**Where Do We Go From Here? #3**

**Helping Someone Along the Way**

**Dr. Marty Baker / August 21, 2016 / Luke 10:30-35**

 Hello. I want to welcome you to Stevens Creek Church. We are so glad that you are here today. I hope that you have had a good week. School is in session. This past weekend high school football started, college football starts in less than two weeks. Then deer season starts a couple of weeks later.

 I am not much of a hunter, but years ago I can remember when my uncle took me hunting. We had waiting all day in the woods. Finally, a deer came up. We both shot and down goes the deer. I said, “I shot the deer.” He said, “No I did.” I said, “No, I did.” We went back and forth. I said that it was my bullet. He said, “No, it was mine.”

 We made such a ruckus that the game warden showed up. He came up and said, “What are you two arguing about?” I said, “He said that he shot the deer, but I know that I did.” The game warden said, “I can solve this. So, he walked up and looked at the animal. He turned back and said, “Are either one of you a preacher?” I said, “I am.” Then, he said, “You shot the deer.” I said, “How do you know?” He said because the bullet went in one ear and out the other. I hope that does not happen today.

 Today we are in our third week of the series, “Where do we go from here?” This is a series designed to help us get a clear vision of what God wants for us. We started by laying a foundation of prayer, then last week, we talked about priorities and this week we are going to talk about how we should treat people.

In fact, one day Jesus was walking down the street and a guy came up to him and he said, Lord what must I do to inherit eternal life?

 Jesus said, “I want to make it simple for you. In fact, there are only two things. Learn to love God with all your heart and, by the way, learn to love everybody else.  He said if you get those two things, you’ve got it.”

*Here’s the Big Idea for today:*

**Life is all about learning to love.**

Everything else is secondary.  Make love your highest aim.  He says I want you first of all to learn to love God.  Then I want you to learn to love everybody else.  Once you’ve done that, you will be ready for Heaven.

  That’s why you are alive.  Life is not about how much you acquire, or how much you achieve, and how many accomplishments you make and how many rewards you receive or how famous you become.  None of that matters.

One day you’re going to stand before God and he’s going to say, ***“Did you learn to love me?*** That’s why I sent Jesus Christ so you could learn to love me.  ***Did you learn to love other people?***  I put you on earth to learn how to love.

Love God with all your heart and love your neighbor as yourself.

 These words can be found in several places in the Bible. Today, I want to focus on the time when Jesus had a conversation with a lawyer in Luke 10.

**Luke 10:25**

On one occasion an expert in the law stood up to test Jesus. “Teacher,” he asked, “what must I do to inherit eternal life?”

 Now an expert in the law was not an expert in the law of the land; he was an expert in biblical Law. He would have had the first five books of the Bible memorized, and he was an expert in interpreting the Law and teaching people about it.

This lawyer asked, ***“What must I do to inherit eternal life?”***

 This seems to be a very easy question for a teacher like Jesus. He could talk about heaven. He could talk about life after death. He could talk about eternity with God. But this is not what this expert in the law is asking.

 In the Jewish context, when you had heard the phrase eternal life, it meant simply: ***How do I live with God now?*** How do I live in step, in tune, in harmony with the Almighty God today? How do I live a life with such sincere significance and meaning in the here and now?

 When the people heard the question, they all got quiet waiting for Jesus to answer. They were interested in what he would say. They’re looking at Jesus. How will he respond? Tell us, teacher, what must I do to inherit eternal life? Jesus responds to the expert’s question with a question.

**Luke 10:26**

“What is written in the Law?” he replied. “How do you read it?”

Jesus is saying, “You’re the expert in the Law and you are asking me.” Tell me how you read it. How do you understand it?”

 Now, the Law in the Jewish mind was the Torah, the first five books of the Bible: Genesis, Exodus, Leviticus, Numbers, and Deuteronomy. And within these five books, you will see that there are six hundred thirteen commandments.

 To the Hebrew people, they are not laws and commands; they are sacred deeds. They are ways for people to walk in step and in tune and in harmony with God. And what’s amazing is that rabbis/teachers began to rank the laws, like they were college football teams.

 Number one, they would say, was to love the Lord your God with all your heart, with all your soul, and with all of your might…with every ounce of your being. But the great debate was*,* ***What’s the second greatest commandment?***

**Luke 10:27**

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.”

Basically saying, Love God; love other people. He was quoting from Deuteronomy 6 and Leviticus 19.

**Luke 10:28**

“You have answered correctly,” Jesus replied. “Do this and you will live.”

 You got it. If you want to know how to inherit eternal life, love God and love your neighbor as yourself. Do this and you will live the good life.

 But the lawyer wasn’t satisfied. They never really are.

He looks at Jesus and he says, trying to justify himself,

**Luke 10:29**

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

 Now this question—who is my neighbor?—was a big question in the first century, especially among Jewish people. There was a big debate going on as to who qualified to be a neighbor.

 Many Jews actually believed that their neighbors were only other Jews. Neighbors were people who had a common way of thinking and shared value system. They would say that a neighbor is someone from our tribe, people who are like us, who vote like us, who dress like us, who act like us and who like the same teams that we like.

If you are not on our team, then you are not worthy of our love. In fact, you are an enemy. So this man is trying to box Jesus in. He’s asking him a great question: Who do you say a neighbor is?

 Jesus responds by telling a story, a story that every one of us has heard. A story that we think of every time we drive by a car that’s on the side of the road and some person is helping some stranded vehicle…the parable of the Good Samaritan. So, Jesus when he was asked this question: “Who is my neighbor?” replies:

**Luke 10:30**

In reply Jesus said: "A man was going down from Jerusalem to Jericho, when he fell into the hands of robbers. They stripped him of his clothes, beat him and went away, leaving him half dead.

 The way Jesus said this is very interesting because we don’t know where this man is from. We don’t know his nationality. All we know is that he is a man and he’s headed from Jerusalem to Jericho.

Jerusalem sits probably twenty-four hundred feet above the Mediterranean Sea, and Jericho is about eight hundred fifty feet below the Mediterranean Sea. This journey, this trail that is 17 miles long is wavy and winding. It bends. It curves. And it descends almost 3,400 feet. And this man is walking down when he finds himself being mugged, being robbed by a group of bandits.

 Scholars will say that this road is one of the most dangerous roads in the ancient Near East. These robbers see this man and beat him to a pulp. They strip him of his clothes and leave him half-dead.

 In this era, you had two ways to be able to recognize a person. One was by the color of their clothes. By their clothes you could tell: Oh, they’re from Rome. Oh, they’re from Palestine. They’re from Israel. They’re from Nazareth. They’re from Galilee. You could by their clothes understand a little bit of where they were from.

 The second way was by their accent. You could say: Oh, they’re from the deep South. They’re from Boston. They’re from Michigan. You could tell just by their accent. (Illustration: California Vacation, accent)

 But this person has no clothes, and he’s lying there half dead. That basically means in the Hebrew mind he’s going to die any moment.

 So we don’t know who this person is. We don’t know if he’s a Jew. We don’t know if he’s Roman. We don’t know if he’s a friend or an enemy. We have no idea who he is. All we know is that he’s lying there and he’s about to die.

So Jesus says,

**Luke 10:31**

A priest happened to be going down the same road, and when he saw the man, he passed by on the other side.

 A priest was part of the upper class. Scholars believe the majority of priests lived in the city of Jericho. Priests would work alongside Levites and laypeople for two weeks in the temple and then be off for two weeks. So, here’s the priest … an upper class man, on a horse, and he is probably tired from a two-week shift at the Temple and now he’s headed home.

 The priest sees this man and keeps going. Why would he do that? He could have been busy, but I don’t think so. It’s not about time. It’s how he understands the Torah.

 For him, it’s not about loving your neighbor; for him it is about being holy. Because if this priest gets off the horse and touches this man, he is ceremonially unclean and he would have to returnto the temple. He would be placed in an area where defiled and unclean priests had to go. People would say: Oh, you couldn’t do your job. You couldn’t stay holy.

And so this priest has a decision. Is this person worth the shame I will endure? Is this person worth the mocking that I will endure? Is this person worth me having to go back to Jerusalem and be unclean and not be with my family? Is this person worth it? **No**. He wasn’t worth it to the priest.

***The priest did not stop and help***. The second character we meet in Jesus’ story is a **Levite**.

**Luke 10:32**

So too, a Levite, when he came to the place and saw him, passed by on the other side.

 Who were the Levites? The Levites were in charge of the worship services at the Temple. They handled security and took care of the grounds. They also worked on a two-week rotation and so this Levite was headed home that day. He did not have the resources that the priest had so he probably wasn’t on a horse, but was walking.

 He arrived at the place where the hurt man is lying. More than likely, he went a little closer than the Priest because the consequences for defilement are not as strict for Levites. He looked at the man lying there and walks on by. Now why is that?

 There are at least **two possibilities**. He may be afraid of thieves hiding out nearby. If he stops to help this person, he may be robbed himself. But more than likely, the Levite knows the priest is on the road ahead of him. It was customary before starting out on a barren road like this to ask who else was on the road. In fact, your life might depend on that information.

 The Levite could be thinking, "If the priest thought it was okay to go by, who am I to contradict him? In fact, if I help this person, I'll be showing up the priest and bringing disfavor on him, and perhaps eventually on myself." So he had a loophole, a way out.

 We do the same thing. We use the behavior of others and say, "Well, if they did not do this, why should I?”

 Well, if you were in Jesus' audience listening to this story, you would be anticipating the next character. Obviously Jesus is walking right down the hierarchy. He started with the **Priest**, and now he's to the **Levite**, and next will be the **Jewish layman**. But surprise!

 Jesus introduced a radical twist to the story. The next character was not a Jewish layman coming down the road but a dreaded, hated Samaritan!

**Luke 10:33**

But a Samaritan, as he traveled, came where the man was; and when he saw him, he took pity on him.

The Jews considered the Samaritans as half-breeds, dogs, and the lowest of the low. There had been this animosity going on between the Jews and the Samaritans for centuries.

**Luke 10:34-35**

**34** He went to him and bandaged his wounds, pouring on oil and wine. Then he put the man on his own donkey, took him to an inn and took care of him.

**35** The next day he took out two silver coins and gave them to the innkeeper. 'Look after him,' he said, 'and when I return, I will reimburse you for any extra expense you may have.'

 These men robbed the man, abandoned him and left him to die. But the Samaritan pays for him. The Samaritan leaves him taken care of. And the Samaritan promises that he will return. ***What does that sound like?***

 ***The gospel***. This is the good news. Isn’t this what Jesus did? When we were lying abandoned, Jesus came. He paid for us. He nursed us. He gave us an identity. He paid for us, and he promised he will return. The Good Samaritan is a picture of Christ.

 But Jesus isn’t done. He has another question. He looked at the lawyer and said,

**Luke 10:36**

“Which of these three do you think was a neighbor to the man who fell into the hands of robbers?”

Here’s something interesting. When the lawyer first asked the question, he made *neighbor* a noun. When Jesus asked the question, he made *neighboring* a verb.

**Luke 10:37**

Jesus told him, “Go and do likewise.”

This isn’t a story about random acts of kindness; this is a story about **love**. It is about **loving your neighbor**.

This story stretches our view of the neighborhood.

 Is it only the person who lives next door to you, the person who looks like you, votes like you, acts like you? Or could ***neighbor*** even be your worst enemy, the person you can’t stand, the person that’s wounded you, hurt you, bullied you, picked on you, left you, robbed you, cursed you? The person who has threatened you and threatened what you desire and what you want? The person that you cannot stand? The person that you hate?

 Jesus is making a declaration that his disciples won’t just **love** people who look like them and act like them. **His disciples will love all people**.

**Our job is to love others without stopping to inquire whether or not they are worthy.**

We are to love God and love people.

 **How can we love our neighbors?**

*First of all, do you even know your neighbors?* Do you know their names?

1. **Get to know your neighbor’s name.**

Take time to develop a relationship with those people that the Lord has put near us. God placed this church in this neighborhood because he wants us to be an influence for Christ in this community. God placed you in your neighborhood … your subdivision, your apartment complex, your street … so that you can be an influence for Christ.

 Here’s the first step: find out their names. If you're going to love people, it helps to know their names. Get to know something about them, like a hobby or a dream or something.

We want to be a church that makes a difference in our neighborhood. If we are going to love our neighbors, then we need to know their names.

1. **Build a friendship with them.**

 Last week, my next door neighbor said, “Let’s get together with some chain saws and trim this tree.” I said, “You mean hire somebody to do this.” He said, “No, that costs too much money. We can do it.” I was dreading the weekend. I did not want to climb with a chainsaw.

 I drove into neighborhood on Friday and it was like the Lord answered my prayer. There was a tree service truck stopped on the side of the road. It had Journey Community Church sticker on it. So, I stopped and invited him over and he cut my tree and my neighbors. My neighbor was excited. I have a friend next door.

1. **Regularly pray for your neighbor and their family.**
2. **Be willing to talk to your friends about spiritual issues when they ask.**

 When God gets involved in a friendship, He often creates conversations through questions. In other words, I believe that your new friend will eventually have some spiritual questions. They are going to open the door and allow you to walk into a spiritual conversation. People are interested in spiritual matters. People have questions.

 When they ask … and they will…don’t tell them how they should live. Instead, tell them your story. Tell them how following Christ has changed your life. Make it personal and make it short. Don’t be weird. Don’t be overly-mystical. Don’t use insider language … talk normal.

1. **Invite them to church.**

 Take the risk. Ask them to come with you. I will do my best to answer their questions in a way that they can understand it.

 Together we will touch this community for Jesus Christ.

**We will never change the world by going to church. We will only change the world by being the church.**

Several weeks ago, a group of folks from our Southpoint campus put this Bible story into practice. They knocked on the door at a house on Kilner Drive and no one was home. This small group cleaned up his yard and cut his grass. When **Jonathan West** came home, he was surprised and asked his neighbors who did this for him.

They told him that it was the folks from the church. This intrigued to the point that this unchurched man went to church the next Sunday. Jonathan is the guy in the green shirt.

At his first visit, Frank Dunbar (volunteer with My Neighbor) made a connection with him and asked him to start serving with us the food ministry team.

So the next Sunday, he came back and brought his kids to kids church, he brought his wife Ashely to church, and he came back to serve with the food ministry team.

He shared with us on Sunday how wonderful it is that we are here for him and how thankful he is to have something to get involved with, like the food ministry team. I believe that this will help me stay on the right track and be a good dad.

Here’s the point.

**No act of kindness, no matter how small, is ever wasted.**

God will use you in ways you never dreamed. Be willing and be open.

**Closing Thoughts and Prayer**