

## Sermon followed by Service

February 26, 2023 - God-Lived Life - #2 Luke 10:25-37

“Like a good neighbor.” I say, “Like a Good Neighbor”; what comes to mind for you? Or should I say, “Who comes to mind for you?” If I sing “Like a Good Neighbor,” chances are pretty good you think of State Farm, might even think of Jake at State Farm answering the phone any time of the day or night.

What makes a good neighbor? A good work neighbor? A good church neighbor? There’s a saying: “Good fences make for good neighbors.” So we might say, “Good neighbors stay in their lanes.” Then we might say, “Yes, but.” Yes, but it sure is nice to come home and find that a neighbor cleared your driveway, isn’t it? If I’m honest with myself and with you, I’d have to say that my “yes-buts” aren’t so positive. You say: “A Good Neighbor stays in his or her lane”; I might say, “Yes, but in the fall I give a whole lot more leaves to my neighbors than I get.” You say, “A Good Neighbor is friendly, smiles at you, greets you, doesn’t turn away and ignore you”; but I might say, “Yes, but I hardly ever see my neighbors.” You might say: “A Good Neighbor is there when you need them”; but I might say, “Yes, but how would I know?” Or “Yes, but what could I do?” When it comes to being a good neighbor, it sure is easy to “yes-but,” isn’t it? So what makes for a good neighbor? A good work neighbor? A good church neighbor?

How did we get to that question? An expert in the law comes up to Jesus. He would have been someone who knew his Old Testament law, not just the Ten Commandments, but all the laws in Exodus, Leviticus, Numbers, and Deuteronomy. He would have known God’s DOs and DON’Ts backwards and forwards. He comes

to Jesus to test Jesus with a question, a DO question - “What must I do to inherit eternal life.”

Jesus isn't so easily tricked; Jesus is a good teacher, so he answers with a question, a God-Lived Life question: “What does the Bible say?” The expert in the law - he knows his Bible words - so he comes up with a good answer: “**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.**” Jesus answers back: “**Good answer. Now do it.**”

“Yes-but.” The expert in the law didn't like Jesus' answer. It made him look a bit foolish; it gave him an answer he couldn't keep, perhaps an answer he didn't want to keep. We've all had neighbors we didn't really feel like loving, haven't we? So, trying to justify himself, trying to excuse himself, trying to make himself look right, he asks another question: “**And who is my neighbor?**” You see what he's trying to do. He's not trying to stretch himself and expand his horizons; he's trying to justify himself. Where's the loophole? Where's the way out? How can we make this doable for me? How can we limit the cost?

Jesus isn't into that game. When Jesus came to justify us, Jesus didn't come looking for loopholes, a way out, a way to limit the cost. No, Jesus set his heart on loving his neighbors, his enemies, the whole world, not just as he loves himself, but more than he loves himself - even at the cost of the cross. Jesus wasn't into offering up excuses and looking for loopholes for himself, and he isn't into offering us excuses and loopholes for us. So Jesus tells a story, a story that cuts to the heart, a story that inspires the heart.

Who do you want to be in Jesus' story? We don't want to be guy who was beaten and robbed, do we? And we don't want to be the priest or the Levite who just pass on by. In the story they come across as worse than the robbers, don't they? We want to be that Good Samaritan, don't we? But, do you hear it? Do you hear the "yes-but's"? "Yes-but. I'd like to help, but what about the danger?" "Yes-but. I'd like to help, but what about the cost? Yes-but. I'm in a hurry; I don't have time. Yes, but. I don't have a lot of extra money; I have bills too." Or "Yes-but. I wouldn't know what to do"? It's a whole lot easier to be the priest or the Levite, or even to imagine our self as the victim, than to be the Good Samaritan, isn't it? But we're not just looking for easy, are we? So we might think: it's a whole lot more reasonable, sensible, even responsible to be the priest or the Levite than to be the Good Samaritan.

But that's not where Jesus is leading us. Jesus gives us a hero who is almost the least likely to be the hero. The Jews treated Samaritans as half-breeds who didn't belong, who were messing with their religion - people to be avoided and looked down on. And what does this Samaritan do? He shows love like God shows love. He sets his care, his attention, his love on someone who - if he wasn't in such a bad way - would just as soon turn his back on him. He takes from himself to care for this hurting stranger. He doesn't dump and run - "done my part." He doesn't count cost - "whatever it takes." He loves like God loves.

Except God's love is even more amazing. We weren't just victims of evil when Jesus stepped in for us; we were perpetrators of evil; we had set our hearts to fighting God, leaving God, lying about God. And yet Jesus stepped in for us. Not just with a hand and coins to bandage and comfort our hurts. Jesus stepped in and gave his life to take our place under judgment - under judgment for the hurt we

have caused and for the hurt we have ignored. He took our place under judgment for our crimes against humanity and for our crimes against God. Jesus stepped in without counting cost - “What about me, my time, my money?” Jesus stepped in all the way to the cross for you and me. And today, he isn’t done with us, but he gathers us to his heart for heaven, and he gathers us to his heart to know the joy of loving and doing for others like he loves us and others.

Did you notice the twist Jesus put at the end of his story? Instead of the question: “**Who is my neighbor?**” Jesus turned the question around: “Who was a neighbor to the man beaten by the robbers?” We know the answer: “**The one who had mercy on him.**” So what does Jesus say? “Go and do likewise.” Amen.

February 25 & 26, 2023

**SERVICE OF WORD AND PRAYER**

**IN OUR WORLD TODAY ...** we see a world of people in need (some in need for their body, so many more in need for their hearts and souls).

**IN OUR WORSHIP TODAY ...** we see that the God-Lived Life doesn't just shrug and walk on by; the God-Lived Life loves to serve with the heart of our God.

**OPENING HYMN**

*"Lord, Help Us Walk Your Servant Way"*

**Hymn 737**

Lord, help us walk your servant way wherever love may lead  
and, bending low, forgetting self, each serve the other's need.

You came to earth, O Christ, as Lord, but pow'r you laid aside.  
You lived your years in servanthood, in lowliness you died.

No golden scepter but a towel you place within the hands  
of those who seek to follow you and live by your commands.

You bid us bend our human pride nor count ourselves above  
the lowest place, the meanest task that waits the gift of love.

Lord, help us walk your servant way wherever love may lead  
and, bending low, forgetting self, each serve the other's need

I rejoiced with those who said to me,  
**"Let us go to the house of the Lord."**

How lovely is your dwelling place, Lord Almighty!  
**Blessed are those who dwell in your house; they are ever praising you.**

The Lord is near to all who call on him,  
**to all who call on him in truth.**

## TIME OF EASTER

God made him who had no sin to be sin for us  
**so that in him we might become the righteousness of God.**

Jesus was delivered over to death for our sins  
**and was raised to life for our justification.**

Death has been swallowed up in victory!  
**Thanks be to God! He gives us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ.**

*Silence for meditation and reflection*

Almighty God, grant to your Church the Holy Spirit and the wisdom that comes from above. Let nothing hinder your Word from being freely proclaimed to the joy and edifying of Christ's holy people, so that we may serve you in steadfast faith and confess your name as long as we live; through Jesus Christ our Lord, who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and forever.

**Amen.**

## FIRST READING

*1 Thessalonians 4:9–12*

Now about your love for one another we do not need to write to you, for you yourselves have been taught by God to love each other. And in fact, you do love all of God's family throughout Macedonia. Yet we urge you, brothers and sisters, to do so more and more, and to make it your ambition to lead a quiet life: You should mind your own business and work with your hands, just as we told you, so that your daily life may win the respect of outsiders and so that you will not be dependent on anybody.

The Word of the Lord. **Thanks be to God.**

## VERSE OF THE DAY

*Mark 10:45*

Alleluia. "For even the Son of Man did not come to be served, but to serve, and to give his life as a ransom for many." Alleluia.

## GOSPEL

*Luke 10:25–37*

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

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

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.’”

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

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

In reply Jesus said: “A man was going down from Jerusalem to Jericho, when he was attacked by robbers. They stripped him of his clothes, beat him and went away, leaving him half dead. A priest happened to be going down the same road, and when he saw the man, he passed by on the other side. So too, a Levite, when he came to the place and saw him, passed by on the other side. But a Samaritan, as he traveled, came where the man was; and when he saw him, he took pity on him. He went to him and bandaged his wounds, pouring on oil and wine. Then he put the man on his own donkey, brought him to an inn and took care of him. The next day he took out two denarii 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.’

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

The expert in the law replied, “The one who had mercy on him.”

Jesus told him, “Go and do likewise.”

The Gospel of the Lord. **Praise be to you, O Christ!**

## HYMN OF THE DAY

*“Lord of Glory, You Have Bought Us”*

**Hymn 767**

Lord of glory, you have bought us with your lifeblood as the price,  
never grudging for the lost ones that tremendous sacrifice;  
and with that have freely given blessings countless as the sand  
to th’ unthankful and the evil with your own unsparing hand.

Grant us hearts, dear Lord, to give you gladly, freely, of your own.  
With the sunshine of your goodness melt our thankless hearts of stone  
till our cold and selfish natures, warmed by you, at length believe  
that more happy and more blessed 'tis to give than to receive.

Wondrous honor you have given to our humblest charity  
in your own mysterious sentence, "You have done it all for me."  
Can it be, O gracious Master, that you need what we can do,  
saying by your poor and needy, "Give as I have giv'n to you"?

Lord of glory, you have bought us with your lifeblood as the price,  
never grudging for the lost ones that tremendous sacrifice.  
Give us faith to trust you boldly, hope, to stay our souls on you;  
but, oh, best of all your graces, with your love our love renew.

## SERMON

### APOSTLES' CREED

**I believe in God, the Father Almighty, maker of heaven and earth.**

**I believe in Jesus Christ, his only Son, our Lord, who was conceived by the Holy Spirit, born of the Virgin Mary, suffered under Pontius Pilate, was crucified, died, and was buried. He descended into hell. The third day he rose again from the dead. He ascended into heaven and is seated at the right hand of God the Father Almighty. From there he will come to judge the living and the dead.**

**I believe in the Holy Spirit, the holy Christian Church, the communion of saints, the forgiveness of sins, the resurrection of the body, and the life everlasting. Amen.**

## VIDEO



<sup>36</sup> In Joppa there was a disciple named Tabitha (in Greek her name is Dorcas); she was always doing good and helping the poor.

<sup>37</sup> About that time she became sick and died, and her body was washed and placed in an upstairs room. <sup>38</sup> Lydda was near Joppa; so when the disciples heard that Peter was in Lydda, they sent two men to him and urged him, "Please come at once!"

<sup>39</sup> Peter went with them, and when he arrived he was taken upstairs to the room. All the widows stood around him, crying and showing him the robes and other clothing that Dorcas had made while she was still with them.

<sup>40</sup> Peter sent them all out of the room; then he got down on his knees and prayed. Turning toward the dead woman, he said, "Tabitha, get up." She opened her eyes, and seeing Peter she sat up. <sup>41</sup> He took her by the hand and helped her to her feet. Then he called for the believers, especially the widows, and presented her to them alive. <sup>42</sup> This became known all over Joppa, and many people believed in the Lord.

### INTO THE TEXT

1. Your obituary is written long before any words are printed on a newspaper page or spoken at your funeral. It is written in your actions and attitudes and verified by all the lives that you touched. Tabitha had been writing her obituary her whole life. What did her obituary say?
2. One of the tricks of the devil is to get us to put off serving others generously until our lives are "just right." How sad if this were an example of our obituary:

"He always planned on helping the poor once he knew that he had enough for himself. She had every intention of getting involved in service to her Savior in church or in a community group once things settled down in her life. He would have been concerned with the problems in other peoples' lives, but he had a lot of his own to work through first. She was always going to start giving a proportionate

amount back to the LORD in her offerings once she had reached her financial goals in her life.”

This text gives us many reasons why we will not want to put off a life of generosity. Scan this short account and give at least 3 reasons.

### APPLYING IT

1. We discussed Tabitha’s “Almost Obituary.” She was likely not one of Time magazine’s “100 Most Influential People of 35 AD.” It was a robe here. A penny there. A garment here. A crust of bread there. She may not have been able to give the world, but what she gave meant the world to those who received it. These were the people who were preaching at her funeral. More specifically, what do you want your obituary or eulogy to say?
2. Name a “Tabitha” in your life. What was something you saw in that person that impacted your life?
3. Look at the commitment card in your bulletin (or from the mailing). Walk through it and decide what you would like to intentionalize this month.

### PRAYER OF THE CHURCH

**M:** Lord Jesus, our only Savior and Lord, we praise and thank you for humbling yourself for us. You gave your life for ours that we might be called children of God. Grant us the grace to live our lives for you by living for others. Lord, in your mercy:

**C:** **Hear our prayer.**

**M:** Heavenly Father, creator of all, provider of our every need, provide our every need and more so that we may never fail to have enough to share with others the good gifts you have given to us. Help us use the hours of each day not just for ourselves but for you. Help us use the treasure you have given to bless others. Help us to use the abilities you have given us to serve more than be served, as your Son did for us. Lord, in your mercy:

**C:** **Hear our prayer.**

M: Holy Spirit, work in us to serve without complaining or counting cost, but that we serve bearing the fruit of love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, and self-control. Lord, in your mercy:

C: **Hear our prayer.**

*Special prayers and intercessions may follow.*

M: Hear us, Lord, as we bring you our private petitions.

#### **PRAYER AND LORD'S PRAYER**

**Our Father, who art in heaven, hallowed be thy name, thy kingdom come, thy will be done on earth as it is in heaven. Give us this day our daily bread; and forgive us our trespasses, as we forgive those who trespass against us; and lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil. For thine is the kingdom and the power and the glory forever and ever. Amen.**

#### **CLOSING PRAYER**

Almighty God, by the death of your Son you conquered sin, and by his resurrection you restored our innocence and gave us everlasting life. Fill our hearts with steadfast faith that we may daily serve you in your kingdom and praise and thank you always; through Jesus Christ our Lord.  
**Amen.**

#### **BLESSING**

The almighty and merciful Lord—the Father, the T Son, and the Holy Spirit—bless us and keep us.  
**Amen.**

## CLOSING HYMN

## *“Brothers, Sisters, Let Us Gladly”*

Hymn 748

Brothers, sisters, let us gladly give to God our all, our best:  
service hearty, thorough, honest, with a living love impressed.  
All our duty, all our striving, all our time to him belong;  
praise him, then, with true devotion, come before him with a song.

By his mercy, by his bounty, by the gift of Christ, his Son,  
what great goodness he has shown us, what high marvels he has done!  
Let us to him promptly, freely, yield our bodies and our souls,  
thankful that his love protects us, that his wisdom all controls.

Gracious Lord, accept our service for the sake of Christ, your Son;  
lo, our hope abides now only in the righteousness he won.  
Bless and save us, help and guide us, watch to comfort and restore,  
till in heav’n we rest rejoicing, praising you forevermore.

## OFFERING

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