

## Luke 10:25 – 42

<sup>25</sup> And a lawyer stood up and put him to the test, saying, ‘Teacher, what shall I do to inherit eternal life?’ <sup>26</sup> And he said to him, ‘What is written in the Law? How does it read to you?’ <sup>27</sup> 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.’ <sup>28</sup> And he said to him, ‘You have answered correctly; do this and you will live.’ <sup>29</sup> But wishing to justify himself, he said to Jesus, ‘And who is my neighbor?’ <sup>30</sup> Jesus replied and said, ‘A man was going down from Jerusalem to Jericho, and fell among robbers, and they stripped him and beat him, and went away leaving him half dead. <sup>31</sup> And by chance a priest was going down on that road, and when he saw him, he passed by on the other side. <sup>32</sup> Likewise a Levite also, when he came to the place and saw him, passed by on the other side. <sup>33</sup> But a Samaritan, who was on a journey, came upon him; and when he saw him, he felt compassion, <sup>34</sup> and came to him and bandaged up his wounds, pouring oil and wine on them; and he put him on his own beast, and brought him to an inn and took care of him. <sup>35</sup> On the next day he took out two denarii and gave them to the innkeeper and said, ‘Take care of him; and whatever more you spend, when I return I will repay you.’ <sup>36</sup> Which of these three do you think proved to be a neighbor to the man who fell into the robbers’ hands?’ <sup>37</sup> And he said, ‘The one who showed mercy toward him.’ Then Jesus said to him, ‘Go and do the same.’ <sup>38</sup> Now as they were traveling along, he entered a village; and a woman named Martha welcomed him into her home. <sup>39</sup> She had a sister called Mary, who was seated at the Lord’s feet, listening to his word. <sup>40</sup> But Martha was distracted with all her preparations; and she came up to him and said, ‘Lord, do you not care that my sister has left me to do all the serving alone? Then tell her to help me.’ <sup>41</sup> But the Lord answered and said to her, ‘Martha, Martha, you are worried and bothered about so many things; <sup>42</sup> but only one thing is necessary, for Mary has chosen the good part, which shall not be taken away from her.’

### Historical and Cultural Background

*Life Within the Sinai Covenant:* The lawyer wants to talk about living *within* the Sinai covenant

- ‘*You shall love the LORD your God...and you will live*’ is the essence of the covenant God made with Israel. The phrase appears at the beginning (Dt.6:5), and at the end (Dt.30:6), but see below.
- ‘*You shall love your neighbor as yourself*’ could be heard as a command from within the Sinai covenant: <sup>19:16</sup> You shall not go about as a slanderer among your people, and you are not to act against the life of your neighbor; I am the LORD. <sup>17</sup> You shall not hate your fellow countryman in your heart; you may surely reprove your neighbor, but shall not incur sin because of him. <sup>18</sup> You shall not take vengeance, nor bear any grudge against the sons of your people, but **you shall love your neighbor as yourself**; I am the LORD. (Lev.19:16 – 18)
- <sup>18:4</sup> You are to perform My judgments and keep My statutes, to live in accord with them; I am the LORD your God. <sup>5</sup> So you shall keep My statutes and My judgments, by which a man may **live if he does them**; I am the LORD. (Lev.18:4 – 5; cf. Dt.6:1 – 5)

*Life Before and Beyond the Sinai Covenant:* Jesus challenges the lawyer to consider life *before and beyond* the Sinai covenant

- *Before the Sinai Covenant:* <sup>42:17</sup> So he put them all together in prison for three days. <sup>18</sup> Now Joseph said to them on the third day, ‘**Do this and live**, for I fear God: <sup>19</sup> if you are honest men, let one of your brothers be confined in your prison; but as for the rest of you, go, carry grain for the famine of your households, <sup>20</sup> and bring your youngest brother to me, so your words may be verified, and you will not die.’ And they did so. (Gen.42:17 – 20)

- *Beyond the Sinai Covenant:* God promised to grant Israel the life of the age to come, i.e. 'eternal life', by performing spiritual surgery on the Israelites after the exile: 'Moreover the LORD your God will circumcise your heart... to love the LORD your God with all your heart and with all your soul, **so that you may live.**'

*Samaritans: Heretics Outside the Sinai Covenant*

- The Jews viewed the Samaritans half-Jewish heretics, the result of Assyria's takeover of Northern Israel (led by the tribe of Joseph) in 721 BC. Samaritans rejected all the biblical books after Deuteronomy. They also rejected the Davidic king and Jerusalem as the center of worship. They had set up a site of worship on top of Mount Gerizim.
- Jews expected that the 'kingdom of God' brought about by the Messiah would be a blessing to Jews primarily. Samaritans and Gentiles, they thought, would be incorporated if they submit to Messiah but would otherwise be second-class citizens.

*The Good Samaritan Story*

- *The Jericho road:* This was a dangerous road, with bandits and robbers around; called 'the bloody road'; the road descended from Jerusalem, which is about 3000 feet above sea level, to Jericho, which is located 846 feet below sea level
- *Two denarii:* Two days' wages
- *Mary learning at Jesus' feet:* The standard picture of loving God was a man sitting at the feet of a rabbi, especially in the Jerusalem Temple, learning the Torah

## Questions

1. What does it mean to 'test' Jesus? Does Jesus test him back?
  - a. The lawyer thinks he can use Jesus to publicly stamp him with the good seal of approval.
  - b. The lawyer was part of the Pharisaic party. They believed that the Temple was corrupted, so they tried to maintain Temple-level purity even outside the Temple. This related to eating only with 'clean people' and not 'sinners,' ceremonial issues like not touching a dead body.
  - c. How does Jesus respond?
  - d. Where is the passage from? 'To live' with God and in the presence of God was generally understood to be 'to live in the promised land with God' (e.g. Dt.6:1 – 5). But otherwise, there are two main places!
    - i. One is within the Sinai covenant, at different places where God and Israel struck the covenant.
    - ii. The other is outside the Sinai covenant, and before it, in Genesis. It is when Joseph's true identity is hidden from his brothers, but he asks them to sacrifice for their youngest half-brother, Benjamin. Jesus' true identity is hidden from his opponents, but he asks them to sacrifice for their half-brothers, the Samaritans. In both cases, the issue is solidarity with brothers, even half-brothers. After Jesus tells the story of the good Samaritan, the lawyer would have to think about the 'do this and live' statement quite differently!
    - iii. The lawyer would have to consider that the covenant is being offered to him from a different relational location. It is being offered from the Samaritan and Gentile location! Not from the Jewish location.
2. Why does Jesus set up a priest and Levite as the foils?
  - a. At first, Jesus shares the lawyer's critique of the Temple and Jerusalem. It is indeed corrupt (the current priests weren't from the proper Levitical family). But Jesus also extends his critique to the lawyer and the Pharisaic party for their extension of ritual purity laws beyond the Temple.
  - b. The Levite was part of a tribe in Israel that was assigned to minister at the Temple in shifts. So both the priest and Levite were coming back from Jerusalem after working their shift.
  - c. Which way are the priest and Levite traveling? The priest was 'going down.' 'Down' probably refers to elevation. Jerusalem is higher elevation, and Jericho was below sea level. If they had been going towards Jerusalem, the inference is that they needed to stay ceremonially clean and it would be somewhat understandable (though very debatable) that they didn't want to touch a potentially dead body. Jesus makes it simple in his story. They are carrying their 'ceremonial cleanliness' attitude around with them even after they have served in the Temple. They don't need to do that. So that's how Jesus critiques the lawyer and the Pharisaic party as well.
3. What's interesting to you about the Samaritan?
  - a. Stopping in a place that was very dangerous; he jeopardized his own life on behalf of someone he didn't know
  - b. Action verbs he does: he saw, but unlike the priest and Levite, he responded to the man he saw; he then took pity on, bandaged, poured cleansing oil and wine, put the man on his donkey, brought him to an inn, took care of him, paid for expenses
  - c. Illus: Paul Farmer's *Haiti After the Quake*, story of the man who lost his sister, but stayed to help another woman he had just met in the hospital.
4. Why does Jesus tell the story about a Samaritan being a good neighbor to a Jew?
  - a. The Samaritans are being embraced by Jesus when he sent the seventy disciples out (Lk.10:1 – 24). They came back having reached people like the Samaritans. Jesus had prepared them not to 'call down fire' on them (Lk.9:51 – 54) or even want to do that. It's possible that the good Samaritan is a very recent follower of Jesus, who Jesus knows because of the mission of the seventy. Of course, it's more likely that the good Samaritan is a reflection of the kind of Samaritan Christian that will result from Jesus' ministry.
  - b. The Samaritan was regarded as outside the covenant. Samaritans worshiped not at Jerusalem but at the wrong mountain, Gerizim (cf. Jn.4:20 – 24). So for the Jewish lawyer to be willing to embrace a Samaritan as a 'brother' – even one who honors God even more than various Jewish leaders – is a huge expansion of the idea of the covenant.
  - c. The Jewish person had to not only admire the Samaritan, but want to join him in eternal life. Previously, he would have only heard the 'among your people' phrases in Leviticus 19. Jesus is pushing this guy to consider the Samaritans as being 'among your people.'

5. Where are there motifs from the Joseph story in Genesis?
  - a. Half brothers
  - b. The 'brother' gets beat up
  - c. The 'half brother' is the one to help
6. Do you think Jesus is referring to Leviticus (within the Sinai covenant) or Genesis (before it) when he says, 'Do this and live'?
7. How does the lawyer respond to the story of the Samaritan?
  - a. He doesn't name the Samaritan as a Samaritan, but only 'the one who had mercy.' Is it because he couldn't bear to say it?
  - b. Mercy is defined not as the Latin legal sense, of not giving a punishment that a person deserves. Mercy is defined in a positive Jewish sense, of giving help and compassion and love.
8. What is the tension between Martha and Mary about?
  - a. Martha being 'busy' with 'doing' while Mary is about 'being with Jesus'? Well, not exactly. This was in a home. Martha could have listened while she was preparing food and such. She probably was.
  - b. Martha had a goal that was different than Jesus. Yes, this is more accurate. Martha seemed to have a timetable that she was anxious to meet. Jesus didn't seem to have that timetable.
  - c. Martha was exercising big sisterly authority over Mary. She wanted Jesus to simply reinforce typical family authority structures and be a vehicle for family culture. Jesus refused. Jesus does not simply legitimate your authority or your culture's patterns of authority. Because he calls everyone to himself and calls everyone to learn about him, he interferes. 'Jesus is Lord' means that all other forms of authority must recognize that Jesus can interfere directly over another person or on their behalf.
9. How is Jesus redefining what it means to love neighbor and love God?