



READ LUKE 10:25-37

A legal expert asks Jesus how to attain eternal life. He and Jesus both agree that aliveness is found by loving God and neighbor. "But who is my neighbor?" asks the man.

Jesus responds by telling a story about a man traveling on a dangerous road. He was attacked, robbed, and left for dead. A religious leader saw the injured man and, in accordance with religious laws, passed by. Another man did the same. A despised Samaritan also saw the injured man. He stopped, took care of him, and paid for his health care. "Who," asked Jesus, "was the neighbor?"

LENT SERIES: WHO AM I?

Throughout Lent we'll be talking about who we are as Jesus-followers as we journey to the cross.

"In the parable, the man in the gutter was dirty and bloody. Living out our faith in Christ often calls us into the dirt and blood, into the mess of this world and people's lives. Faith is too often used as a shield, a tool to protect ourselves and keep us clean and safe from the world, but this messy world is the world that God so loved. And hidden in this mess, hidden in the face of our needy neighbor, is the face of Christ."

— from Pastor Jeff Marian's sermon

Where do you find yourself in this story? How does this story bring you new life?

Who are you in a world filled with messy opportunities to see the face of Christ? Who do you become in the midst of hundreds of homeless men, women and children in your county? When millions of lives are threatened by violent conflict and religious persecution? When you face another human being seeking refuge and safety?

Who are you in the messy business of balancing our nation's safety with Christ's love, of balancing your moral ideals with the heartbreaking stories of real people? What should Jesus followers do during this tumultuous time?

PROGRESS

DAY 1: What does the man in this story mean by "eternal life"? What is it, and how do we get it? Is this a question about the future (after we die) or the present (here and now)? Have we made much progress since this question was first asked? Have we found the answer yet?

PROGRESS

DAY 2: The legal expert and Jesus agree that the pathway to aliveness is loving God and neighbor. How does that work? Are you supposed to think nice thoughts about your neighbor? Or just refrain from hurting them? Do you have to actually *do* something? What happens when our theology is laced with guilty words like "should," "ought" or "have to"? Is there another way to think about this?

SURPRISE

DAY 3: Who is your neighbor? Who is not? At what point have you fulfilled the duty of loving your neighbor? Where does your obligation end? How much is enough?

SURPRISE

DAY 4: Jews hated Samaritans in the ancient world, yet the "hero" in this story is a Samaritan. Why does Jesus tell the story this way? What statement is he making? Does this story address racism? How is that relevant today?

SURPRISE

DAY 5: Why does Jesus often answer questions with stories? When it comes to volatile subjects like religion and politics, would it be helpful for us to do the same?

SURPRISE

DAY 6: What is the difference between asking WHO your neighbor is and asking if YOU are being a neighbor? What changes when you stop categorizing others, and instead challenge yourself to be a neighbor in every situation? What happens when you shift the focus of this story from other peoples' worthiness to your own compassion?

LOVE

DAY 7: Is it enough to show compassion because it's the right thing to do? Does that change your heart, or make you bitter? What changes when you see the face of God in each person you encounter? Does that bring new life? How can we learn to spark a real genuine love for "the least of these" among us, for each other? How can this story transform from an obligation into a matter of the heart ... from law into love?

REMEMBER: Luke 10:29 *Looking for a loophole, he asked, "And just how would you define 'neighbor'?"*

NEXT WEEK: Luke 13:1-9, 31-35