your neighbor as yourself. And Jesus said to him, You have answered rightly. Do this and you will live.

Now, I've always considered it striking that this lawyer would give the same answer that

Jesus on another occasion gave. Now, if Matthew's chronology is to be seen as the correct chronology, and remember, we don't know for sure in any case which gospel is giving the right chronology since none of them really professes to be giving a chronology, but if Matthew has positioned the discussion with the lawyer where Jesus brought up these commandments in the proper place and it's actually in the final week, the Passion Week, whereas this story is related considerably earlier, it's interesting that this man would have that answer prior to Jesus having given the same answer. Jesus later would give the same answer himself.

Now, of course, we have no suspicion at all that Jesus got his information from this encounter. That is, Jesus said, Hey, that's a good idea. That sounds good to me.

When they asked me, I'll say the same thing. It would be more likely that the lawyer would have gotten it from Jesus because Jesus is simply more original than any of the lawyers or the scribes were, and we would expect Jesus to have that insight, and the lawyer would perhaps, if he had heard Jesus say such a thing, would say, Yeah, that's right, because actually in the story in Matthew, there is a parallel in Mark, and in Mark, after Jesus says, You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, soul, mind, and strength, and love your neighbor as yourself, the lawyer then, in Mark's gospel, says, Well said, Master. This is true.

To love God with all your heart, mind, and soul, and to love your neighbor as yourself is more than all burnt offerings and sacrifices. So the lawyer, in that story, which is recorded in Matthew and Mark, acknowledged that Jesus had really given a surprisingly insightful answer, which the lawyer himself had to commend. He said, Yeah, that's right.

Now, if all that had happened before this, then either this lawyer, if he were the same one, or another one who had heard that conversation, might be inclined to say, Yeah, this is the right answer. Here's the great commandment. But it doesn't seem likely that that is the case, just because the chronology is so different in Luke.

Now, Luke does, and Matthew does too, at times shuffle things around into different order, and there is a remote possibility, I would not call it a likelihood, that this story of this interaction between Jesus and this lawyer took place after the other story recorded in Matthew and Mark, but that would place it quite late, unless Matthew and Mark are quite off chronologically in placing it as late as they do. I would just say that if this man gave this answer without having been informed by Jesus' statement, if Jesus had not made this statement prior, then it's remarkable, a tremendous coincidence that this man would give the same answer Jesus would give. The reason it's remarkable, of course, is because the answer comes from two passages of Scripture.

One, Deuteronomy chapter 6, You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, with all your soul, with all your strength. That one is from Deuteronomy 6.5, and the other one, You shall love your neighbors yourself, is from an entirely different book, from

Leviticus 19.18. And while both of them are very significant statements, they are, in a sense, in their original context, they're lost in chapters that have a whole bunch of miscellaneous things in them, and would not be expected to stand out, just to commend themselves. If someone says, well, what's the summary of the law? You would not expect someone to pull this obscure verse out of Deuteronomy, this obscure one, not that it was real obscure, I mean, I'm sure the Jews were quite familiar with Deuteronomy 6, that's where the Shemot, I mean, the Shemot, the, oh my gosh, never thought I'd forget the name of that, it'll come back to me at the time when I don't need it, the hero Israel, what's it called? Shemot, yeah, I almost said Shemot, yeah, the Shemot, that's right, that's why I got it mixed up, yeah, the Shemot, the hero Israel, the Lord, our God is one Lord, that comes from there, and then of course the next line is, and you shall love the Lord with all your heart, mind, soul, and strength.

So that was not an obscure scripture at all, but it was not in the Ten Commandments, for example. It's interesting, when we test our students every year on Exodus, after we've been through the book, one of the things we ask them to do is list the Ten Commandments, and I've always been surprised when reading their answers, how many of them put the first commandment, you shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, mind, soul, and strength. Now actually, of course, that isn't found in the Ten Commandments, but something like it is, you shall have no other gods before me, and you shall not make any graven images, but I guess these two get mixed up in the minds of people quite a bit.

They obviously have a similar meaning. But when Jesus said that was the first and great commandment, he didn't mean it was the first of the Ten Commandments. It was found in a lesser passage, I would say, lesser than that of Exodus 20, where we have the Ten Great Commandments.

Now the statement, you shall love your neighbors yourself, I would imagine in the Jewish mind would be considerably more obscure. At least the statement, you shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, mind, soul, and strength, is found in the Shema, which is repeated in every synagogue service now. I don't know whether it was in those days or not, but it is far from obscure now to the Jewish mind.

But the statement in Leviticus, in its context, is much more obscure. It's just mixed in with a chapter full of miscellaneous laws, and that it would stand out as almost equal to the Shema. You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, soul, mind, and strength.

I guess I would have to say perhaps some other rabbis came up with this, and it was commonly held that these two commandments were the great ones, even before Jesus ever said it. Now I would, I'm inclined to see that as a possibility. Though I say Jesus was more original than the rabbis, that doesn't mean that he never agreed with anything

they had thought of before.

In fact, when he spoke about divorce, in Matthew 19, when the Pharisees said, is it lawful to divorce your wife for every cause, and Jesus indicated that fornication or adultery is the only cause for legitimate divorce, he was siding with something one of the rabbis had taught before. There were two rabbi schools, one under a man named Shammai, and the other under a man named Hillel. And Hillel taught you could divorce your wife for any cause, and Shammai taught you could only divorce for the cause of adultery.

And when they asked, can a man divorce his wife for any cause, they were asking whether Jesus sided with Hillel or Shammai on that issue, or had another view of his own. And Jesus didn't come up with a third position, he just sided with Shammai. Why not? Shammai had it right.

If some rabbi got it right, why should Jesus have any qualms about agreeing with him? And so Jesus did agree with Shammai on the divorce issue, and for all I know, but I honestly don't know, and I'm not sure if any scholar does, because no commentary I've ever read has ever indicated this. And by the way, commentators are pretty familiar with the rabbinic teachings in most cases, and would have brought this out. So I guess there's no record in the Talmud of any rabbi having come up with these two commandments, the one from Deuteronomy and the one from Leviticus, and putting them together to say this is it, this is the whole thing right here.

But just because it's not in the Talmud doesn't mean that no one had ever said that before. If no rabbi had said that before, then this scribe, this lawyer coming up with it on his own, would put him way ahead in terms of enlightenment, of even the greatest rabbis whose teachings have been left behind. So it is possible that some rabbi, before Jesus even, had come up with the binding of those two commands together and said this is the core of it all.

And that this lawyer and other lawyers of that time were familiar with that and agreed with it, though maybe didn't apply it very consistently, and had that view before even Jesus said it. There's also the possibility, though, that Jesus had said it more than once in his ministry, and that this lawyer had heard Jesus say it or heard that Jesus had said such a thing in some conversation. It's just the kind of thing that I would expect Jesus to say more than once.

You know, I mean, when it gets down to the real issues of Jesus' teaching, it seems like if Jesus would repeat anything, that's what you would expect him to repeat. Because he's talking about the law all the time, and what is and what is not important in the law as far as God is concerned. And to link those two commands and say this is the core and the crux of the whole law, if Jesus said that only once, I'd be very surprised.

We only have record of him saying it once. But he may well have said it many times. He

may have said it many times on a record, and this lawyer may have been informed from having heard Jesus teach previously and realized he couldn't dispute that.

I mean, what Jesus said is the essence of it all. So I guess there are two options that are open to us, or three. One is that Jesus had said this earlier, and that's how this lawyer came up with exactly the same idea, that he was aware that Jesus had taught it.

Or else, some other rabbi originated the joining of those two commands as the summary of all the law. Or even this lawyer came up with it first, and Jesus agreed with him, and later voiced his agreement when asked on another occasion what was the great commandment of the law, that he went along with whatever rabbi had first come up with this idea. I think, not just because of my loyalty to Jesus and always wanting to make him seem like the bright one, but I think it's more likely of those two options that Jesus had said it previously, and that this man's getting the same idea probably traces back to Jesus having said it some other time.

And my reason for choosing that of the options is because I think had there been some great rabbi who had said this before, that would be among the things that would still be preserved in the Talmud. Because what the Talmud is, is just the written record of what these rabbis of Jesus' time and before had said about almost every issue, and that's the kind of thing that would be important enough to record. And I don't think there is any record of anyone making that point.

Is the Shema part of the Talmud? The Shema is actually part of Deuteronomy. Yeah, it's actually in Deuteronomy 6, 4, and 5, which says, The word Shema means here. It's the first word in the statement.

S-H-E-M-A. There might be an H at the end, but I think not. Shema.

It's the Shema, the here. Here, O Israel, the Lord our God is one Lord, and thou shalt love the Lord your God with all your heart, with all your soul, and with all your strength. Okay? Well, anyway, I guess having played with this idea a little bit, I really don't know how this man came up with the same idea that Jesus later expressed.

I guess we don't have to know, but the man certainly gave a good answer. Now, you might think that because this man had such a good answer, he was a better than average Jew, a better than average lawyer. On another occasion, Jesus said, Woe unto you lawyers! Woe unto you scribes! In Pharisees, the scribes were generally the lawyers.

They were experts not in secular law, but in the Jewish law, in the Torah. And as we saw in Matthew, when we talked about how the lawyer asked Jesus, What's the great commandment? Jesus gave the same answer, and the man said, You're right, Rabbi, this is right. You got that right.

Jesus said to that lawyer, You are not far from the kingdom of God. I think in Mark's

gospel, it gives that response from Jesus. When the lawyer showed his approval of Jesus' answer, in Mark chapter 12, verses 32-34, Jesus told these two commandments here, And the scribe said to him, Well said, teacher.

You have spoken the truth, for there is one God, and there is no other God but He, and to love Him with all the heart, with all the understanding, with all the soul, with all the strength, and to love one's neighbor as oneself, is more than all the whole burnt offerings and sacrifices. In verse 34, this is Mark 12-34, So Jesus saw that he answered wisely, and said to him, You are not far from the kingdom of God. Now, Jesus seemed to indicate that this lawyer that asked him the question in Mark, and paralleled in Matthew 22, that man was, his heart was close, that he was teachable, that although he may not have come up with that answer Jesus gave himself, that when he heard it, he said, That's a good answer, I like that answer.

You know, that seems so right. The man was spiritually minded, he saw the difference in the value between ceremonial law, like whole burnt offerings and sacrifices on the one hand, and moral law, like loving God and loving your neighbor, and he was willing to accept Jesus' assessment of things. That put the man not far from the kingdom.

Now, this lawyer, in Luke chapter 10, who seemed to agree, at least in word, that these two commandments were the essence of what the law required, apparently with his heart, he didn't fully accept it. And that is why he then questioned further, and it's his second question that led to the story of the Good Samaritan that we're studying today. But before we get to that, let me just say this.

The man's original question to Jesus in verse 25 was, What shall I do to inherit eternal life? And we don't know exactly what kind of answer the man expected, but Jesus didn't give him an answer, but a question. Jesus said, well, what does the law say? You tell me. Now, Jesus seemed to imply, although we can't say that he actually said this, and maybe he didn't mean to imply it, but it looked like he was implying, well, what do you have to do to inherit eternal life? What's the law say? In other words, the law is a good guide of the answer to that question.

What you must do to have eternal life must be found in the law. And when the man did quote something from the law, Jesus said, that's right. You do that and you'll live.

In other words, you'll have eternal life. Now, it sounds as if Jesus is affirming that a person can be saved by keeping the law. There's another place where Jesus appears to affirm that.

Over in Matthew chapter 19, where another man asked him essentially the same question. Matthew 19, 16. Now, behold, one came and said to him, good teacher, what good thing shall I do that I may have eternal life? This is essentially the same question.

The lawyer in Luke 10 said, teacher, what shall I do to inherit eternal life? In Matthew 19, another man who we know to be the rich young ruler, he said, good teacher, what good thing shall I do that I may have eternal life? Actually, in Mark and Luke's parallels of that story of the rich young ruler, he used the word inherit eternal life, the same as the lawyer used in the story we're considering in Luke. In other words, the question is about the same. Now, in Matthew 19, Jesus' answer, after he said, why do you call me good? No one is good but one, that is God.

He then says, but if you want to enter into life, keep the commandments. And he said to him, which ones? And Jesus said, now it's interesting, Jesus didn't say, you shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, soul, mind, and strength, and love your neighbor as yourself, which would be the commandments that come up in the story of the good Samaritan and so forth here. Instead, Jesus says, well, you want to know which ones you have to keep to have eternal life? How about you shall not murder, you shall not commit adultery, you shall not steal, you shall not bear false witness, honor your father and your mother, and you shall love your neighbor as yourself.

Now, all of those laws that Jesus quoted are from the Ten Commandments, except the last one, you shall love your neighbor as yourself, which in a sense could be seen as a summary of those ones. And the young man said to him, all these things I have kept from my youth, what do I still lack? And Jesus said to him, if you want to be perfect, go and sell what you have, give to the poor, and you will have treasure in heaven, then come follow me. Now, the thing about both of these stories is we have Jewish guys, religious guys.

The rich young ruler was not some secular ruler of some faraway land. He was almost certainly the ruler of a synagogue, which is just a ruler, it's just a term like president, the one who presides at the meeting, the master of ceremonies. I mean, he's just, he's not really a king or anything like that.

He happened to be rich, but I don't know that one had to be rich to be a ruler of a synagogue. The point is, though, that he held a position in the synagogue and was therefore a religious Jew, as was the lawyer, the scribe, was a religious Jew. Both of these men asked the same question, what do I have to do to inherit eternal life? And Jesus gave them both the same answer, at least implied it, and that is keep the law.

What is the commandment you find in the law? Now, of course, the way that specific laws were brought up in each case is different, but when the rich young ruler said which ones, Jesus listed some of the laws right out of the Ten Commandments, and then, of course, summarized them with, and you shall love your neighbors yourself. In the case of the lawyer in Luke 10, the lawyer himself came up with the answer, you know, love God and love your neighbors yourself. Jesus agreed and said, do that and you will live.

Now, I think that we cannot deny that Jesus, on more than one occasion, therefore,

indicated that by keeping the law, this particular law, one could have eternal life. And for that reason, this made many evangelicals uncomfortable, because we evangelicals believe that you cannot be saved by works, but we're saved by faith alone. And works is some other religion than Christianity.

We're saved by grace through faith, not of works, lest any man should boast. And yet, Jesus seems to imply that these works are necessary for salvation, or even are a means of conferring it. You know, you want to have eternal life, do this and you'll have it.

Now, it is not necessary, however, to view Jesus' statements in such a way as to affirm that if a person just does enough good works, he can have eternal life. Or if Jesus did affirm it, he did not necessarily indicate that anyone would obtain eternal life that way. You know, it is possible to take Jesus at face value.

If you do this, you'll have eternal life. That is, if you always do it, if you always have done it, if you've never failed to do it, if any man on earth would always love his neighbor as himself, and love God with all his heart, if without any defect in these areas, a man would be able to perform, he would have eternal life. Problem is, you don't.

No one does, no one can. And even if you could start doing it now, it wouldn't make up for the times you didn't do it before. There just isn't a man on the earth except for Jesus who has ever kept these commandments.

And therefore, many have understood Jesus to be saying, in both of these places, not so much, here's how to get yourself saved, keep the law, but rather saying, the only way you could be saved under the law is to keep these commandments, which anyone could tell that they have not done. And therefore, salvation is not going to be found through the law. It's got to be found some other way.

Look with me over at Romans chapter 3. It says in Romans 3 and verse 20, Therefore by the deeds of the law, no flesh will be justified in his sight. For by the law is the knowledge of sin. Now the law is there to let us know what we've done wrong, to let us know that we are sinners.

If there was no law, we would be doing wrong things, but not be fully aware that they were wrong things. We would not be aware that any penalty was due us, because we would not know that there were laws against the things we were doing. The law therefore gives definition to what sin is.

And sin is another word for crimes against God. And a crime against God presumably incurs penalties, like any other crime against any other authority. And therefore, when I read the law of God, and I realize that if I would do all those things, I would not have to die.

If I would never sin, if I would always love my neighbor as myself, and always love God

with all my heart, mind, and strength, if I never was defective in any point in those matters, I would never have to die. But trouble is, I've already been defective in that in many cases, and I probably will have more to answer for in that area before my life is over than I have now. I'm not likely to live a perfect life now, from now on, and I know I haven't in the past, and therefore it's not very encouraging to me to know that if I do these things, I will live.

Jesus didn't say, if you start doing them, and if you do them 85% of the time, you will live. In fact, in the case of the rich young ruler, when he actually said, well, here's some of the stuff you've got to look into. You should not murder, you should not commit adultery, you should not steal, you should not bear false witness on your father and mother.

Those things, and Jesus could have picked laws that would be more convicting to the man. Initially, he was trying to lead the guy on a little bit, I think to hit him hard with the final point. That is, if the guy was already trusting in his own righteousness, to let him kind of go that direction a little ways, and then dump on him big time.

The man hadn't committed any murder. The man hadn't committed adultery. He was a religious Jew.

He hadn't done those things. Stealing, bearing false witness, probably he had not done those things. Now, we might say, but, according to Jesus, if you look at a woman, to lust after her, you commit adultery in your heart, and if you are angry at your brother without a cause, it's as bad as murder.

True, but I don't think that Jesus was implying or expecting that this man was acquainted with the Sermon on the Mount. I don't think that when Jesus said, you should not commit murder, he expected this man also to understand, and you know what I said earlier about anger. And when he said, you should not commit adultery, that he expected this man to be conversant with the Sermon on the Mount, which he said earlier about lust in the heart.

I think what he was doing is giving commandments that the man had indeed kept, purposefully, so that the man, in a sense, he could begin to feel like maybe he's got a claim on this deal. But the final point Jesus gave was, and you shall love your neighbors yourself. Now, this was the problem for both the rich young ruler and the lawyer.

That part, love your neighbors yourself. In the case of the rich young ruler, although Jesus said, and you shall love your neighbors yourself, and the man said, I've done that, I've done that from my childhood. He said, well, you lack one thing.

If you really want to be complete, if you want to be perfect in this, and now this is the important thing, you've got to be perfect at it to be saved. Now, you say you've done it,

but have you been perfectly obedient in this matter? That's the question, because you want to have eternal life, you've got to be perfect in all these things. And Jesus basically says, well, you know, you think you've done it, but I think you need to be aware of something, you haven't done it perfectly.

If you really perfectly love your neighbors yourself, you probably wouldn't have all that money when there's so many neighbors out there who don't have any money. If you will sell all that you have and give it to the poor and come follow me, then I'll believe that you love your neighbors yourself. Then you'll be perfect.

And the man, of course, didn't take him up on that. But the point here is, Jesus implies that if you kept the law, and if you did so perfectly, you could be saved. And even though the man thought momentarily that he had been perfect, because he hadn't outwardly committed murder, adultery, or theft, that issue of loving your neighbors yourself, he had not thought through very thoroughly.

And Jesus had to point out to him that his very opulence and affluence of lifestyle was an example of not loving his neighbors himself. When there's a neighbor who needs something and you've got more than you need, how can you call that loving your neighbors yourself? Now, this in itself, if the man had simply sold what he had and gave to the poor, and therefore really loved his neighbors himself and kept that whole law, even that, of course, would not have saved him. Because he hadn't done that all his life.

But Jesus said, you're going to have to do something else. In addition to sell what you haven't done before, you have to also come follow me. In other words, you have to become a Christian.

You have to become one of my disciples. Then you'll have treasures in heaven, and then you'll have eternal life. The point being, even if at this point he could perfectly love his neighbors himself, even to exhibit it by selling everything he had and giving it to the poor, and saying, wow, now I'm on the right track, now I love my neighbors myself, now I'm doing exactly what the law said, wouldn't change the fact that he still had a bunch of old sins to take care of.

I mean, what about all those years up until now that he didn't love his neighbors himself? You've got to answer for those. But he can take care of that by becoming a disciple of Jesus. By following Jesus, he can have all his sins forgiven, and that's where real salvation comes.

We have in the rich young ruler story the use of the law to show the man that he was a sinner, and that he needed to become a disciple of Jesus in order to be saved. But also the fact that he did need to learn to keep those laws. He did need to learn to keep the moral law of God and to love his neighbors himself, because being a follower of Jesus would require that.

There is in Jesus' teaching, to my mind, the perfect balance between grace and works, a balance which is not found very often in the teaching of Christians. And I'm not sure that it's as balanced in my own teaching as it is in his. But I think what's common enough in Christian circles is for there to be churches that are more legalistic than Jesus was, or more greasy grace oriented than Jesus was, where they think works are not important, or other churches think works are all important.

They diminish on the grace side and they're too much into the works, or they pendulum swing to the grace side and they diminish on the works. But the thing Jesus said is, you've got to be a follower of me. That's where grace comes from, by being a disciple of Jesus.

You shall know the truth and the truth will make you free from sin, Jesus said, if you become a disciple of mine, elsewhere in John 8. And so you've got the grace there, you've got the forgiveness, you've got the Christianity part, but you've also got the ethics part. Now, sell what you have and give to the poor. Really start loving your neighbors yourself, like you said you do.

And then come follow me. In other words, repent of not having been obedient in this area. And then the next step is follow me.

And of course you'll be expected to keep doing the right thing after that too. Now, we're not really studying the rich young ruler today, but there's such a similarity there between that and the case before us in Luke chapter 10, that I wanted to point it out, because both men ask how to obtain eternal life. Both men are told basically keep the law.

And in both cases, the law in particular that emphasis is laid upon is love your neighbor as yourself. In the case of the rich young ruler, selling his goods and giving to the poor would be the way to show that he did that. In the case of this present lawyer, it was also on that second command, love your neighbors yourself, that further elaboration had to be made.

Because the man said, well, who is my neighbor then? I'm supposed to love my neighbor, but who is that? Now, it says in verse 29, the man asked this second question because he wanted to justify himself. Now, this is what's so important to see. Justification is a very important New Testament doctrine, and Old Testament for that matter too.

To be justified means declared not guilty. Now, the man felt the need at this point to justify himself, to declare himself not guilty. And I believe that it is the craving of every human being, more than almost anything else, is to be justified.

Though not all want to be justified by God, not all even care about God, but they want to be justified to their own conscience, they want to be justified in the sight of men. I mean,

that's why no matter what kind of heinous crime a politician is caught in or someone's caught in, he's always going to try to say, well, there are extenuating circumstances, or I didn't really do it, or an aide of mine did, I didn't know he was doing it. I mean, there's always some way to justify himself saying, I'm not really guilty.

I mean, you will find some exceptions. And some people, you know, the weight of evidence is just so much because they admit their guilt and they step down in humiliation or whatever. But even in those cases, they certainly wish they could justify themselves.

Every man wants to be justified. There just seems to be some craving to be right, to be good, to be at least perceived as good and right. And there comes, of course, a point in some people's lives where they give up altogether on that and they just want to be known as bad.

I mean, they want to be known as something. And since they know they can't be known as good, they'll just make their name as a bad guy. But that's because there's no hope in their eyes anymore of being justified and being called good or righteous, so they now want to make a name some other way.

It's sort of like a kid who doesn't get enough attention when he's behaving, so he misbehaves because he wants attention. But still, what every child would prefer is the commendation of his parents. And everyone's saying, oh, what a good little boy, what a fine boy, what a talented boy, and so forth.

And everyone likes to be admired and commended. And, of course, what the Bible teaches us is there is no commendation due us. There is no praise due to us.

Jesus said in actually Luke 17, he said, so when you've done all the things that you're commanded to do, say, we are unprofitable servants, we've done only what was our duty to do. And that comes at the end of a parable. He tells about a servant who goes out and works all day in the field.

He comes in and works all night in the kitchen. Finally, after his master has been served and gone off to bed, he gets to scrounge around the kitchen and get something for himself. And Jesus says, that servant does not expect to be thanked.

He does not expect to be commended. That's what servants are expected to do. They get no thanks or commendation for it.

And so Jesus basically teaches us we don't expect to be commended. There's another place in Luke where justification comes up in an important context that's very, very characteristic of New Testament teaching itself. And that's in Luke 18, verse 9 and following.

Luke 18, 9 through 14, actually, says, Also he spoke this parable to some who trusted in themselves that they were righteous, and they despised others. They justified themselves, in other words. They trusted that they were righteous, but they didn't think other people were as righteous as they were.

I gave an example of a Pharisee who had such an attitude. He said, two men went up to the temple to pray. One a Pharisee, the other a tax collector.

The Pharisee stood and prayed thus with himself, God, I thank you that I'm not like other men, extortioners, unjust, adulterers, or even as this tax collector. I fast twice a week. I give tithes of all that I possess.

Now there's a man trying to justify himself, trying to be declared righteous. And the tax collector, standing afar off, we find he makes no effort to justify himself. It says, he would not so much as raise his eyes to heaven, but beat his breast saying, God, be merciful to me, a sinner.

He doesn't say, I'm a good guy. I'm one of the good guys, and I deserve to be seen as one of the good guys. He says, I'm a bad guy.

And I don't much like it. But that's all I am, and I'm not going to pretend to be something else. I'm a sinner, and I just need some mercy.

I just need forgiveness. And that man, Jesus said, I tell you, this man went down to his house justified, rather than the other. One man justified himself.

The other made no attempt to justify himself, but just cried out for mercy. And that man, who did not justify himself, ended up being justified by God. God declared that man righteous.

The other one, not. Okay, now back to Luke 10. The man, the lawyer who first came to Jesus, because lawyers always want to do, they always want to get a not guilty verdict.

That's what a lawyer is all about. And it's the lawyer himself who suddenly feels like he's on trial. Now the funny thing is, he came to put Jesus on trial.

He came to test Jesus. And suddenly, Jesus had him on trial, and he felt like he's the one who had to be acquitted. He's trying to justify himself now.

As a lawyer, he knows every weasley little way to do that too. He's a real slime ball. You see, Jesus got him to admit that the law requires him to love his neighbor as himself.

Well, no doubt, this man was not more loving than most, and fell short in this commandment, and felt a bit convicted when Jesus said, okay, that's a good law, do that and you'll live. Well, the man obviously wanted to live. The man wanted to be just in the sight of God and in his own sight.

But loving his neighbor as himself, if that's what I have to do to be just, then I'd better find some way, if I want to justify myself, I need to find some way to say that the behavior I've done up to this point has complied with the law. Otherwise, I'm not justified. I can say, hey, well, Jesus, I've really fallen short of this.

I really thought I was a good guy. Now I can see from what you say, I'm a wretched sinner. I just need to cry out to the mercy of God.

But the man didn't do that. Rather, he wanted to justify himself, like the Pharisee. And to do so, a lawyer has to get a not guilty verdict.

And to do that, he has to show that no law has been broken. Now the law, as he himself admitted, was love your neighbors as yourself. The question is, now, have you done that? And, of course, that depends.

Who is a neighbor? I mean, that law does state that the obligation is to love a person who somehow fits the label of my neighbor, what my neighbor is myself. Now, leave it up to a lawyer to look for loopholes. Well, who is a neighbor, technically? Technically, who is a neighbor? And actually, from what I understand, the rabbis had discussed on other occasions what constitutes a neighbor and what does not.

But all of their definitions were within the confines of Israel. The idea that being neighborly to Gentiles would be maybe a good thing to do had never occurred to any of the Jewish thinkers. I mean, one rabbi might think, well, a neighbor is a Jewish person who lives near you and therefore his circumstances are known to you and you have some obligation to him.

Another might say, well, no, the neighbor is a Jewish man who is friendly to you as opposed to an enemy. And some might have other definitions of what a neighbor is, but all of them would include Jewish. And the point of Jesus' parable, of course, flies in the face of that basic presupposition, as we find, and Jesus, of course, deliberately does so.

But what the man is doing is he's trying to put Jesus to the test, but now Jesus has him on trial and he has to be acquitted. He has to justify himself, he thinks. Of course, he didn't have to.

He could have admitted he was guilty. But like any lawyer, he's always looking for a loophole and saying, well, maybe I have obeyed this. Depends on what you call a neighbor.

After all, I've been pretty good to the guy next door to me. I've been reasonably good to people who are good to me. It just depends on how broadly this idea of neighbor is defined.

Of course, it is implied that there were some people that this man did not love. There

were some people that this man had not behaved in a neighborly way toward. I mean, like most people, virtually all of us have people that we have not been good to.

And this man is hardly expected to be an exception to that. So there were people in his life to whom he had not lived in a loving manner. The question is, did God consider those people to be his neighbors to whom he was obligated to love? If so, then he was a lawbreaker because he hadn't loved them.

But if they could somehow be, if the definition of neighbor could be narrowed to the point where these people out here that I haven't been good to aren't included as neighbors, these are somehow other, in some other category, then I'm justified. Then I'm free. So what he was hoping for here, I'm sure, is a most narrow definition of neighbor.

And he asked Jesus, who is my neighbor? Because he hoped that the definition might be sufficiently narrow to justify him and his behavior toward certain persons that he hoped might not be included under that designation. Then Jesus answered and said, verse 30, A certain man went down from Jerusalem to Jericho and fell among thieves, who stripped him of his clothing, wounded him, and departed, leaving him half dead. Now, the certain man, I think it goes without saying, was a Jew.

It's important, of course, because the man who helped him was a Samaritan, which is a surprising element in the story because Samaritans and Jews were not friendly toward each other. But since Jesus did not designate the race of the original man in the story, it goes without saying that he was a Jew. First of all, he's in Jewish territory.

If he was not a Jew, it'd be a significant enough point to mention. I mean, it could be a non-Jew, but the assumption would be he was a Jew. He was going down from Jerusalem to Jericho.

The distance from Jericho to Jerusalem is about 17 miles, and it's very mountainous terrain.