Title: Who is my neighbour?
Passage: Luke 10:29-37
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Series: Who is my Neighbour?

[slide]

[Prayer]

Read Luke 10:29-37

An expert in Biblical law asked Jesus a question
"What must I do to inherit eternal life?"
He wasn't just asking about how he could get to heaven.
He wanted to know what you need to do receive God's life, to live God's way, to be God's people.

No doubt it is Jesus' behaviour which prompts this question.
Jesus shows kindness to a broader set of people who are sinners, far from God.
This jars with the Lawyer's narrower view of how God's people ought to behave.

Jesus responds with a question "What is written in the Law"
There were standard ways of giving a summing up the Law. His own summary is the same as that which Jesus himself gives in Mark 12.29–31 and Matthew 22.37–40.

> 27 He answered, "'Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your strength and with all your mind'; and, 'Love your neighbor as yourself.'"

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

Of course this cannot be the end of the conversation.
Because The Lawyer disagrees with Jesus behaviour and if Jesus behaviour of showing kindness to sinners is right, then his behaviour is wrong

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

The Lawyer wants to limit the obligations because this will justify his behaviour
- These are people are neighbours, these people are not.

Who is my neighbour? Keep it to faithful Israelites, people like me.

In response Jesus tells this story of the Good Samaritan.

> A Jewish man was travelling through a mountainous remote area where he was robbed, beaten and left in the road half-dead.

Along came a priest, then a Levite - one of the temple workers who assisted the priests.
Both should have stopped to help, because the Jew was their brother in the faith and the law required them to help.
But they came to the man, saw him and passed by on the other side. Probably because this clearly was a dangerous road and they didn't want to share the same fate of the half-dead man.

Then along came a Samaritan.
Samaritans and Jews were the bitterest of enemies.
They hated each other for hundreds of years. The conflict was over who were the true inheritors of Israel, continued today in the battle between Palestine and Israel.
When the Samaritan came to the man and saw him, he was moved by compassion.
He braved the danger by stopping, provided aid,
Taking him to an Inn
Paying for his expenses until the man was fully recovered.

In this memorable story Jesus was answering more than the Lawyer's was asking for - what does it mean to love your neighbour?

Love here is clearly more than a warm feeling
He shows us a man who sees a person in need and loves by meeting his material, physical, economic needs
- He does this with courage - involved at risk to himself
- He does this sacrificially at significant cost to himself
- He does it generously with seemingly no expectation of repayment

Jesus refuses to limit how we love people who are in need

This man did what he could with what he had.
He didn't bring soldiers to capture the robbers, but he did let this man's circumstance interrupt his travel and business plans.
V33 "As he travelled"
V35 "when I return"

Jesus refuses to limit HOW we love people who are in need
And in contrast to the Lawyer
Jesus refuses to limit WHO we love as our neighbour

The Lawyer wants to be a neighbour only to those who deserve it - race, creed and lifestyle

Jesus will have none of that.
By showing a Samaritan helping a Jew, Jesus insists that anyone in need is your neighbour - regardless of race, politics, class, religion, lifestyle [slide]

Jesus could have told the parable like this

> A Samaritan was beaten up and left half dead on the road. Then a Jewish man came along the road. He saw him and had compassion on him and helped him.

It would have still communicated not limiting how we love people in need
It would have still communicated not limiting who we love as our neighbour

But by putting a man with no racial identity on the road Jesus asks the Lawyer to imagine himself as the victim, dying with no help unless this Samaritan stopped and helped.

How would you want the Samaritan to act?
Wouldn't you want him to be a neighbour to you

Jesus asks the lawyer his final question
36 "Which of these three do you think was a neighbor to the man who fell into the hands of robbers?"
37 The expert in the law replied, "The one who had mercy on him."

I don't think this expert has accepted the point yet
He couldn't name the man as a "Samaritan"
I doubt he would have called him a good Samaritan.
I think his need to justify himself means he chokes on Jesus' point.

This is part of the problem with people who want to justify themselves, they are so busy proving they are right, they are in control, they don't understand what it is like to be in a ditch desperate for help from any quarter.

By telling this parable this way, Jesus invites us to examine how we are to love our neighbour <u>as we love ourselves</u>. [slide]
In our love for our own lives, when we are in real, even desperate, need, we are glad for help from whomever it may come.
To really know this, it turns out theory is not enough – the Lawyer was an expert in theory.
This expert knew his law. He knew helping the poor and those in need was "one of the three chief duties of true religion".
But we are sinners and selfish. We are hard hearted and thick-headed.
We are like 2 out 3 people walking to Jericho. We see the need and pass by on the other side. And we should know better.

What moves us to show mercy?
When mercy has changed us. [slide]
When we have been humbled by our own deep need, and have received surprising, generous, open-handed help.
And it moves us to being merciful

The Lawyer struggles to see this, as good as this story is, I think Christians have better than the parable to help us.

> Timothy Keller, Generous Justice, p76
> But the law expert did not have the vantage point to see what we can see. According to the Bible, we are all like that man, dying in the road. Spiritually, we are "dead in trespasses and sins" (Ephesians 2: 5). But when Jesus came into our dangerous world, he came down our road. And though we had been his enemies, he was moved with compassion by our plight (Romans 5: 10). He came to us and saved us, not merely at the risk of his life, as in the case of the Samaritan, but at the cost of his life. On the cross he paid a debt we could never have paid ourselves. Jesus is the Great Samaritan to whom the Good Samaritan points. Before you can give this neighbor-love, you need to receive it. Only if you see that you have been saved graciously by someone who owes you the opposite will you go out into the world looking to help absolutely anyone in need. Once we receive this ultimate, radical neighbor-love through Jesus, we can start to be the neighbors that the Bible calls us to be.

If we don't know the Great Samaritan's love then we tell ourselves I am a good person, I do good things. I am in control. And when we are like this, we forget we are ourselves in need of a neighbour and we then fail to show mercy.
But when our helping others starts with God's mercy changing us. When we know how God through Jesus graciously, sacrificially, generously is my neighbour, how can I not do the same for another person in trouble?

When I see someone in need but they have a temper, an ungrateful spirit, and treat people poorly.
Or when I suspect they need help because of their poor choices or neglect or fault?
Should I help because they are undeserving?

- [how has God helped me…]

Or I feel I have nothing to spare, that it may cost me or cause some suffering…
Should I help?

- [how has God helped me…]

These challenging points and more come from Jonathan Edwards's sermon in January 1732 "The Duty of Christian Charity: Explained and Defended." (worth reading)
argues that helping those in need is one of the *highest duties* of the Christian. It is not a just a small duty, but a great duty.

Edwards teaches that 'Tis the most absolute and indispensable duty of a people of God to give bountifully and willingly for the supply of the wants of the needy. [slide]

According to Jesus this is critical to what makes for eternal life.

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to the man who fell into the hands of robbers?"
37 The expert in the law replied, "The one who had
mercy on him."

Do this and you will live
Not just you, your neighbour too

Response/Prayer/Care cards