

“[Still] On the Jericho Road” – Luke 10:25-37

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[What follows is the transcript of a sermon. It was originally intended to be heard, not read, so the tone is more conversational than academic. It has only been loosely edited, so forgive any grammatical, syntactical, or spelling errors. If you have questions please contact Southern Oaks Baptist Church through their official website, www.welovethegospel.com]

Take a Bible and let's meet in Luke 10...

There are a couple of significant days on the national calendar this week. The first is Martin Luther King Jr. Day, which is tomorrow. We all know Dr. King as the revered figure whose name is virtually synonymous with the civil rights movement of the 1950s and 60s. A couple years ago Asher, my son, came home from school and wanted to talk about what he was learning about the man. It took me a second to figure out who he was talking about though. Here was our conversation:

Asher: “Dad, can I tell you about One-a-da King Jr.”

Me: “Who?”

Asher: “One-a-da King Jr.”

Me: “Was he a King?”

Asher: “No, he was a preacher. Like you. But not in a church.”

Me: “Do you mean Martin Luther King Jr.?”

Asher: “Yes sir.”

Me: “Tell me all about him.”

Asher: “He was a really nice guy when you were a kid...people could not ride on buses...One-a-da King Jr. helped...He had a dream...Then he died.”

Me: “That's right son.”

Asher: “Yup. He died and now you have his job at church. When you die, I'll have your job. I'll be the new One-a-da King Jr.”

It was a very memorable conversation. We then pulled up the “Dream” speech on my phone and watched it together. He was excited to learn that he didn't have to go to school one day the next week because of “One-a-da King Jr.” But what he doesn't quite grasp yet is that what he has enjoyed most of his life, growing up with two sisters who look nothing like him, was pretty unheard of in America not that long ago. His experience was part of what Dr. King was fighting for. So his legacy is commemorated in our country on the third Monday of January each year.

The other significant day on the calendar this week is Tuesday, the National Sanctity of Human Life Day. This date is chosen as a reminder of the tragic Supreme Court decision called as *Roe v. Wade*. That decree is much disputed, but it essentially made abortion legal in our country up to the point of birth as long as the health of the mother was at stake, which “has been construed to mean any discomfort that would come from an unwanted pregnancy.”¹ The net result is practically abortion on demand and for the sake of convenience. 46 years have passed since that decision and so have an estimated 60 million little ones in our country alone in that same period. It's hard to even wrap our minds around that staggering number. For perspective, that's nearly 20% of the present day population of the United States. It would be like wiping out every person in California and New York. And that's just the abortion in our country since that decision, to say nothing about the global figures.

Today is actually the National Sanctity of Life Sunday. We set this day aside for Parent/Child dedications as a way to celebrate the blessing of life as seen in God's gift of children. We are a very blessed church in that regard. And today we have rejoiced in God's blessing and purpose on several of the families among us. This Sunday is set aside in many churches because of its proximity to the National Sanctity of Human Life Day.

I also believe the two matters—the Civil Rights Movement and the Right to Life Movement—are more related than they may appear at first glance because they both have racial components to them. It's appropriate then that these two days—Martin Luther King Jr. Day and the National Sanctity of Human Life Day—fall in such close proximity because, as Trevin Wax puts it, “One reason why we stand for life is because we stand for human rights and racial equality” and the matter of abortion “strikes at the heart of both of these convictions.”² Let me explain.

Around a decade ago an article was published in *The New York Times*, in which Ruth Bader Ginsberg, the Supreme Court Justice in the news for her health these days, was asked about existing federal restrictions that prohibited the use of Medicaid for abortion. Here was her response:

“The ruling about that surprised me. Frankly, I had thought that at the time *Roe versus Wade* was decided, there was concern about population growth and particular growth in populations that we don't want to have too many of...”³

That's a remarkable statement. Wax explains,

“Justice Ginsberg admits that behind the Supreme Court decision in 1973 was the concern that we limit the expansion of ‘populations that we don't want too many of.’ I wonder what populations she might have been referring to. If the statistics on abortion demographics are any indication, one can hardly miss her point. Abortion has taken a terrible toll on the black community.”⁴

In what way? Several ways. To begin with, since *Roe v. Wade* over 18 million Black children have been aborted. That's almost half of the current African American population today. Clinics are often set up disproportionately in poorer communities, which by extension means that minority communities are disproportionately affected and victimized by abortion. So, for example, while African Americans make up about less than 13% of the American population, around 30% of abortions touch their homes. Why? In my opinion, racism is *part* of the answer. The explanation is at least partially explained by racial injustice and suppression, particularly when you consider the origin and practice of abortion in our country (cf. Margaret Sanger, eugenics movements, etc.). This is why Martin Luther King Jr.'s niece, Alveda King, has said, “Abortion and racism are evil twins, born of the same lie. Where racism now hides its face in public, abortion is accomplishing the goals of which racism only once dreamed.”⁵

“Of course, we do not oppose the slaughter of unborn children merely because it unjustly targets minorities. We believe that abortion cheapens life for *all* of us. Once we discriminate against human life in its earliest forms, we soon determine that other lives can be discarded and wasted.”⁶

And herein lies why this sermon series is so important and so timely. The Parable of the Good Samaritan strikes at the heart of the issues of the day—issues like racial inequalities and the devaluation of human life and so many more. We will be exploring this in greater detail throughout the series, but today I merely want to introduce you to what will be our primary text for the next few weeks and impress upon you its relevance for our day. To that end, let's look at the text. The story involves a conversation between Jesus and a lawyer. I'll begin reading in verse 25 of Luke 10 and I invite you to follow along as I do. This is God's Word...

“And behold, a lawyer stood up to put him to the test, saying, ‘Teacher, what shall I do to inherit eternal life?’²⁶ He said to him, ‘What is written in the Law? How do you read it?’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.’²⁸ And he said to him, ‘You have answered correctly; do this, and you will live.’²⁹ But he, desiring to justify himself, said to Jesus, ‘And who is my neighbor?’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.’³¹ Now by chance a priest was going

down that road, and when he saw him he passed by on the other side. ³² So likewise a Levite, when he came to the place and saw him, passed by on the other side. ³³ But a Samaritan, as he journeyed, came to where he was, and when he saw him, he had compassion. 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." 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.'" (Luke 10:25-37)

I can't prove it, but this may be the most well known parable of Jesus in our day, both inside and outside of the church. Yet while most people know something of the story, they know very little about its context and purpose. They reduce it to a moral story—a prod to spur us on to become more generous and compassionate. It is that. But it is so much more.

To understand its true significance we have to read it in context, which is what we will do in the next few weeks. Already we have read the parable with its immediate context and, if you look carefully, you can discern a pattern between the first half of the text and the second. The first section consists of verses 25 to 28, which is the most neglected section. The final section runs from verse 29 to 37. When these sections are compared, you'll notice that they unfold in a remarkably similar way.

- A. The lawyer asks a question of Jesus
- B. Jesus responds by asking the lawyer a different question
- C. The lawyer answers Jesus' question
- D. Jesus answer's the lawyer's original question⁷

That's how both sections unravel. Section one begins with the lawyer asking, "*Teacher, what shall I do to inherit eternal life?*" (10:25). Jesus asks, "*What is written in the Law?*" (10:26). The lawyer answers Jesus (10:27). Then Jesus answers the lawyer's original question (10:28). Then the cycle repeats in next section. The lawyer asks, "*who is my neighbor?*" (10:29). Jesus tells the parable to set up His own question, "*Which of these three, do you think, proved to be a neighbor to the man who fell among the robbers?*" (10:36). The lawyer gives an answer and then Jesus again answers the lawyer's original question (10:37).

The deliberate structure helps us see that the sections are related. You can't understand one without the other. Yet, as I said, the first section is almost always excluded from discussion and this skews one's understanding of the parable itself. The other thing that distorts our understanding of the parable is our familiarity. Yet, in the weeks ahead, as we examine the various details of this passage of Scripture, I'm confident we will discover we are not as familiar with the meaning and implications of the parable as we may currently believe.

But what I want you to see today is that the account touches on some of the matters I've already mentioned that are front and center in the social discourse of our nation today (and, perhaps, particularly this week). For example, there is a racial component to the text. The Samaritan was considered a mixed race and one that would have been despised by the lawyer, the priest, and the Levite. First century racism is actually what makes the parable so potent. Jesus is holding up a person who considered "other" and "different" and "inferior" and even "the enemy" as the hero of the story. Furthermore, there is also a choice component in the story where one life is deemed less important than another. The Levite and the priest assessed the situation, determined that their security and safety and convenience was more important than the battered and bruised man, so they passed by on the side of the road and left him to die. In other words, you might say, they did not love their neighbor as themselves (10:27).

So there's a racial component and a choice component. And I would argue that both of these issues and the decisions that accompany them—in their day and ours—are issues and decisions that involve the dehumanizing of individuals. That is, they involve outlooks that ascribe a value to another individual that is less than their own

and this leads to their course of action. To frame it in more biblical language, dehumanization is the result of an “active refusal to recognize the image of God in others,” which just so happens to be “at the heart of every form of exploitation.”⁸ I am convinced that one of the greatest needs of the 21st century American church is a renewed understanding of the importance and implications of the doctrine of the *Imago Dei*, the image of God. We must rediscover the dignity of humanity. All human life has dignity because all human life is created in God’s image. This has implications for racial reconciliation, the life movement, justice system reforms, end of life issues, poverty, work, sexuality, marriage, technology, religious liberty, political discourse, and so much more. If you are looking for a great book that explores this, let me recommend *The Dignity Revolution*, by Daniel Darling. Of all the books I read in 2018, it was my favorite (and I read a lot).

The point though is that the Parable of the Good Samaritan is very timely. It meets the church where it is in 2019. It’s lost no significance over the past two millennia. We are still on the Jericho road, so to speak. This parable is at the heart of our mission as a church. It touches on one of our three GCs—the Great Commandments, to love God and neighbor. And it exposes some of our cultural blind spots and imbalances, as we shall see. So I hope you are as excited as I am to dive into it in the weeks ahead in this sermon series, which I’ve called “S.O.S.” for a couple of reasons. The obvious reason is that an “S.O.S.” is slang for an urgent cry for help. The Samaritan man responded to the victim on the road’s S.O.S. and we too, as Christians, are called upon to do likewise with our neighbors. There is another reason for the series title as well, which relates to a ministry I’ll tell you more about mid-series.

Here’s the plan. The next few weeks we are going to pick apart the details of the text here in Luke 10. We are going to explore several crucial ideas that will help us understand the Gospel better and how to live in step with the Gospel. Then I will introduce a new ministry that our church is going to be engaging in the days ahead. And then we will spend a few more weeks wrapping up the series by turning our attention to a passage in Leviticus that the parable is built on. This will help us consider how to apply what we have learned in practical ways in our setting. So I hope you will be along for the journey. All of it. I’m really excited about it and what it will mean for the life of our church and community.

But let me close with one final word. Perhaps some of the matters we have discussed today are close to home. Maybe the issues we began considering. You lived through the Civil Rights Movement or abortion has touched your life in some personal way. Maybe there was a time that you were on the wrong side of both of those issues, guilty of racism or of having or encouraging an abortion. Jesus hates racism and abortion, but He loves you. He died to save racists and abortionists. He died to save sinners of every stripe and persuasion in fact. That’s the beauty of the Gospel. When these truths touch your life, your broken heart can give way to joy and healing. There are people in this church—men and women—who have walked through it as you are and have emerged on the other side passionate about cause of life and equality. You too must be patient with your healing. You’re not alone. You are loved by us. Most importantly, you are loved by the Lord. Don’t run from Him. Run to Him.

The Parable of the Good Samaritan is a Gospel story. It reminds us that we have the greatest neighbor of all, the Lord Jesus, who has seen our brokenness and come to us in compassion in an even more profound way. A God who became man to mend our wounds. A Savior who demonstrates God’s love for us in this: while we were yet sinners, He died on the cross for us (Romans 5:8). A neighbor who can reconcile us to God and our fellow man, regardless of the mess in our lives. A Messiah who cared for us sacrificially and extravagantly, not just with a brief pick me up, but ensuring our final restoration. A Lord who is coming back again for us to finish all His work in our lives.⁹ That’s how you are loved. Yes, even you. Sinful you. Sinful me. Even when the scars in our lives are self-inflicted. He can save. He can forgive. He will, if you will believe in Him. Turn from your sinful way of life and trust Jesus to forgive and restore you. He delights in taking the worst of sinners and making them children of God, trophies of grace. He’s not your enemy. He’s the friend of sinners. Believe that.

Let’s pray...

¹ John Piper, “Love Your Unborn Neighbor,” a sermon preached to Bethlehem Baptist Church in Minneapolis, MN, on January 22, 2006 and accessed at the following website: <https://www.desiringgod.org/messages/love-your-unborn-neighbor>.

² Trevin Wax, “Roe v. Wade at 37,” an article published on January 18, 2010, and accessed at the following web address: <https://www.thegospelcoalition.org/blogs/trevin-wax/roe-v-wade-at-37/>.

³ We should not assume that she herself is pro-choice for these reasons (or any other modern pro-choice advocate), simply that she believed that this thinking was a factor at the time of the Supreme Court Decision.

⁴ Ibid.

⁵ Ibid.

⁶ Ibid.

⁷ D. A. Carson, “The Parable of the Good Samaritan,” in *D. A. Carson Sermon Library* (Bellingham, WA: Faithlife, 2016), Lk 10:25-37.

⁸ Raleigh Sadler, “The One Who Showed Mercy,” published on March 9, 2015, and accessed at the following website: <https://www.thegospelcoalition.org/article/the-one-who-showed-mercy/>.

⁹ Thabiti Anyabwile, *Exalting Jesus in Luke* (CCE; Nashville: B&H Publishing Group, 2018), 182.