

Caring for Others with the Love of a Mother's

Scripture: Luke 10:25-37 New International Version (NIV) - The Parable of the Good Samaritan

SAY: One day, Jesus was being questioned about how to get to heaven. Part of the answer was to love your neighbor as yourself. When asked "who is my neighbor?" Jesus replied with the parable of the Good Samaritan. Listen to Jesus' story, which tells us about the care Jesus want us to give to all our neighbors.

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."

SAY: May God grant us the courage to "go and do likewise" providing care and having mercy on our neighbors in need. Amen

Caring for Others with the Love of a Mother's



Before we start, I would again like to wish a Happy Mother's Day to all of you who are and are becoming mothers, as well as those who have been motherly figures to others. What a great day to celebrate all of the women in our lives that have nurtured and raised us and those who have mentored and helped us become the people we are today.

I want us to take time to think about someone who has cared for and loved us like a mother. It could be your mother, grandmother, aunt, sister, sister in Christ or even a father. When you have that person in mind, you can discuss with someone near you, or think about what made their care, time, attention and love so special? Think of a specific time that you felt most loved by them. Was it a time when you were sick, going through a rough time, celebrating an accomplishment, or grieving a loss?

A mother's love is special (as is the love of our father's and father figures as well). Parents care for their children with everything they have. Sacrificing themselves, their time, sanity, and health to ensure their children are safe, healthy and happy. They deal with dirty diapers, stomach flu, household messes, runny noses and bloody knees. Parents hold their children as they are getting shots, at the dentist, or after falling or failing hard. They are on the sidelines throughout our lives watching, cheering, and crying. Parenting is messy, inconvenient, tiring, at times scary and far from easy. But most parents wouldn't trade loving and caring for their children for anything.

Caring for Others with the Love of a Mother's



Caring for Others with the Love of a Mother's

But what about how we care for each other? Are we really to love our neighbors as ourselves or even love our neighbors as we love our children? Who exactly is our neighbor and how do we care for them? Let's take a deeper look at our scripture lessons today, the parable of the Good Samaritan, to find out.

Luke chapter 10 verse 25 starts with a crowd of people listening to Jesus teach. Some "know-it all expert" of the Old Testament law was there. Wanting to make sure the crowd acknowledged how much he knew about the law, the "expert" tried to "stump the teacher" by testing Jesus with questions he already knew the answer to. Obviously "too smart to know better", the expert stands up to ensure he is seen by all and asks Jesus, "Teacher, what must I do to inherit eternal life?"

Jesus, not falling for his antics asks the expert in the law "What does the law say? How do you read it?" The "expert" proudly boasts, "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

Caring for Others with the Love of a Mother's

neighbor as yourself.” “You have answered correctly,” Jesus replies. “Do this and you will live.”

Feeling good that Jesus acknowledged he was right, the expert takes it one more step. He wants to see if he can trick Jesus with a follow-up question, so he asks, “And who is my neighbor?”

Here the conversation takes a turn. Jesus could have continued to talk to the expert by quoting law and verse. He could have again asked the expert what he thought. They both could have had hours of theological debate. Instead Jesus decides to use a parable, or story, to demonstrate what neighborly love looks like. He doesn't give a list of instructions or detailed directions. Jesus uses an illustration of a situation that all humans – in his time and in ours – can recognize and relate to.

A man is walking alone on a dangerous road. Because he is alone, he becomes an easy target for a band of thieves. The criminals don't want to leave a witness to their crime so they beat the man until he is near death, steal the clothes off his body, take all of his food, water and possessions and leaves him bloody and naked on the side of the road.

After some time, a priest walks past. The priest sees the man, but knows if he touches the bloodied man, he will become ceremonially unclean and will be sent out of his village for a time to be “cleansed”, rendering him useless to his duties at the temple. Deciding he's too important to spend that kind of time for just one person, he crosses to the other side of the road and walks past the dying man.

Next comes along a Levite, whose life is dedicated to the service of God's temple on behalf of the Jewish community. The Levites care for the temple, the priests and their needs on a daily basis. This Levite is no stranger to service and care. But he pretends not to see the man and walks past. Maybe the Levite was unsure the situation was safe or was concerned the thieves were still nearby. Maybe he too was just too busy. Whatever the reason, he decides not to stop, and instead walks past, leaving the man to die.

Finally, comes a Samaritan on the road. Samaritans during the time of Jesus, were considered “lesser humans” compared to the Jews. Samaritans were looked down upon and were not to be talked to. But the Samaritan, a person the dying man would have avoided in other circumstances, had pity on a fellow human who was clearly suffering. The Samaritan stopped to help, even though he was not the dying man's faith leader or

Caring for Others with the Love of a Mother's

community member. The Samaritan decided that helping this man on the road was more important than getting to his destination on time. He concluded that their shared humanity was more important than their difference in nationality. He risked ridicule and he stopped to help a dying man. He cleaned and bandaged his wounds, gave him a ride to town on his donkey while he walked alongside him. The Samaritan took care of the man financially and physically as he healed.

Jesus ends the story by asking the "expert", "And which person do you think was this man's neighbor?" Was it the people the dying man lived near? The people he shared a faith with? The people who were his "church family"? No. "The man who showed him mercy", answers the "expert", convicted by his own answer. "Go and do likewise" says Jesus.

Jesus used this story to help the "expert", as well as the reader, see that knowing the answer was not enough. Quoting verse and law was not enough. Knowledge alone does not even come close to realizing, living out and expressing the love of God. Compassion is required. Mercy and grace are required. Sacrifice of oneself is required. **Action is required.**

Taking action to love and care for our neighbors is what is required of all God's children. But who are our neighbors? Our neighbors are not just our loved ones, or those who are like us. We are to love those who are strangers, those whose religious, social, racial, and sexual practices are not like ours. Does that mean the people we disagree with or cannot stand to be around? Clearly Jesus can't intend for us to include people who do terrible things to us and the world? Right? Our neighbors are all of God's children. Every person of every nation, religion and creed. We are to love Samaritans and Jews. Bears fans as well as Packers fans. Democrats and Republicans. We are to love immigrants, atheists, political leaders, criminals, and even sinners like me. Jesus' parable is calling us to act and to show love to all people, even our enemies. Jesus didn't say it was going to be easy. Jesus just said to love our neighbors is to love God.

How many of you have seen a homeless person on the street? What do you do? Do you give them money? Do you keep walking as if you didn't see the person? Do you acknowledge them but keep walking? Have you ever taken time to think about how the homeless person may feel? When was the last time someone saw them as a person and not an obstacle in their way? How long has it been since they felt compassion or love from anyone? Can you imagine how bad their situation must be, that they have to dehumanize themselves to the world, be seen as an object to fear, or even hate, and yet to be so

Caring for Others with the Love of a Mother's

desperate in need that they must beg for money to survive? To be scrutinized, ignored, mocked, judged, pushed around by their fellow man, because people assume they haven't done enough to help themselves. Has anyone ever stopped to help them or to get to know their story? Does anyone see them as their neighbor?

It's easy to watch from a distance, like the priest; or pretend we don't see the person in need, like the Levite; but God calls us to get our hands dirty, like the Samaritan. We are to touch the wounds, soak up the blood, walk alongside them and provide for their needs. Not only that, but like the Samaritan, we are to watch after him, come back and check on him and ensure he not only makes it through the initial physical trauma, but also hold him up through the emotional, mental and spiritual healing that needs to happen as well. We need to care for our neighbors like our mothers have cared for us.

Homelessness isn't always obvious in our community but there is always someone in need in our midst. Look at our own church family? How are we loving and caring for each other in our own times of trial, pain, abuse and neglect?

This week I had the privilege of visiting our sister in Christ, Agnes Ropers, who turned 106 on Tuesday. My family used to sit right in front of Agnes, her sister Ida Mae, Phyllis Reynolds and Grace Fonstad, when we first started coming to Crossroads. These matriarchs of our church were so kind and loving to us and our then toddler daughter who they loved and doted on each week. I'm embarrassed to admit to you, that this week was the first time I had seen Agnes since she was physically unable to come to church. It was great to reconnect and she loved her birthday cards that you all sent and the Quilted Hug our quilters made for her, but my heart broke as our conversation turned to church. She teared up as she described how much she missed being able to come to church. She described how lonely her nights are and how few visitors she gets other than the few family members and friends she has left. She looked empty as she talked about how much she missed her sister, who used to live a few apartments down from her, but passed over a year ago. I am ashamed that I had not taken time to visit her before Tuesday. There are no excuses for how I have failed her as my sister and church family member. I have thought about the countless numbers of you that I have failed to care for in your time of need. And today I want to sincerely apologize for failing to be there for you.

I thought it was enough to notice someone missing from worship. It was easy to assume or even expect someone else to reach out and help. I felt good when I would take time to

Caring for Others with the Love of a Mother's

ask someone after worship if they've heard what a missing person or family's situation was. But I realize now, that was more about satisfying my own curiosity than really caring for my church family. I know now that we are called to be the Good Samaritan to each and every one our brothers and sisters in Christ and take time out of our week to make a call and ask what we can do to help them through whatever trial or hardship they are facing.

We are called to love our neighbors, to show compassion, mercy and grace to everyone. We - all of us here - each person in this sanctuary - and those not here today - are family - brothers and sisters in Christ - heirs to eternal life - church family. We need to join together, work side by side and care for each other as families should. We must step out of our safe zone, do things we're uncomfortable doing and no longer use the excuse that "it just isn't my gift". We are all uniquely gifted by God to help others in some unique way. We are commanded to get dirty, get involved, spend time and energy, become inconvenienced and start caring, serving and loving each other with mercy and grace.

The lyrics from the song "Do Something" by Matthew West explain what I'm trying to say better than I can.

I woke up this morning
Saw a world full of trouble now, thought
How'd we ever get so far down, and
How's it ever gonna turn around
So I turned my eyes to Heaven
I thought, "God, why don't You do something?"
Well, I just couldn't bear the thought of
People living in poverty
Children sold into slavery
The thought disgusted me
So, I shook my fist at Heaven
Said, "God, why don't You do something?"
He said, "I did. I created you!"

If not us, then who
If not me and you
Right now, it's time for us to do something,
If not now, then when
Will we see an end
To all this pain

Caring for Others with the Love of a Mother's

Oh, it's not enough to do nothing
It's time for us to do something

I'm so tired of talking about
How we are God's hands and feet
But it's easier to say than to be
Live like angels of apathy who tell ourselves
It's alright, "somebody else will do something"
Well, I don't know about you
But I'm sick and tired of life with no desire
I don't want a flame, I want a fire and
I wanna be the one who stands up and says
"I'm gonna do something"

We are the salt of the earth
We are a city on a hill
We're never gonna change the world
By standing still

If not us, then who
If not me and you
Right now
It's time for us to do something
If not now, then when
Will we see an end
To all this pain
It's not enough to do nothing
It's time for us to do something

This is OUR job – not someone else's – OURS! Each And Every One of US! We must stop waiting for "the right person", or the person with the "right job title" to do it for us. This is OUR JOB. This is God's calling for all Christians of all places and time. Each of us are ministers – ministering to one another – each one active in ministry in our church and in ministry beyond these walls and beyond just our church membership rolls.

Right Now I want to commit to doing a better job of caring for you all, my church family and neighbors. Today is the day I will stop finding excuses and stand up to love God with all of me, by showing his love when I care for you. How about you? Will you join me in taking action to care for our church family and community to the best of our ability? Will we join together to learn what that means and looks like?

Caring for Others with the Love of a Mother's

Right Now, we stop waiting for someone else to do it, stepping around and walking past the dying man in the ditch. TODAY we start getting dirty and take action, like the Good Samaritan did, to show God's love to ALL of God's children. **RIGHT NOW** we need to join together and commit to "loving our neighbors as ourselves" by caring for those in need. TODAY we need to take action to care for others like the care and love we have received from God and our mother's! **If not us, then who? If not now, then when? It's not enough to do nothing. It's time to DO SOMETHING! Amen!**