

## The Good Samaritan Luke 10:25-37

Life is full of questions.

Some of those questions are **easy** and **trivial**. For example, would you like a free upgrade on your holiday accommodation?

Other questions are much more **important** and much more **complicated**. An example of one of those is found in verse 25.

### Read verse 25.

Notice the religious expert doesn't ask, what must I do to guarantee a place in heaven?

No, he says what must I do to inherit eternal life?

How do those two ideas hold together? **Doing** and **inheritance**.

**Inheritance** isn't about doing anything. Inheritance is the language of a family gift. It's something you are given because of who you are, not what you do.

If the word inheritance hadn't been used then we'd have a fairly straightforward question, what must I do to get eternal life? The answer is, nothing. You can't do anything to merit eternal life. It's a gift of salvation paid for by Jesus and received by faith.

And yet the question before us has **both words**. Do and inheritance. How can we make sense of them both?

This section of the Bible is not about earning our way to heaven but about how we can be sure we are heaven bound.

The Bible makes it very clear that only faith in Jesus is what saves. But how can we know if we have genuine faith?

**We know what kind of tree it is by the fruit that it bears.** We know that money doesn't grow on trees but apples do and so do pears. And that's how we identify an apple tree or a pear tree.

The genuine believer, that is a child of God who will receive their future inheritance of heaven, will always show the fruit of their conversion. That is, they will live in a certain way.

This makes sense of the question presented to Jesus. What must I do to inherit eternal life? That is, what behaviour will demonstrate that I am truly one of God's children?

The genuine child of God, the authentic member of God's rescued people, will live in a certain way.

The big question is then, what kind of behaviour will a genuine Christian demonstrate? How does the heaven bound believer live whilst they are still on earth?

Look at verse 26. **Read verses 26 to 28.**

The **Beatles** weren't the first to say that love is all you need.

Here is a beautiful summary of how the child of God is expected to live. Not outward rule keeping without any personal commitment but **heart devotion** for God for those around us.

Jesus isn't saying that if we do all this perfectly that we will be rewarded for our efforts with a place in heaven. No, the salvation inheritance of the future that has been bought with the blood of Christ is given to the true followers of Christ.

**How do we know who they are?** Well, they love God and they love their neighbour in radically costly ways..

This is simultaneously very **attractive** and very **demanding**.

At this point, the reaction of the religious expert is very revealing.

Look at what he says in verse 29. **Read verse 29.**

When we fall short of the standards expected of us we have two choices. We either try to elevate our performance. Or we try to reduce the requirements.

The man speaking to Jesus is definitely following the second approach. "Love your neighbour as yourself. All very interesting Jesus but just help me out a little, who is my neighbour? I'm sure you can't mean loving everything in the way you describe, That would be far too demanding. So help me out and draw my love responsibilities a bit closer to home."

Can you hear his heart beat? This is **Mr Minimum** talking not **Mr Maximum**. Help me do **less** rather than do **more**.

In response, Jesus tells his famous story about the Good Samaritan.

It's not that difficult to understand. A man was travelling, Jesus says, from Jerusalem to Jericho. Or more accurately, according to **verse 30**, a man was going down from Jerusalem to Jericho. Jerusalem was 2,700 feet above sea level and Jericho 820 feet below – so this meant a drop of 3,500 feet over a 17 mile journey through very dangerous robber territory.

The man in Jesus' story gets attacked, robbed of his possessions and then left for dead on a road in the middle of nowhere. And then?

Well, we get the entrance of the clergy. **Verse 31**, 'A priest happened to be going down the same road...' So far so good. He is a priest, he is going down (so away from Jerusalem) and is on the same road. What would you expect to read next? So he went to the man and attended to his needs with loving compassion. But not according to Jesus. **Middle of verse 31**, 'when he saw the man, he passed by on the other side. So too, a Levite (someone who also worked at the temple in Jerusalem), when he came to the place saw him, passed by on the other side.'

Two men who people would naturally assume were heaven bound. They were the clergy of the day. The men in dog collars. Surely they were destined for the blissful life of God's future world? No, because where was the evidence of their faith? When confronted with a need they simply walked past and left the poor man to lie in his own blood and tears. No excuse is given for their behaviour, and my friends, we are not to find one. There was no excuse.

The hero of the story appears in **verse 33**. We're told that a Samaritan came along the road and when he saw him, he took pity on him. Or better, he was so moved internally by compassion that he acted! What pity he took! He stopped, he went over, he attended to his wounds, and then took him to a place of recovery where he spent the night looking after him and then paid for his care in his absence.

Jesus' question in **verse 36** is not difficult to answer, "Which of the three do you think was a neighbour to the man who fell into the hands of robbers?" 'The one who had mercy on him.' Jesus concludes, 'Go and do likewise.'

**What does all this mean for us?**

The **first** thing to notice is that Jesus doesn't answer the man's question in **verse 29**.

**Jesus doesn't tell him who he needs to love but rather what it means to love.**

There are no boundaries to neighbourly love. This Jewish expert would probably have restricted devoted love to his own people but Jesus blows this out of the water by using a Samaritan to care for the needs of a Jew. And so Jesus doesn't answer the question, 'Who is my neighbour?' Instead he answers, 'What does it mean to be a neighbour?' The answer is to show practical love to those in need.

Let's remember **the reason why**. This isn't performance driven reward religion. No, this is the life lived by a genuine child of God. If the religious expert wants to assure himself that he will be going to heaven then he had better show that his heart is pulsing with costly and sacrificial love.

The **second** thing to notice is that this kind of life isn't easy at all.

To love God with everything we've got and to love our neighbours as we love ourselves is radical and deeply challenging.

**How can we possibly live like this?**

Here's the secret. We must first identify with the half-dead man on the ground before we seek to live like the compassionate Samaritan.

Most of us instinctively identify with every character in the story apart from the man on the ground. So we feel the guilt of passing by on the other side and we aspire to be like the Good Samaritan.

However, very few of us look down on the ground and see ourselves in the mirror as we gaze at the one who is badly in need of loving rescue and restoration.

**Who in the story will likely be the next Good Samaritan?** The one whose life has been radically altered by someone he despised and rejected. The love he experiences will transform him and give him a vision for radical love being shown to everyone.

**If we want to be the Good Samaritan we must first be helped by the Good Samaritan.**

Our spiritual condition before the intervention of Jesus is very bad. We are not good people full of loving devotion for God and those around us. No, we are rebels seeking to live in God's world according to our own standards. This is destructive for now and for all eternity.

The good news of the Bible is that God the Father sent his only Son on a dramatic rescue mission. To come towards us, pick us up and care for us at great personal cost.. It cost him his life. The result of those who have faith in Jesus is that they become children of God. God's children are promised a wonderful inheritance.

How do we know if we are one of his children?

Have we come to Jesus for salvation? **He is the ultimate Good Samaritan.**

**Have you come to Jesus?** We all need him.

As a result of our encounter with Jesus, are we now seeking to live a life of radical, costly and sacrificial love? That isn't natural and it isn't easy. However, for Christians it is possible because of **two** things.

- The presence of the Holy Spirit.
- The reminder of the gospel.

We won't be able to live a life of perfect love. Well not yet anyone!

However, in the meantime, if you are a follower of Jesus then let's pay attention to his words at the end of parable, "Go and do likewise."

**Let's pray.**