

The story of the Good Samaritan is well known, and the term Good Samaritan is used to describe a person who goes out of their way to help another person in trouble. Here are three headlines I pulled up on the internet.

[Good Samaritan rushes into burning home to alert the family inside](#)

[Good Samaritans who came to woman's rescue make headlines in China.](#)

[Good Samaritan guns down neighbor who was shooting his own mother](#)

The story of the Good Samaritan therefore has taken on a general meaning which simply encourages people to help others who are in trouble or need, just as the Good Samaritan helped out the man who was attacked and left for dead on the road to Jericho.

But the passage teaches us much more than that.

Firstly, we cannot miss the importance of the question which sparked the parable from Jesus in the first place.

A lawyer stood up to put Jesus to the test, saying, "Teacher, what shall I do to inherit eternal life?"

A lawyer is not a defense attorney like we think of lawyers today. A lawyer here is someone who is a trained expert in the law of God.

And perhaps he wants to know if Jesus knows as much as he does. So he asks him a basic catechism question. Like What is the chief end of man? What shall I do to inherit eternal life? Or the life of the age to come? is the driving force behind the issue of the Good Samaritan.

Jesus then, in typical Jewish fashion, answers a question, with a question. “What is written in the law? How do you read it?” Or perhaps what Jesus is asking him here, is, “How do you recite it?” Jesus could be asking the man what is the liturgical practice? And he spurs him on to recite Deut. 6, which faithful Jews recite twice a day.

“You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your might and all your mind.” And he even knows to add in another verse from Leviticus 19, “You shall love your neighbor as yourself.”

And Jesus said, “You are correct. If you do this, you shall live.” And just to be clear. This has nothing to do with works based righteousness. This is about what a living faith looks like. James says, a faith that has no works is dead. So Jesus gives a standard answer that if one desires to inherit eternal life, they are to love God and their neighbor.

Moses writes about the righteousness that is based on the law, that the person who does the commandments shall live. God’s grace in saving his people comes first, then he gives them law to obey in response. In other words, they live by faith-filled obedience. Which is the whole of what the Word of God teaches.

The problem was the Jews, even this lawyer here, an expert in the law, they were actually ignorant of the righteousness of God, and they sought to establish their own righteousness, by creating all sorts of legal loopholes in their interpretation of the law, that they effectively nullified the law of God. And thus, they actually did not submit to the law of God, and his righteousness, but sought to establish their own righteousness.

And we see this is a number of places throughout the gospels. The religious leaders, through legal loopholes found ways to “obey their man-made law” but at the expense of oppressing widows and orphans. And

one of the most striking accounts of this sort of thing is in Mark 7 when Jesus says, “You have a fine way of rejecting the commandment of God in order to establish your own tradition. For Moses said, Honor your father and mother. And, whoever reviled father or mother must surely die. But you say, if a man tells his father or mother, “Whatever you would have gained from me is Corban,” – that is given to God, then you no longer permit him to anything for father or mother.”

The same was true with issues of fasting, or washings, or retaliation, or adultery, divorce. Jesus says they are experts at nullifying the law of God in order to establish their own commandments. Jesus says, “These people honor me with their lips, but their hearts are far from me. In vain do they worship me, teaching as doctrines the commandments of men.” Jesus says, they tithe their mint, dill and cumin, but they neglect their weightier matters of the law. They strain out gnats and swallow camels.

Obedying God’s law out of a heart of love for God and thanksgiving to him for saving you by his grace and mercifully bringing you in to the covenant with him and his people, is normal and good. That is what the law teaches us to do.

Thus, Jesus is absolutely correct, and so was this man’s answer to say, that if you love God with all your heart, soul, strength, and mind, and love your neighbor as yourself, you will inherit the life of the age to come.

But the lawyer, “desiring to justify himself, said to Jesus, who is my neighbor?”

And what this means, when it says he sought to justify himself, is exactly what I was just talking about. He was attempting to establish his own righteousness, not based upon the law of God, but based upon the Pharisaical tradition of creating Rabbinic legal loopholes for why it is that you do not have to actually do what the Law of God says.

And so he asks, “Who is my neighbor?”

Leviticus 19, which I read this morning for our OT reading says this:

¹⁷‘You shall not hate your brother in your heart. You shall surely rebuke your neighbor, and not bear sin because of him. ¹⁸You shall not take vengeance, nor bear any grudge against the children of your people, but you shall love your neighbor as yourself: I am the LORD.

So here the categories of brothers, and children of your people, relate to neighbor. My neighbor, is my fellow Jew. My neighbor is my people, my brother.

But there arose among the Jews the belief that those who were not Jews, were not my neighbor. If they were not my people, if they were not my brother, or sons of my people, then they were not my neighbor, and therefore I have no obligation to love them.

In the Apocryphal book of Sirach, 12:4-7 it says,

⁴Give to the devout, but do not help the sinner.

*⁵ Do good to the humble, but do not give to the ungodly;
hold back their bread, and do not give it to them,
for by means of it they might subdue you;
then you will receive twice as much evil
for all the good you have done to them.*

*⁶For the Most High also hates sinners
and will inflict punishment on the ungodly.*

⁷Give to the one who is good, but do not help the sinner.

The Medieval Torah Scholar Moses Maimonides, even came to say, “As for Gentiles with whom we are not at war...their death must not be caused, but it is forbidden to save them if they are at the point of death;

if, for example, one of them is seen falling into the sea, he should not be rescued, for it is written: ‘neither shalt thou stand against the blood of thy fellow’ –but [a Gentile] is not thy fellow" (*Mishneh Torah*, Laws of Murder 4:11).

By all means, the Jews were saying, do good to your brother neighbor, and the sons of your people neighbor, do good to your fellow Jews, but you are under no requirement to help those who are not fellow Jews. They are not your neighbor.

Now this is incredibly important, because what we see here is that this Lawyer, who wanted to know how to inherit eternal life, was looking to justify himself, by restricting the command to love his neighbor, by only loving his brother neighbor. His own people.

But if we jumped ahead a few verses in Lev. 19:33-34 we would see that God also commands love for the stranger who sojourns in the land. Israelites are not to do them any wrong.

³³‘And if a stranger dwells with you in your land, you shall not mistreat him. ³⁴The stranger who dwells among you shall be to you as one born among you, and you shall love him as yourself; for you were strangers in the land of Egypt: I am the LORD your God.

The stranger was a person who had settled and established himself in Israel but who did not really belong there because he had no blood ties. Think, Abraham in Canaan, Israel in Egypt, and Elimelech and his family in Moab. These were all strangers and sojourners at one time, because they dwelt among a people with whom they had no kinship.

Modern expressions would include “immigrants” or “refugees”, people who left their home and resettled in another country. And strangers and sojourners were not necessarily worshipers of YHWH either. However,

YHWH was still gracious to the stranger, and he commanded his people to likewise be gracious and loving to the stranger as well, and to treat them with the same kind of brotherly love and natural affection that you would have for your own people.

And the rationale for why Israel was to love the stranger, was because Israel had one time been strangers in Egypt. They knew what it was like to be mistreated by Pharaoh. So Israel is supposed to have compassion and love and mercy on others who are experiencing a lesser sojourn in their land, away from their home, and they are not to mistreat them, as they were once mistreated by Pharaoh in Egypt. And interestingly, the gospels portray in a number of locations, Israel acting exactly like Egypt, and mistreating everyone, especially Jesus. Which is why in Revelation Jerusalem is referred to as the city which is mystically Egypt, and Sodom.

So, in order to answer the question about who is this man's neighbor, Jesus launches into the parable of the Good Samaritan. Which we all know.

A man was on the road from Jerusalem to Jericho, he fell among robbers, who stripped him and beat him, and left him for dead. A Priest walked down the road, saw the man, and he crossed the street. And then a Levite did the same. But a Samaritan came down the road, saw the man, and he had compassion on him. So he poured wine and oil on his wounds, and he bound them up. He picked the man up, put him on his animal and brought him to the inn and took care of him. He then paid the innkeeper some money to take care of him, and he told him that if he spends any more money than that, he will be back to repay him.

The Lawyers Question was, "Who is My neighbor?" And Jesus responds with another question of his own, saying, "Which of these three proved to be a neighbor to the man who fell among the robbers? And he said, "the one who showed mercy." And Jesus replied, "Go and do likewise."

Notice that Jesus subverts the man's justification for loving only his Israelite neighbor, by forcing him to answer the question of what does it mean to be a neighbor. Who was the neighbor? And the Lawyer can't even bring himself to the name Samaritan. He just says, the one who had mercy.

The priest and the Levite in the parable therefore are the ones who are seen as missing out on eternal life, because they did not have mercy and compassion and thus fulfill the law of love for neighbor. But the Samaritan did have compassion, and thus fulfilled the law of love for neighbor.

This is one of the many examples of what theologians call the Great Reversal theme, where Christ turns everything upside down. He shows that Israel, like in the Prophet Hosea, who were My People, were actually Not My People, because of their lack of compassion and mercy. And those Samaritans, who Israel considered to be Not God's People, Christ shows that they had embodied being My People, more than Israel did, because they showed mercy and compassion, which is the heart of God's covenant love.

Jesus is showing how short Israel has fallen of their daily confession to love God and neighbor, by showing that the most religious people who were charged with teaching Israel what it means to love God and neighbor, as being the ones who actually had no love for neighbor.

And I think what happens is this: that when Israel limited the love of Neighbor to only refer to their fellow Jews, and they then excluded strangers, they didn't actually increase in love for their own people, instead, their hearts became more hardened, even toward their Jewish neighbors.

In other words, when Israel limited their natural affections to only include those who were like them, they did not actually increase in their natural affections, they actually lost the natural affections toward their own people as well.

People of God, we must therefore be careful about this talk about loving our people and loving our place. Not because we shouldn't love our people and our place. Clearly we should. And we should have rightly ordered loves and affections. For God commands us in Leviticus to love our people. And Paul command us to do good to all men, but especially to the household of faith. And the man who does not care for his own family is worse than an unbeliever.

But, if we limit our love and affection for only our people, we will fall into the same sin as the lawyer, and we will actually find that with such limits and constraints, we actually limit our hearts and love as well. And then we will be guilty of not loving our people sufficiently enough.

We are not only commanded to love our people and our place. But we are also commanded to love the stranger who is sojourning in our land. And we are to love him in such a way, God says, that we treat him as though he were a native born son of the land.

And when we do that, we will find that our hearts will actually enlarge, and we will be able to love our people even more, than if we had restricted our love to only our people. When we enlarge our hearts to include treating the stranger with the same kind of love as we would treat our fellow church members, we are acting like Christ, who loved those who were not his people, as though they were.

In order to bring this home, let us talk about the Samaritans for a second. Who were they? They were a mixed group of foreigners who were

transplanted from their ancestral homeland into a different Israel through forced immigration. 2 Kings 17 tells the story.

And the king of Assyria brought people from Babylon, Cuthah, Avva, Hamath, and Sepharvaim, and placed them in the cities of Samaria instead of the people of Israel. And they took possession of Samaria, and lived in its cities. ²⁵ And it was so, at the beginning of their dwelling there, that they did not fear the LORD; therefore the LORD sent lions among them, which killed some of them. ²⁶ So they spoke to the king of Assyria, saying, "The nations whom you have removed and placed in the cities of Samaria do not know the rituals of the God of the land; therefore He has sent lions among them, and indeed, they are killing them because they do not know the rituals of the God of the land." ²⁷ Then the king of Assyria commanded, saying, "Send there one of the priests whom you brought from there; let him go and dwell there, and let him teach them the rituals of the God of the land." ²⁸ Then one of the priests whom they had carried away from Samaria came and dwelt in Bethel, and taught them how they should fear the LORD.

Eventually after the return from Judah from the Babylonian captivity, the Samaritans have now existed for a few generations, and they adopted some of the practices and beliefs of the Jews, but they also altered some of them as well. The chief example is that they believe in the 5 books of Moses only, but they also added something to Exodus 20 which says that Israel was to worship God on Mt Gerazim. As I spoke about a couple weeks ago, this was the issue the Samaritan woman at the well wanted to discuss with Jesus.

Either way, the Samaritans were foreigners, who came to Israel through forced immigration. I believe this is really important to consider. Because we know that there is a lot of forced immigration happening today in our nation. There are millions and millions of people who do not share our customs and cultures and value and religion, who are being relocated by some government program, in order to disestablish the native inhabitants of the land. Call it a land curse if you will.

And much of the talk that has been happening online recently about having Natural Affections, and the talk about White Boy Summer, is in part, in part, a reaction to the larger issue of forced immigration, and the Global Elites agenda to purposely decline the white population of America, and their Marxist agenda of sowing hatred for white people in America, by sowing a hatred for our past, our traditions and customs and cultures and heroes and institutions. White Supremacy is the Sin that must be conquered they say.

And, all this is indeed enough make some white boys angry. Very angry. And we could, if we are not careful, use our talk about Natural Affections as a veil to hide our hatred toward foreigners. We could, if we are not careful, suffer from the same problem that, ironically, the Jews did. And we could actually limit our love to only those who are like us.

Now, I am not advocating Oikophobia, a hatred for ones own home and people. Nor am I advocating an unnatural form of Xenophilia, a love for the stranger, over against your own people. But a proper ordering of our loves, for our neighbor and the foreigner, must be kept in balance by the Law of God.

I want us to make sure that we are careful to love God and to love our neighbor, and to love the stranger who is in our land, as though he were a native born son. Because that is what the Law of God tells us to do, and God's law will guard our hearts from closing in on themselves in sinful anger, and it will prevent us from narrowing and limiting our love for our people.

Let me make a qualification. All of this takes wisdom, and care. I am not saying you should, invite a bunch of Haitians into your house with your daughters, without due consideration for their character. No, there needs to be ordered affections here, and the chief affection you are to have is for

your family, and you are to care for their safety first, before you care for another. This is common sense.

Another thing you should not do is this: If you see a family of people who clearly look like they are not from around here, standing on the corner in the Walmart parking lot, holding a sign which says they are looking for help, you should not harden your heart toward them, and think, well, these aren't my people, therefore I have no obligation to help them. Nor should you attempt to justify your lack of helping them because of the implications of the broader problem of illegal immigration.

Rather, you should stop to see if you can help them. Because you too were a stranger in a foreign land once, when your spiritual ancestors were in Egypt. But also when your physical ancestors came over from Europe to this land, and started a new life here. And many of them experienced some hardships from the people who were here before them.

Look, the Global Elite may be bringing people into this land from foreign places for some greater more sinister agenda. If you are upset about that, I get it. I too think we need to have wise immigration laws.

However, not loving the stranger who is now here, through, perhaps, no fault of his own, is not going to fix that problem. I am required to show love to the stranger when God puts them in my path. Because that is how I am to be a good neighbor.

And one last application. If we say we are going to love our people, then let that mean something more than we just love those whom we share an ideology with. If you say you have natural affections for your people, and you share those philosophical and ideological beliefs with other people who live on the other side of the country, or on another continent, but then you don't actually care for the person who lives in your own home, or right next door to you, then you are just as guilty as the liberal who

loves the faceless masses of humanity, but doesn't love any real actual persons. You love the ideology of loving your people, more than actually loving your people. Those Christians in your own church, or in your own denomination, who disagree with your politics and ideology, they are your people. And you are to love them, and treat them as a neighbor, and show mercy and compassion to them. Ok?

I know that these cultural wars are heating up. But we must let the world know that we are Christians by the love that we have for one another. Guard your hearts, people of God, and love one another. Be like Christ, who was the True Good Samaritan, who had compassion on us when we were dead in our trespasses and sins. He found us and came to us in our blood, and he bound up our wounds, and he poured the oil of the spirit on us, and the wine of His blood, and who paid the debt of our sins that was against us on the cross. Jesus is true Good Samaritan, and we are called to go and do likewise. And in this way, by loving God and loving your neighbor, you will inherit eternal life. Amen.