

RRR2.5 - Neighboring

Luke 10.25-37 / September 25, 2016
Spence Shelton

Hey Good morning! Welcome to mercy church. My name is Spence and I am one of the pastors here. I feel especially grateful to be here with you this morning.

Listen, when I woke up Monday morning I was planning on us talking about Dating today. And then one of the craziest weeks our city has ever seen... happened. Tear gas, police in riot gear, fires in the street, I thought I was watching something from a war zone. I kept needing to realize this is here. HERE. But thanks be to God the violence dissipated but the protest continued. And that is the important message for us. And by Thursday morning we realized we needed space as a church together to process what is happening right here in our city. So, we are adding a sermon right here into the relationship series on Neighboring. By that I mean what does the bible have to say about how we as Christians are to neighbor. How we care for one another in our community. I know some of you are angry, some of you are scared, some of you are confused, and many of you may be altogether oblivious to what is going on underneath the news headlines. Some of you are police officers or are closely related to an officer. Man its been a big week. So I hope this will allow us the space to

feel, consider those feelings in light of the gospel, and then to find hope to cling to together. Then we are going to pray together for one another and for our city.

Personally, I've spent a lot of this week listening. Listening to our African American members, listening to police officers & family members, listening to other African American pastors here in charlotte and around the country. I've spent a great deal of time over the past few years in discussions with close friends who are African American, with MLK's writings and the writings of a few other prominent African American thinkers. Here's why:

Listen, I want you to know something about me...I'm white. Turns out I've been white all my life. I checked and...my parents are white. So are my grandparents. My wife Courtney...she's white too. As is everyone in her family. Our kids...pasty white. And, this is important, I'm not wrong for being white. God chose to make Spence Shelton white. And so I gladly celebrate my rhythm-less whiteness.

But that means I experience the world differently than my African American brothers and sisters do. And so as I walk through the passage today I'm going to share some things I've heard from them as I've listened not just this week but for really for years, & later I'm going to have one of our brothers share with all of us. I know I won't say everything perfectly today. But let's get into the word and God willing I'll point you to the hope of the gospel.

To keep this concise I'm going to anchor us into one passage and then reference a few others ok. Luke 10.25-37. This passage is commonly referred to as the parable of the Good Samaritan. And this is one of those passages that is referred to so much "hey be a good Samaritan" that you may think you know it. If that's you I want you to pretend like you've never heard this story before ok. And look at what it actually says. Let's walk through it.

[25] And behold, a lawyer stood up to put him to the test, saying, "Teacher, what shall I do to inherit eternal life?"

This lawyer is not just a civil lawyer. This is one who would be really well versed in Jewish law. This is a guy who is smart enough to know what Jesus' answer is going to be, and cocky enough to ask it anyway. He isn't trying to learn. He's trying to stump or catch Jesus in some fashion. Main Point: This is a religious guy who had a good working knowledge of God's word. And so Jesus replies...

[26] He said to him, "What is written in the Law? How do you read it?" Jesus knows the lawyer knows so he just puts it back in his court.

[27] And he answered, "You shall 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 your neighbor as yourself."

Here's where I want to pause especially if you are new to church and new to the bible. This comment the lawyer

makes is not just his opinion. He is quoting two very specific passages from the Old Testament. Two passages that summarized the entire OT law. Here they are:

You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your might. Deuteronomy 6.4-5

You shall not take vengeance or bear a grudge against the sons of your own people, but you shall love your neighbor as yourself: I am the LORD. Leviticus 19.18

Ok go with me cause I'm about to give you the theological underpinnings of the entire Christian ethical system. Which has massive implications for how the church responds to protestors, tear gas, police officers, people in majority culture, people in minority culture... how every Christian is to respond to others, especially in this tense moment we are in.

In the opening two chapters of the bible God creates people & it depicts how God was going to relate to people and how they would relate to each other.

First it says God created humans in his image – We are the only thing in creation God says this about. And he gives a special value to people. We are the only ones God desires to have a friendship with. And because God values us so much, we are to likewise ascribe a certain worth and dignity to every single human. Because every human is an image bearer. And any reaction we have to any person or group of

people, to protests or movements, must begin with this reality. That all people are incredibly valuable in God's eyes and deserve respect as God's image bearers. Regardless of anything else about them...if they are people they are image bearers. No matter anything else.

Then It says that God had a friendship with Adam such that he walked with Adam in the garden. He spoke to Adam & Adam had this close, worshipful relationship with God. There were two relationships in play in the garden...Love for God who made them (vertical relationship), Love for each other because they were made in God's image (horizontal relationship).

Then, when sin entered the world in Genesis 3 it corrupted both relationships. Adam & Eve ran away from God, and Adam & Eve's children instead of loving each other & respecting each other, murdered each other. Both their vertical relationship with God AND their horizontal relationships with each other were broken.

SO, God gave the 10 commandments as a moral compass to help point people back towards the right workings of the relationships they were made for. If you were to go look at them the first 4 all demand and enhance our love for God. They are summed up in Deuteronomy 6 - Love the Lord your God with all your heart, mind, and strength. The final 6 all demand that we love each other and are encapsulated in Leviticus 19.18 - Love your neighbor.

The spiritual logic then becomes clear: you must first love God with all that is in you, and if you do, you will be able to love others as you love yourself. Love for God produces Love for people.¹

Jesus quotes these two verses when he is asked in Matthew what the greatest two commandments are. Paul in Galatians 5.14 says the entire law is summed up in the command to love your neighbor as yourself.

So the Christian ethic commands & compels us to love God first and to love others second. And Jesus knew that this lawyer knew this. So when they lawyer responded with Love God & Love your neighbor Jesus said...

[28] And he said to him, "You have answered correctly; do this, and you will live."

Which is kind of a gentle jab at the lawyer. Basically he says if you will just practice what you preach, you'll be good to go. So the lawyer, now trying to save face. And more than that trying to justify his lack of loving action towards his neighbor...says

[29] But he, desiring to justify himself, said to Jesus, "And who is my neighbor?"

Most commentators see this lawyer as having a limited view of neighbor. He thinks God meant fellow Israelites

¹ Kent Hughes. *LUKE*. That you may know truth (Crossway Wheaton, ILL 1998) 388.

right? Fellow people of good standing and character. People who look and act just like you.² For most of us, even though the digital age has allowed us to be informed that other people are out there in the world, we function in our everyday life only interacting with neighbors who look and act just like us. Listen, I'm not doggin you for having good friends who look like you. But I want you to prepare yourself for how Jesus replies to this question. Who is my neighbor? Who is the person you are supposed to love as yourself?

[30] Jesus replied, "A man was going down from Jerusalem to Jericho, and he fell among robbers, who stripped him and beat him and departed, leaving him half dead.

Simple scenario. A hurting man is lying on the side of the road. He's half dead. Helpless. Beaten Down. Remember this is a parable, its not real. And for Jesus a parable is a way to get across one big point. And this beaten down man is the object of the lesson. Watch what happens...

[31] Now by chance a priest was going down that road, and when he saw him he passed by on the other side.

The priest is the guy who works in the temple. He is the religious leader. And what this lawyer listening knows, is that one of the rules a priest has to abide by was that he was not allowed to touch a dead body. If he did he would

² Kent Hughes, Leon Morris, and Robert Stein all import this assumption into the understanding of the lawyer's question.

become unclean. But he's a priest...which means he is called to love his neighbor too. So he's got to choose helping another that will defile himself or keep himself pure and pass by the man. Jesus says he chose not only to pass by but to move to the other side of the rd.

[32] So likewise a Levite, when he came to the place and saw him, passed by on the other side.

A levite helped the priests perform their duties in the temple. He doesn't want to defile himself either. And Jesus' point is setting up the story for the big twist. It's a parable remember these characters are fictional. He's making the story good. Two guys that were, in the eyes of the community "men of God", avoided this half-dead man. Who would the third guy be & What would the third guy do?

[33] But a Samaritan not a jewish layman, but a Samaritan. A hated foreigner. Someone the entire jewish community would have considered as defiled and someone you could not associate with. "Jesus and Luke sought to illustrate that the love of one's neighbor must transcend all natural or human boundaries such as race, nationality, religion, and economic or educational status."³

, as he journeyed, came to where he was, and when he saw him, he had compassion.

³ Stein, Robert. *Luke*; The New American Commentary Series (Broadman, Nashville, TN 1992) 318.

Remember this is just a story Jesus is telling to teach a point. Unlike the two religious men, the defiled dirty Samaritan **has compassion**. He saw the man hurting and his reaction is compassion. For many of us today that is the biggest thing I hope we leave with today. Compassion for hurting people. Compassion for a man who has been oppressed and needs help or he will die. Then he shows what that compassion looks like:

[34] He went to him and bound up his wounds, pouring on oil and wine. Then he set him on his own animal and brought him to an inn and took care of him. [35] And the next day he took out two denarii and gave them to the innkeeper, saying, "Take care of him, and whatever more you spend, I will repay you when I come back."

Jesus makes a pretty big point doesn't he? He didn't have compassion and then tweet out a sad face emoji. Actually had a guy this week send me a text that said charlotte ☹️. And I'm like I appreciate that, but I don't know that all of our problems are solved now that you sent me this message. Compassion only expressed through social media is what you could call slacktivism. It's a slacker's form of activism. May we not settle, whenever ANYONE in our community is hurting, for slacktivism.

The Samaritan's compassion compelled him to act. And his action was over the top generosity. You could call it extravagant compassion. He didn't just check on him. He got down on the ground with him and bandaged him. Then

put him on his own horse. And then gave him enough \$ to recover for two months at the inn. That is extravagant compassion. Way more than what this guy would have expected. Which is really Jesus' point.

Martin Luther King Jr wrote a book called Strength To Love where he laid out his philosophy of a peaceful approach to societal change. In it he said "*I imagine that the first question the priest and Levite asked was: 'If I stop to help this man, what will happen to me?' But by the very nature of his concern, the good Samaritan reversed the question: 'If I do not stop to help this man, what will happen to him?'*" – Martin Luther King Jr

This is the neighbor love Jesus is trying to teach to this lawyer. It is a love that steps in and acts. It doesn't consider self, but it considers the plight of the other. It is self-giving, self-sacrificing. The lawyer has been trying to justify himself, and Jesus is flipping this around and getting at the lawyer's heart. He shows us right as he finishes with this question to the lawyer...

[36] Which of these three, do you think, proved to be a neighbor to the man who fell among the robbers?" [37] He said, "The one who showed him mercy." And Jesus said to him, "You go, and do likewise."

See what happens here is Jesus makes a big point about what neighbor love looks like. Remember the whole point of this parable is Jesus answering a question "who is my

neighbor?" Jesus could have just said...hurting people are your neighbor so go help hurting people. Instead of answering 'who is your neighbor' Jesus in effect says 'what kind of neighbor are you!?' He turns the question back onto the lawyer and says instead of looking for loopholes, look in the mirror. Will you be the one who shows mercy? Or the one who passes by?

I believe this parable is so incredibly important for us this week. Because the long road to healing in our community, to righting wrongs, will be best facilitated by being good neighbors. A recent group of pastors in Arvada Colorado got together with the mayor after a rough couple of years in their community. And the pastors said to the mayor how can we help? And the Mayor said at the very end "you know, if you could help your people be good neighbors I think that'd solve a lot of this stuff." And the pastors sat there embarrassed because the mayor had just asked the pastors to do what Jesus had already told them to do. ⁴

There is no way for us to put a bandaid over what we've experienced this week. The events of this week have revealed Charlotte the pain & hurt that has been here for some time & There is no simple fix. But I believe Christ gives us a way forward here in this parable we should heed. So I just want to make sure we understand from this passage how we follow Christ's commands to love your neighbor.

⁴ <http://www.artofneighboring.com/>

True gospel belief creates compassion in your heart for your neighbors

This is the gospel. God loved you When you were helpless and hopeless. When your sin had cast a verdict on you as guilty and you had no way to be reconciled to God. We were the oppressed, bound into slavery Romans says by our sin. And he has set us free. He has healed us. he has given hope to the hopeless. And he did so by giving his own life for yours. By trading places with you. now he says that love has set you free. Has won your battle. Has lifted your burden off your shoulders. Has answered your fears. He has shown you mercy. In fact the reason we are called Mercy Church is **1 Peter 2.10 – Once you were not a people but now you are God's people. Once you had not received mercy but now you have received mercy.**

We are nothing but a people of mercy. And that mercy we've received is the compassion of Christ on us. Do you have compassion for your neighbors who are hurting?

Sadly for some of us the reaction to this week wasn't compassion, it was Apathy – Some of us, like the first two people in Jesus' parable, are responding to the killings, & the protests, in apathy. You observe it, see it on the news, but kind of hope it will just go away with the weekend news cycle because you 'don't see what the big deal is.' And even if it doesn't, it doesn't really affect your daily routine so you don't *have* to care. I don't walk into a store and wonder if they think I'm going to steal something. I don't fear for my

life if I get pulled over. My race doesn't make me wrong, but my apathy to the painful experience of others does.

Here's all I want to say to you if you are in that place where you see it, but are just moving to the other side of the road... some of your brothers and sisters are truly genuinely hurting. They are angry, scared, confused, and saddened today. And they are your neighbors. And the gospel must warm your heart to compassion for your family in Christ. So when many of my black brothers and sisters in Christ together express anger, pain, & fear over the oppression they feel...the one thing I must not feel is apathy. That's my neighbor crying out. Walking the streets of uptown for nights on end saying something is wrong & change must come! The least I can do is listen. I'm going to give us the chance to listen in just a minute to one of our family members as he is processing this and maybe today will be a little wake up call for you. That's the first step of neighbor love. Is just listening.

In a 60 minutes interview in 1966 MLK said 'I think we've got to see that a riot is the language of the unheard.' Compassion begins with just listening. It means listening to police officers, some who we have here who are members who are scared. Who got into this line of work out of a sense of love for the community. To serve and protect not to be villainized. You gotta love them too.

Did you guys see the "free hugs" guy walking around the past few nights? Basically said 'yes there is something we

feel is systemically wrong, but these officers are people. They need hugs too.' It begins with listening. But it doesn't stop there.

Ya'll this week is one example of why we are praying and striving towards becoming a multicultural church. We believe unity in the gospel across cultural lines creates an incredible picture of the gospel for our City. And it also facilitates compassion because everyone will have the opportunity to build friendships with brothers and sisters who don't look like you.

The gospel compels us to help our neighbor

Jesus is very intentional with his language in this parable. Compassion is followed by over the top generosity towards the hurting man. Why does Jesus tell the story this way!? Because this is exactly the kind of love Jesus had been modeling to them

Luke 7.13 – Jesus sees a widow weeping because her only son had just died and was being carried off. And Jesus looks at her and it says FIRST...he had compassion. Compassion. THEN, he walked over to her and said woman don't weep. Watch...and he brought her son back to life & it says Jesus gave him to his mother. He is the God of compassion.

Luke 15.20 – The parable of the prodigal son. When the prodigal son begins to come home, the father has compassion on him. Compassion. And he RUNS out to greet

him. And he brings him home, throws him a great feast. Extravagant compassion.

The Gospel is great news not just because of what Christ felt for us but because of what he DID about our situation. For God so loved the world THAT HE DID SOMETHING ABOUT IT! 1 John 4.10 says [10] In this is love, not that we have loved God but that he loved us and sent his Son to be the propitiation for our sins.

Do you know what verse 11 says?

1 John 4. [11] Beloved, if God so loved us, we also ought to love one another.

We must act! Instead of asking the question who is my neighbor, ask the question what kind of neighbor am I being to those in my community? Start by getting to know the names of the people in your literal neighborhood. For reals...like the people in the closest 6 dwelling units to yours. Dorm, Apartment, street whatever. Can you name their names?

All of us, no matter our race, Are you willing to befriend people who from a different race than you and just listen...with grace...to how they experience the world around them? And then when some among us are hurting...like this week...it will be the joy of others in the family to have compassion on our neighbor. Will we be a people marked by neighbor love? We've jumped off to an incredible start with Serve Charlotte. I cannot commend

you enough. I'm meeting more people coming to our church because of their interaction with you in Serve CLT.

But like I said last week, we gotta make this a 365 thing. And the more we do, the more people from different walks of life will start to shape how we experience the world. Here's what I want to do. I want to take a few minutes today to close our time by praying for our city.

God calls us as his people to pray to him for our city.

But seek the welfare of the city where I have sent you into exile, and pray to the LORD on its behalf, for in its welfare you will find your welfare. - Jeremiah 29:7

In the welfare of our city we will find our welfare. Both practically and spiritually the welfare of Mercy Church is tied to the welfare of Charlotte. Let's pray to the Lord on its behalf. I have a few points to guide us. This will be a time where we group up & pray out loud.

Prayer Points

1. That we would have compassion for our neighbors

2. That people in our city would see Christ as the only answer to our problems.

[3] Put not your trust in princes, in a son of man, in whom there is no salvation. [4] When his breath departs, he returns to the earth; on that very day his plans perish. [5] Blessed is

he whose help is the God of Jacob, whose hope is in the LORD his God,
Psalm 146.3-5

3. That God would give wisdom to our city officials, & to law enforcement officers, to govern with justice

[1] First of all, then, I urge that supplications, prayers, intercessions, and thanksgivings be made for all people, [2] for kings and all who are in high positions, that we may lead a peaceful and quiet life, godly and dignified in every way. 1 Timothy 2.1-2.

Pray for law enforcement – it's a big job with a lot of eyes on them. Especially for believers in law enforcement pray they are able to have gospel conversations with those in their department.

4. That God would continue to grow us into a multicultural family

[14] For he himself is our peace, who has made us both one and has broken down in his flesh the dividing wall of hostility [15] by abolishing the law of commandments expressed in ordinances, that he might create in himself one new man in place of the two, so making peace, [16] and might reconcile us both to God in one body through the cross, thereby killing the hostility. (Ephesians 2:14-16 ESV)