

## **Lawyers Looking for Loopholes in Love (Humanity's Incessant Lust for Hell)**

Luke 10:25–37

#19 in our series "Stories Jesus Told"

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### **Song**

"Don't you want somebody to love?" by Jefferson Airplane, sung by Vince Colbert and band.

When the truth is found  
To be lies  
And all the joy  
Within you dies

Don't you want somebody to love?  
Don't you need somebody to love?  
Wouldn't you love somebody to love?  
You better find somebody to love  
Love

When the garden flowers  
Baby, are dead, yes  
And your mind, your mind  
Is so full of red

Don't you want somebody to love?  
Don't you need somebody to love?  
Wouldn't you love somebody to love?  
You better find somebody to love

Your eyes, I say your eyes  
May look like his  
Yeah, but in your head, baby  
I'm afraid you don't know where it is

Don't you want somebody to love?  
Don't you need somebody to love?  
Wouldn't you love somebody to love?  
You better find somebody to love

Tears are running  
They're all running down your dress  
And your friends, baby  
They treat you like a guest

Don't you want somebody to love?  
Don't you need somebody to love?  
Wouldn't you love somebody to love?  
You better find somebody to love.

## Message

### UNICEF Commercial

[A woman's voice sings]

"Swing low . . ."



"Sweet chariot. . ."

[The words, "No child should have to look into the face of death" appear across a black screen.]

"Comin' for . . . To carry me home, . . ."

[The image of the little undernourished girl is shown again.]

(The little girl blinks and looks directly at the camera.)

"Swing low, . . ."

[The words "No parent should have to watch their child die" appear across the screen.]

"Sweet chariot, . . ."



"Comin' for . . ."

[The baby looks at the camera.]

"To carry me . . . home. . ."

Female Narrator: *Children are dying every day, from hunger, and sickness.*



Narrator: *Innocent children, just like this one.*



"Swing low..."

Narrator: *These children are facing death right now!*

"Sweet . . ."

UNICEF Commercial continued

Narrator: *But with your support...*



*and just \$.50 a day...*

*“Chariot . . .”*

*We can save them.*

*“Comin’ for to carry me home.”*

*Please, go online, or call this number and joined the US fund for UNICEF for only \$15 a month.*

I was walking on the treadmill last week watching CNN when this commercial interrupted me. The first time I changed the channel. The second time I watched it and thought, “Maybe I should give.” Jesus said, “*You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, soul, and mind. This is the great and first commandment and the second is like it. You shall love your neighbor as yourself.*” (Matthew 22:39)<sup>1</sup>

Saint Paul wrote, “*The whole law is fulfilled in one word, you shall love your neighbor as yourself*” (Galatians 5:14). So I thought, “Maybe I should give.”

And then I thought: “Yeah..but...”

Yeah but—that’s the United Nations Children’s Fund.

Can I really trust that organization?

(Some say it’s the beginning of the one world government ruled by the antichrist.)

Yeah but—what will they teach that kid?

He could be Muslim, and he could be radicalized.

Yeah but—we all must die . . .

And no one is “innocent” like the video suggests . . .

And how presumptive to think we could save anyone.

Is some African kid, of whom I know nothing about and have no relationship with, my neighbor?

Is that kid my neighbor??



<sup>1</sup> He’s quoting Deuteronomy 6:5 and Leviticus 19:18 - the commandment isn’t new.

<sup>2</sup> Literally, that means “*life of the age.*” The lawyer may have meant life without end, but I’m not sure he

Now I could give through organizations that would work to make that kid my neighbor and turn us into pen pals and stuff. But yeah... But would he truly be my neighbor? Some believe God will exile most of humanity to outer darkness—endlessly separated from the Kingdom of Heaven in hell - endlessly NOT my neighbor.

What you believe about this really makes a difference.

So the question is: Is that child my neighbor?

Maybe you were asking it just now, while the video was playing:

“Yeah. . . Love my neighbor, but is that kid my neighbor?”

It’s what I always ask during those commercials. And then I answer, “I don’t know.” Then I tell myself: “I need more knowledge—more knowledge of good and evil. That’s what I need.” And by then the news is back on, and I’m on my way to nowhere—walking on the treadmill.

### **Prayer**

Lord God, we need you to preach your Word, not a dead word, but the Living Word—“...living and active, sharper than any two-edged sword, piercing to the division of soul and spirit, of joints and marrow, and discerning the thoughts and intentions of the heart.” And would you Lord God help us to trust your Word—that He’s good? Amen.

### **Message Continued**

Luke 10:25

*And behold, a lawyer stood up to put him to the test, saying, “Teacher, what shall I do to inherit eternal life?”*

“A lawyer...” Now in that culture, people wouldn’t think: “*lawyer*” as you think: “*lawyer*.” They’d think, “*theologian*,” or “*pastor*,” not an expert in civil law, but rather an expert in the religious law—someone like me. Someone that can tell you what God requires—someone that can give you “*knowledge of good and evil*”—principles and values. Law is “*knowledge of good and evil*” that you can take and apply to your life to make yourself “*right*” or “*just*”. “Right” and “just” are the same word in Greek (*dikaios*). A lawyer stood up and put him to the test: *Ekpierazo* is the Greek word. It’s an interesting word. It only appears here and in one other instance in the Gospels. Jesus uses it when He quotes the Old Testament to the devil saying, “*You shall not tempt (ekpierazo) the Lord your God.*”

*A lawyer stood up to tempt him, saying, “Teacher, what shall I do to inherit eternal life?”<sup>2</sup>*

What is life?

You know biologists, scientists and philosophers debate that incessantly:

“Is a virus alive?”

“Is an advanced computer system alive?”

“Is the entire universe alive or dead?”

What is life????

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<sup>2</sup> Literally, that means “*life of the age*.” The lawyer may have meant life without end, but I’m not sure he knew what eternal life is—or what any life is for that matter.

The lawyer asks, “*What shall I do to inherit eternal life?*”

Well, technically, the only thing that anyone can “*do*” to “*inherit*” anything is...  
To *KILL* the one you hope to inherit from.

Jesus said, “*I am the life.*” And the lawyer asks, “*How do I inherit eternal life?*”

Luke 10: 25 – 26

And behold, a lawyer stood up to put into the test, saying, “Teacher what shall I do to inherit eternal life?” He said to him, “What is written in the law? How do you read it (*anaginosko*)?” *Genesco* means: “*to know.*” *Anaginosko* means something like “*come to know.*”

So Jesus asks, “How do you come to know about good and evil? And the lawyer quotes the law. The lawyer answered:

*Luke 10:27 – 28*

... “*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.*”

Think that through:

If we are to “*love the Lord*” with all we’ve got, and still “*love our neighbor*,” that implies that God is *IN* our neighbor, as if our neighbor is His Temple—or Body.

And if we are to “*love them as we love ourselves*,” maybe, even we are His Temple and Body.

Some people say, “You can’t love your neighbor until you learn to love yourself.” But Jesus didn’t say, “Love your neighbor as you *SHOULD* love yourself;” He said, “Love your neighbor as (*you DO love*) yourself.”

You may not love yourself well, but you love yourself. You may not love yourself with the truth, but you will love yourself with a sandwich. I mean if you’re really hungry, you’ll buy yourself a sandwich. If you’re cold you’ll put on a jacket. If you’re thirsty, you’ll give yourself a cup of cold water. So if you loved your neighbor as yourself, you’d be just as concerned that your neighbor had a sandwich, jacket, and drink as you. You’d love them as if they were your own body. You may not *like* your body, but you *love* your body. (You can test this idea by pinching someone next to you; they will defend their body!)

Likewise, you may hate the things you do, or have done, but you love yourself.

CS Lewis wrote,

I remember Christian teachers telling me long ago that I must...hate the sin but not the sinner. I used to think this a silly, straw-splitting distinction; how could you hate what a man did and not the man? But years later, it occurred to me that there was one man to

whom I had been doing this all my life— namely myself. However much I might dislike my own cowardice, or conceit, or greed I went on loving myself. There had never been the slightest difficulty about it. In fact the very reason why I hated the things was that I love the man” Just because I loved myself, I was sorry to find that I was the sort of man who did those things.”

Think about it:

It’s because you love yourself—that you hate your sin and try to fix yourself.

It’s because you love yourself, that you try to justify yourself, that means: “*make yourself right.*”

Well, if you “*loved your neighbor as yourself*” you’d desire your neighbor’s justification just as much as your own justification. You’d feel the pain and shame of their sin just as you feel the pain and shame of your own sin and you might pray, “*Father forgive them*” and mean it.

You’d feel their hunger in your own belly and you’d buy them a sandwich as quick as you’d buy your own. If you are buying a jacket at Walmart, and you considered the people standing in line to be “*your neighbors,*” you’d be just as concerned that they each had a jacket as you are that you have a jacket, and you would enjoy buying all of the jackets, just as you enjoy buying and wearing your own jacket.

If you “*love your neighbor as yourself*” you would feel the pain of their thirst, and you would experience the pleasure of cool water in their parched throats. You would love them as your own body. “*That’s the way Christ loves us,*” explains Paul in Ephesians 5. Then he writes, “*No one ever hated his own flesh but nourishes and cherishes it as Christ does the church.*” But maybe that’s the problem with my flesh. Not that it’s physical or enjoys pleasure, but that it only experiences its own pleasure - its own pain and pleasure.

I don’t know how true this is, but I once read that there are nerve endings for pain—but not pleasure. Pain can be localized, but pleasure is more complex; it is experienced when many things come together. So pain is a divided body and pleasure is a united body or bodies.

Well, my flesh doesn’t feel the pain or pleasure of any other person’s flesh. Well, except maybe my bride’s in the communion of the sacrament of the covenant of our marriage. There’s a moment in which my bride’s pleasure is my pleasure, and we are like one body and I don’t have to love—I get to love in my marriage, and sometimes with my kids.

When they were little, I used to take each of them on little dates.

Becky and Elizabeth really liked Table Mountain Inn. I’d take them, one at a time, for dessert. Becky would get so excited; her eyes would be huge with anticipation. And when the ice cream chocolate taco would arrive, I think maybe it tasted better in her mouth than mine! As she looked at me with those big eyes, I experienced her joy. Coleman always wanted to go to Loaf ‘n Jug for a hot dog. And the hot dog tasted better in his mouth than my own, as if he were my own flesh, as if I loved him like I love myself, as if I wanted to feed him—just like I want to and actually enjoy feeding myself.

So Jesus says to the lawyer, “*That is correct.*” “*You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart mind soul and strength and your neighbor as yourself.*”

Apart from a few precious moments with my wife and kids, I wonder if I ever do that? Does anyone ever do that? If you did that on a consistent basis, and considered more than three or four people your neighbor, you'd probably end up with only a jacket on your back and no place to lay your head. Have you ever heard of anyone that actually lived like that? Jesus says, "*Do this and you will live.*" That probably means, "Do this, and you will be living." Like life isn't the *reward* for love, but love *is* life.

And Jesus doesn't say, "eternal life" but just "life," as if any life is one thing loving another thing:  
One molecule cooperating with another molecule...  
One cell sacrificing for another cell...  
One member unified with another member—subject to one will in one body...  
One person in communion with another person is life.

Well, if all things were filled with love and God is love, maybe that would be "eternal life"—the life of the age to come—the age in which everyone loves and everyone is a neighbor and so there is no pain, and I will experience everyone's pleasure, even God's pleasure.

Jesus said, "I came that my joy might be in you." Now Jesus says, "Do this and live"—"Love and live." It's interesting that when Jesus quotes the law in Greek, He doesn't say, "You *SHOULD* love," but "You *SHALL* love." The verb is a simple future active indicative. So most literally translated, Jesus says: "You *WILL* love the Lord your God with all your heart, mind, soul and strength and your neighbor as yourself." "You will."

How do you read that?  
How do you know that?  
How do you take that?  
As a challenge? - A threat?  
Or a promise?

John 12:50 Jesus says, "The Father's commandment is eternal life." "The Word of God is eternal life." How do you know that? How do you come to know the Word of God? As a promise or threat?

Well, the lawyer obviously takes Jesus as a threat - so he quotes the law and Jesus says, "Correct. You will love your neighbor as yourself. Do this and live!"

Next verse,  
Luke 10:29

*But he, desiring to justify himself, said to Jesus, "And who is my neighbor?"*

"Yeah...but..."

"Yeah...love my neighbor, but...is an African kid, with whom I have no relationship, who might be an enemy, my neighbor?" said the lawyer trying to justify himself.

Is there anything you do, that's not done in an effort to justify yourself? That means "make yourself just, right, or good." Why do you wear the clothes you wear? Isn't it to make yourself look right? Why do you say the things you say? Isn't it to present yourself as right or just? Why do you do the things you do? Isn't it to make yourself good—to justify yourself?

Do you do anything apart from justifying yourself? If you do, you probably don't remember it because you lost yourself when you did it. You didn't have to make yourself do it; you just did it. You hugged your friend, smiled at your daughter, or kissed your wife just because you loved them, not because you were worried about yourself.

Love wasn't a threat but more like a gift so "the good" was a blessing and not a curse—a painful responsibility. Why do you go to church— to justify yourself or worship? Why do you read your Bible? How do you come to know the Word of God—The Revelation of the Good?

When WC Fields was old, sick, and near death, he was confined to a hospital bed. One day his wife, making an unexpected call on him, found him reading the Bible. She was shocked, for WC never seemed too interested in such things. "WC!" she said, "I can't believe you're reading the Bible...What's gotten into you?" He replied, "Looking for loopholes, my dear...looking for loopholes."

*"You will love your neighbor as yourself"* and the lawyer, desiring to justify himself said, *"Who's my neighbor?"* He's looking for loopholes. If your desire is to *"justify yourself,"* well then, your desire is to have very few neighbors because you know that you have to *"love your neighbor's as yourself."*

You've taken the fruit and now you know. "Who's my neighbor?" asks the lawyer. Maybe the answer is no one—but that doesn't sound like heaven, that sounds like hell.

Maybe the answer is everyone! So, is that a curse or a blessing? "Don't you want somebody to love? Don't you need somebody to love? Wouldn't you love somebody to love? " Well no! Not if you want to justify yourself. If you are trying to justify yourself, you want to have to love very few people and ultimately no So Jesus says to the lawyer, *"That is correct"* So Jesus says to the lawyer, *"That is correct"* people, because people can be rather challenging to love.

You know, I really don't know whether you should or shouldn't give your money to UNICEF or some other organization or person. I don't know if I should give to that kid on the screen. But the really terrifying thought is that maybe I don't want to. I think the really terrifying thought is that there is something in Peter Hiatt that doesn't want many neighbors and preferably no neighbors.

Peter looks up at the screen with a photo of this child on it.

He begins singing as if she were singing to him:



“It’s a beautiful day in this neighborhood, a beautiful day for a neighbor,  
Would you be mine? Could you be mine? Won’t you be my neighbor?  
I’ve always wanted to have a neighbor, just like you.  
I’ve always wanted to live in a neighborhood with you.  
Well, let’s make the most of this beautiful day.  
Since we’re together we might as well say,  
Would you be mine? Could you be mine? Won’t you be my neighbor?”

-This is the theme song from *Mr. Roger’s Neighborhood*

[Still looking at the photo of the child on the screen Peter shouts out the response below]

Well... NO! Because you see, I want to justify myself.  
So I hope you’re *NOT* my neighbor!  
And I hope Iraqis, Syrians, and Moslems are not my neighbor.  
I hope to hell my enemies are not my neighbor.  
I even hope my wife and kids aren’t my neighbor.  
I even hope I’m not my own neighbor  
Because if I got no neighbors, I’ve got no one I have to love.  
I’m utterly alone in outer darkness!

Do you see? That “I”–that “me” that psyche that looks for loopholes in love and lusts for hell, that self needs to die. Or maybe it’s already dead, and I just don’t know it.

The lawyer asked Jesus, “*Who’s my neighbor?*” And Jesus tells a story - don’t you hate that? (Moses and Mohammed will attempt to give you an answer and that’s why we like them so much.)

But Jesus tells a story as if some questions are already the wrong answer, like:

“Love muffin, how many minutes of romantic dialogue do you require in order to make whoopee? In order for you to do it with me?”  
“How much do I have to give: 10% (before or after taxes?)”  
“How often and how long do I have to pray to you, speak to you, Lord God in order to be saved?”  
“How much do I have to love to inherit eternal life?”  
“Who’s my neighbor?”

The lawyer wants a list. And we want a list. The law is a list and it’s not evil, but what we *DO* with it is evil. The law is a description of love. What will the lawyer do with it if he gets it?

He will use it to justify himself. He will tithe, and give alms, and hate God, his neighbor, and eventually himself. He will use love to save himself rather than lose himself for the sake of love and so find himself lost. In other words, he will crucify the Christ rather than *surrender* to the Christ. He will take knowledge of the good on the tree rather than receive the life of the good *given* on the tree.

The lawyer says, “Who is my neighbor?” And Jesus tells the story. It’s a very good story. It’s called the gospel. But if you are trying to justify yourself, you’ll butcher the story and turn it into law. The law will kill you-but don’t fear, that’s just part of the story. It’s a very good story.

“*Who is my neighbor?*” . . . And Jesus tells the finely crafted inverse parabolic ballad in seven stanzas, where everything hinges on the middle stanza-number four:

**Verse 30 (stanza #1)**

Jesus replied,  
Luke 10:30

*“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.”*

Jerusalem is the traditional site of the Garden of Eden and the Celestial City.  
Jericho is at the elevation of the Dead Sea— lowest point on earth— the Abyss.  
The man (the *Adam* in Hebrew) is descending from Jerusalem to Jericho.  
The Adam falls among robbers who stripped him. And now he’s half dead (he’s unconscious).

In that day, people were identified and justified with their clothing and their speech. This man cannot justify himself; he is literally naked humanity stripped of his fig leaves, unable to say a word, and unable to do a thing, unable to justify himself. Most likely, he’s a Jew, but we don’t know that. We have no relationship with him—kind of like that kid in the commercial from UNICEF.

**Verse 31 (stanza #2)**

Luke 10:31

*“Now by chance a priest (who would be riding) was going down that road, and when he saw him he passed by on the other side.”*

“*Neighbor*” can be translated “*near*,” but the priest doesn’t want to be near. And the listeners would consider him justified because according to the law, a priest was defiled if he touched the Gentile or came within four cubits of a corpse (ritual purification was humiliating, extremely costly, and took a week). He justifies himself, using the law, and so passes by on the other side.

**Verse 32 (stanza #3)**

Luke 10:32

*“So likewise a Levite, when he came to the place and saw him, passed by on the other side.”*

A Levite was like an assistant to the priest. He would’ve probably been walking. So he couldn’t have carried the man to safety, but he could’ve given first-aid. He likely would’ve known the priest passed by and he must have thought, “Yeah, I should love—but who am I to do what the priest didn’t do? And I too could be defiled, and the robbers must still be close. In fact, this man could be one of the robbers. So I don’t want to be near—I don’t want to be neighbors.” And so he justified himself and passed by on the other side.

The priest and the Levite both served in the temple in Jerusalem, and the listeners would expect the next character to be a Jewish layman coming from worship in the temple.

**Verse 33 (stanza #4)**

Luke 10:33

*“But a Samaritan...*

That would've come as a terrible shock to the listeners!

*“But a Samaritan, as he journeyed, came to where he was, and when he saw him, he had compassion.”*

*“With passion”- splagchnizomai*, from the Greek word, *splagchnon*, which means bowels or gut. It means, he literally felt this other man's suffering deep in his own guts—a Jew that had pity on a desperate Samaritan. But to hear about a Samaritan who had compassion on the naked, half dead, probably Jew would've just about stripped them of all pride and crucified their psyches.

Daily in the synagogues, Samaritans were publicly cursed. And the Jews would regularly pray that the Samaritans would not inherit eternal life but rather go to hell and stay there. And the sad irony is that they were brothers—like Jacob and Esau or Isaac and Ishmael. The Samaritans were descendants of the ten lost tribes of Israel and Syrians. Can you imagine not wanting them as neighbors?

**Verse 34 (stanza #5)**

Luke 10:34

*“He went to him (he chose to be near him) and bound up his wounds (the prophet said that God binds up our wounds), pouring on oil and wine.”*

Jesus uses language that makes it clear that the Samaritan does what the Levites did in the temple, *“pouring oil and wine.”* *“Oil and wine”* were sacrificial libations in the temple, as well as first aid— (the oil softened wounds and the wine cleansed wounds). So the sacrifice was Mercy at a temple of flesh. Jesus often quoted the prophet who said, *“I desire mercy, not sacrifice”* (Hosea 6:6). The Samaritan fulfills the law that the Levite did not fulfill.

**Verse 34b (stanza #5)**

Luke 10:34b

*“Then he set him on his own animal and brought him to an inn and took care of him.”*

The Samaritan does what the priest could've done and should've done. He not only gives first-aid, he brings the man to safety, and at great danger to himself. Samaritans, also believed that they would be ritually defiled by a corpse. Samaritans were in even more danger from robbers, in that part of the world than Jews. And for a Samaritan to ride into a Jewish town like Jericho with the naked, beaten unconscious, probably Jew on the back of his jackass...well, he might just get killed. But the Samaritan isn't concerned with justifying himself; He justifies— He makes right the naked, beaten, half dead *Adam* on the side of the road.

**Verse 35 (stanza #7)**

Luke 10:35

*“And the next day, he took out two denarii and gave them to the innkeeper, saying, ‘Take care of him, and whatever more you spend, I will repay you when I come back.’”*

The Samaritan is coming back. He will return again. And that’s the end.

That’s an “inverse parabolic ballad in seven stanzas” where everything hinges on that middle stanza—the arrival of the Samaritan.

Verse 36

Luke 10:36 Jesus says to the lawyer:

*“Which of these three, do you think, proved to be a neighbor to the man who fell among the robbers?”*

“Who proved to be a helper to the Adam, who fell . . . among the robbers, and maybe is a robber (that is: someone who takes the goods, rather than surrendering to the Good)? “Who is Adam’s helper? Adam?” “Who became a neighbor? Who proved to be the neighbor in those seven . . . stanzas?”

Luke 10:37

*[The lawyer] said, “The one who showed him mercy.” And Jesus said to him, “You go, and do likewise.”*

Wow! The lawyer was judging Jesus, and I think Jesus just judged the lawyer. . .

With this story and a question— “Who justified the Adam?” “Who proved to be his helper?” “Who became his neighbor?”

Now you may be thinking: “Wait a minute. What just happened? The lawyer asked, ‘Who’s my neighbor?’ Did Jesus ever answer his question?”

The lawyer asked, “*Who’s my neighbor?*”

And Jesus got him to confess, “The enemy—who came to the fallen, naked, half dead man— the one who showed the Adam mercy. That’s the neighbor.”

Well, is that the lawyer’s neighbor? If so, it kind of makes the lawyer into the fallen, naked, half dead man with one foot in the grave—that is Hades or Sheol— that is Hell.

Then Jesus says, “*Go and do likewise.*”

How can the lawyer “Go and do likewise?” How can you “Go and do likewise? That is, make yourself “*last and least*” and despised like a Samaritan, traveling from Jerusalem to Jericho having compassion on everyone you meet, loving them from the gut, feeling their pain and their sorrow as if their wounds were actually yours and then pouring out your oil and wine—your lifeblood and your spirit? Pleased to give your life for those that hate you—loving them as you love yourself not because you have to - but because you want to; not because you’re trying to make yourself good, but because you *are* good; not because you’re trying to justify yourself but

because you're justified in all your words and long to justify everyone else with your judgment because you're just and justifier.

Jesus says, "*Go and do likewise*" and then "*you'll be alive.*" The lawyer must realize, "I'm not alive-I'm dead. The priest is dead, the Levite is dead, all the robbers are dead and I'm dead. I don't need the priests and the Levites and more 'knowledge of the good'; I need the GOOD Samaritan. I can't make myself the Good Samaritan. I need to be saved by the Good Samaritan. But who is the Good Samaritan?" Jesus said, "*No one is good but God alone.*"

In John 8, the Jews, who had made themselves enemies of Jesus, say to Jesus, "*Are we right in saying that you are a Samaritan and you have a demon?*" And Jesus says, "Well, I don't have a demon..."

Karl Barth writes,

The good Samaritan...is not far from the lawyer...he stands before him incarnate, although hidden under the form of one, whom the lawyer believed he should hate, as the Jews hated the Samaritan.

So this is the judgment: "Will you allow yourself to be loved by your scapegoat – the one you hated in order to justify yourself?"

Every time you use love to save your psyche rather than lose your psyche for the sake of love, you take the Good (God in flesh) and nail Him to a tree. Jesus said, "*Whatever you do to the least of these my brothers, you do to me.*" And one day you will see Him and realize you have used the Good, crucified the Good, and made him your enemy. But behold: He has made *you* his neighbor. He loves you as He loves himself – his very own body and bride. When you see it, you'll be stripped of all your self-righteousness, your entire ego; you'll lose your psyche–your life. Jesus is the Good Samaritan and you yourself – the lawyer, are dead.

But Jesus still says, "*Go and do likewise.*" So should we try to "*Go and do likewise*"—even if we're dead? I think so. I think that's how we discover that we are dead. That's the purpose of the law. That's how I learn about the good and discover I'm *not* good. Then when I've realized that I'm not the Samaritan, I can finally meet the Samaritan. When I see that I can't justify myself, I can finally believe that I am justified. When I face my sin, I can begin to believe Grace. When I stop trying to take "the Good" I can finally be *known* by "the Good," and *know* the Good, not the dead good—the law, but the living incarnate Good!

Jesus said to the lawyer, "What is the law, what is the good? How do you read it—how do you come to know it?"

Well, you see: the fallen, naked, half dead man on the road from Jerusalem to Jericho didn't know the good because he took knowledge of "The Good;" he knew the good because "The Good" came, and knew him, and took him. Jesus says, "Go and do likewise."

We should "try" to "Go and do likewise" because that's how we discover that we are dead and He is alive. That's how we stop trying to *be* good and *become* good—because we *are* good—we're justified.

"*We love because He first loved us.*" 1 John 4:19

Last week, Karl preached an amazing sermon and asked the question: “Why can’t we receive love?” Well, isn’t this because we think we must earn love (that is, justify ourselves)? We think we must earn love – but love can’t be earned. Love is God and we are dead until we see Him. We “*love because He first loved us.*” We can only “*go and do likewise*” once we see that He’s come and done so wise. We cannot “*go and do likewise*” if we’re trying to justify ourselves. We can only “*go and do likewise*” when we believe we have been justified. Then we don’t *have* to love; we want to find somebody to love. We become the Body of the Good Samaritan. We experience life and begin to know His. Life is a neighborhood created by love. We stop waiting for neighbors; we *are* neighbor creators– the Body of the Samaritan.

The early church–Clement, Iraneaus, Origen–they all argued that the man (in Jesus’s story) was Adam, Jerusalem was Eden, Jericho was this fallen world, the robbers were Satan or men controlled by Satan, the priests and Levites were the law and prophets, the Samaritan was Jesus, and the inn is His body in this world, the church, the body of the neighbor creator.

Don’t ask, “Is he my neighbor?” Make him your neighbor with the love of the Samaritan.

Just before Jesus told the story to the lawyer in Luke 10, He thanked God that He’d hidden these things from the “wise and understanding (the knowledgeable) and revealed them to little children.” And that makes sense: Little children can’t justify themselves, and they often want somebody to love.

On a quiet street in the city, a little old man walked along...  
Then among the leaves near an orphans’ home a piece of paper caught his eye...  
It read,  
“Whoever finds this, I love you; whoever finds this, I need you.  
I ain’t even got no one to talk to. So, whoever finds this, I love you!”

The old man’s eyes searched the orphans’ home and came to rest upon a child...  
And the old man knew he had found a friend at last, so he waved to her and smiled...  
They spent the winter laughing at the rain...  
Talking through the fence and exchanging little gifts they had made for each other...

But then, on the first day of June, the little girl ran to the fence  
To show the old man a picture she drew, but he wasn’t there.  
And somehow the little girl knew he wasn’t coming back  
So she went to her room, took a crayon and paper  
And she wrote,  
“Whoever finds this, I love you; whoever finds this, I need you.  
I ain’t even got no one to talk to. So, whoever finds this, I love you!”

Maybe it’s more than just a little kid writing the note.  
Maybe it’s more than just an African kid looking out to those eyes on your TV?  
Maybe it’s the Good Samaritan, in the last and least of these, singing to you:  
“*Would you be mine? Could you be mine? Won’t you be my neighbor?*”

And maybe that’s not a curse, but a blessing.  
Maybe it’s an invitation to live His Life and know the Pleasure of God.

Through Isaiah, the Lord says to Israel:

*“Is not this the fast that I chose:  
...to share your bread with the hungry  
and bring the homeless poor into your house;  
when you see the naked, to cover him,  
and not to hide yourself from your own flesh?”* (Isaiah 58:6)

*“Your own flesh . . .”*

As if, in the words of St. Paul, “neighbors” are members one of another in one body.  
(Ephesians 4:25)

As if my neighbor is my *own* flesh and blood.

Greg O’Leary was walking down a dimly lit street, late one evening, when he heard muffled screams coming from behind a clump of bushes. He panicked when he realized that what he was hearing were the unmistakable sounds of a violent struggle. Only yards from where he stood, a woman was being attacked: *“Should I do something or keep walking?”* he asked himself. He was frightened for his own safety, and cursed himself for having suddenly decided to take a new route home that night: *“What if I become another statistic?”* he thought, *“Shouldn’t I just run to the nearest phone and call the police?”*

“No!” He writes, “I cannot turn my back on the fate of this unknown woman even if it meant risking my own life.” He writes, “I am not a brave man, nor am I athletic. I don’t know where I found the moral courage and physical strength – but...I ran behind the bushes and pulled the assailant off the woman. Grappling, we fell to the ground, where we wrestled for a few minutes until the attacker jumped up and escaped. Panting hard, I scrambled upright and approached the girl who was crouched behind a tree, sobbing.

In the darkness, I could barely see her outline, but I could certainly sense her trembling shock.” Not wanting to frighten her further, I at first spoke to her from a distance: “It’s okay,” I said soothingly, “The man ran away. You’re safe now.”

There was a long pause and then I heard her words, uttered in wonder, amazement: “Dad, is that you?” And then, from behind the tree, stepped my youngest daughter, Katherine.”

Maybe every person on the road from Jerusalem to Jericho is your neighbor.  
And every neighbor is your own flesh and blood (Even your enemies).  
And maybe one day you’ll see they are not a curse, but a blessing.  
And love is not a threat, but a promise –even a Covenant.

### **Communion**

On the night Jesus was betrayed, He took the bread and broke it saying, *“Take and eat. This is my body broken for you.”* And in the same manner, after supper, He took the cup saying, *“This is the covenant in my blood.”*

So, who proved to be your neighbor?

We come asking, “Who do I have to love?”

And the Samaritan comes and reveals, “*In this is love...See how I have loved you and will always love you?*”

Now... *Don't you want somebody to love?*  
*Don't you need somebody to love?*  
*Wouldn't you love somebody to love?*  
*You better find somebody to love.*

Come to the table and receive his love. Become the Body of the Samaritan.  
In Jesus' name, Amen.

### **Prayer**

Thank you Father for your Word incarnate, and loving us constantly! Amen.

### **Benediction**

Maybe you are thinking to yourself: “*Parts of that were really condemning. And there were parts that were strangely liberating.*” Yes. It was both. And that wasn't a one time kind of thing that happened at camp when you were in junior high; it's meant to happen everyday, when you stand before The Samaritan and begin to see your own sin—your own self. And when you see it, don't try to justify it; it's dead! Just look at it: It's dead and nailed to the cross with Jesus. Let it go. That's not you; it's dead. Confess it. That's what it means.

Then, if you happen to look back and you think: “Hey! Look at that! I loved somebody, from the heart, because I wanted to!” Don't be proud. That's the Spirit of The Samaritan in you!

So what is God always doing in this world over these seven stanzas—these seven days? Well, He's crucifying the old, dead lawyer, and He's giving birth to his Body, the Body of Christ—the Body of The Samaritan in this world. He is preparing you for a party that will never end—The Kingdom of Heaven where everybody is neighbors, and everybody loves one another as they love themselves!

That's pretty good news!!  
So believe the Gospel, and you'll live the gospel.

In Jesus' name, Amen.

*Disclaimer: This document is a draft and has not been edited by the author. Therefore, there may be discrepancies. Some discrepancies may be minor; some may have to do with theology. When in doubt, please refer to the audio version of the sermon on this website and don't be shy about informing us of errors.*