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Sermon Notes

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## **Love Your Neighbor: The Call of the Jericho Road**

**Matthew 22:34-40; Luke 10:25-37**

Today we're going to look down the most dangerous road in the world... the Jericho Road

Tim Keller: "The road to Jericho is steep and dangerous. So dangerous, in fact, that people have called it 'the bloody way.' Jerusalem rests at 3000 feet above sea level, while Jericho, only seventeen miles away, sits on land 1000 feet *below* the level of the Mediterranean. The road between the towns descends sharply through mountainous territory full of crags and caves, allowing thieves to hide, strike, and escape with great ease. Travelling the Jericho Road in those days was much like walking through a dark alley in the worst part of a modern city, except that it was many miles to the nearest streetlight."

It's not dangerous merely because there are brigands on it who will jump out at you and assault you and take your precious possessions

No... it's primarily dangerous for us because here, on the Jericho Road, the Lord Jesus Christ tests our hearts to the very core... will we love our neighbor as ourselves, or will we just love ourselves? Will we spend ourselves on behalf of others, or will we pass by in safety while wasting the opportunities God prepares for us for good works?

The Jericho Road can happen in your own homes, when your spouse demands more attention and needs more of you than you feel you can give

The Jericho Road can happen in your neighborhood, when you find out your neighbor has just been diagnosed with terminal cancer

The Jericho Road can happen as you stand in line at Wal-Mart and overhear a conversation between an unemployed man and his son concerning something the son wants to buy, but they can't afford it

The Jericho Road can happen at a stoplight, when a homeless man tries to catch your eye and hit you up for money

The Jericho Road can happen at church, when you see a newcomer standing alone after the service with no one who wants to talk to him

You see, the Jericho Road has to do with interactions with other human beings... ANY human being who has a need that you can meet

It is dangerous for us... deadly dangerous... because if we learn to walk the walk of the Priest or Levite, shielding our eyes and passing by in selfish isolation, we will find it gets easier and easier to do... and soon, we can hardly imagine EVER ministering sacrificially to another human being!!

Every day we are surrounded by people with needs... sometimes overwhelming needs

The relentless call of Jesus Christ over us every moment of the day is to pour ourselves out in loving service to them, to deny ourselves for them, to spend ourselves for them... to love them as we love ourselves

Last week, we began to study this issue... what does it mean to "Love your neighbor as yourself"???

Today, we seek even more clarity

## I. The Two Great Commandments

### A. Context: Final Week of Jesus' Life

#### 1. A Lawyer questions Jesus

***"Which is the greatest commandment in the Law?"***

#### 2. Christ's timeless and very orthodox answer

***Matthew 22:37-40 Jesus replied: "'Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind.' <sup>38</sup> This is the first and greatest commandment. <sup>39</sup> And the second is like it: 'Love your neighbor as yourself.' <sup>40</sup> All the Law and the Prophets hang on these two commandments."***

### B. Last Week: Made the case that the Two Commandments are INTERTWINED

#### 1. True Love for Neighbor Depends on First Loving God

- a. You cannot truly love your neighbor without loving God more
- b. Loving your neighbor more than you love God is IDOLATRY
- c. Thus husbands and wives should NOT love each other more than they love God
- d. Parents should NOT love their children more than they love God

- e. Truly, a healthy love for neighbor must be a SUBSET of loving God... whenever we truly love our neighbor, we are loving God in the very act

## 2. HOWEVER... True Love for God ALWAYS Results in Love for Neighbor

***1 John 4:20 If anyone says, "I love God," yet hates his brother, he is a liar. For anyone who does not love his brother, whom he has seen, cannot love God, whom he has not seen.***

## II. What Does it Mean to Love Your Neighbor As Yourself?

### A. Definition Given

Love is cheerful sacrifice for the benefit of another person and for the glory of God

1. Love is an AFFECTION... a heart movement toward a person... it must come "from the heart"... this is included in the word "cheerful"
2. Love is SACRIFICE... a willingness to give something valuable... time, energy, money, yourself—your attention, your gifts, your personality... without sacrifice, there is no love; the more sacrifice there is, the greater the love

***John 15:13 Greater love has no one than this, that he lay down his life for his friends.***

3. Love results in BENEFICIAL ACTION... some action in the world, something is done to help the person

### B. Two Aspects are Indispensable

1. Heart Attraction
2. Beneficial (sacrificial) service

### C. Christ's Example

1. Heart moved

***Mark 1:40-41 A man with leprosy came to him and begged him on his knees, "If you are willing, you can make me clean." <sup>41</sup> Filled with compassion, Jesus reached out his hand and touched the man. "I am willing," he said. "Be clean!"***

***Matthew 14:14 When Jesus landed and saw a large crowd, he had compassion on them and healed their sick.***

***Matthew 15:32 Jesus called his disciples to him and said, "I have compassion for these people; they have already been with me three days and have nothing to eat. I do not want to send them away hungry, or they may collapse on the way."***

## 2. Interruptible

- a. One of the biggest challenges in living a life of love is GIVING UP YOUR OWN AGENDA for the day; how many times have you seen a motorist broken down by the side of the road or an elderly person with some need, or a poor person begging for money... and have shrunk back from helping because of how TIME CONSUMING it is to love your neighbor...
- b. It is so astonishing to me how INTERRUPTIBLE Jesus was

***Matthew 8:5-7*** *When Jesus had entered Capernaum, a centurion came to him, asking for help. <sup>6</sup> "Lord," he said, "my servant lies at home paralyzed and in terrible suffering." <sup>7</sup> Jesus said to him, "I will go and heal him."*

***Mark 5:22-24*** *Then one of the synagogue rulers, named Jairus, came there. Seeing Jesus, he fell at his feet <sup>23</sup> and pleaded earnestly with him, "My little daughter is dying. Please come and put your hands on her so that she will be healed and live." <sup>24</sup> ¶ So Jesus went with him.*

***Matthew 20:30-34*** *Two blind men were sitting by the roadside, and when they heard that Jesus was going by, they shouted, "Lord, Son of David, have mercy on us!" <sup>31</sup> The crowd rebuked them and told them to be quiet, but they shouted all the louder, "Lord, Son of David, have mercy on us!" <sup>32</sup> Jesus stopped and called them. "What do you want me to do for you?" he asked. <sup>33</sup> "Lord," they answered, "we want our sight." <sup>34</sup> Jesus had compassion on them and touched their eyes. Immediately they received their sight and followed him*

### D. "As Yourself"...

1. Does this teach the prior need for self esteem, or does it assume you already love yourself?
2. A command to love yourself??
  - a. Some follow this approach: "You can't love anyone else until you love yourself..."
  - b. So, first, love yourself, and then you will be fit and ready to love your neighbor as yourself
3. However, I think the Scriptures indicate we already love ourselves in the way this command wants us to do for our neighbors
4. Key verse: Ephesians 5

***Ephesians 5:28-29*** *husbands ought to love their wives as their own bodies. He who loves his wife loves himself. <sup>29</sup> After all, no one ever hated his own body, but he feeds and cares for it*

Every act of kindness and care you show to your own body—physical grooming, feeding, drinking, sleeping, scratching an itch, getting an extra blanket because you’re cold—all of this is evidence that you do love yourselves

5. How do we love ourselves?

- a. Consistently thinking of our preferences, our goals, our pleasures, our desires, our aspirations
- b. Consistently meeting our own physical needs: food, warmth, relief of pain, sleep, drink, etc.

6. This then is how we should love our neighbors... seeing their needs as if they were our own

***Philippians 2:4 Each of you should look not only to your own interests, but also to the interests of others.***

The non-Christian is fanatical about looking after his own interests... the Christian adds the interests of others

***Philippians 2:21 everyone looks out for his own interests***

“Looking Out for Number One”

This Darwinian, survival of the fittest, dog-eat-dog, selfishness is at the root of what makes life here on earth so wretched and sin-cursed

7. So, a loving Christian learns to see other’s needs as if they were his

- a. He looks at urban poverty and says “What would it be like if I lived there? What would I need?” He is thinking like Christ... stepping out of his own comfort and self-satisfaction to take on the misery of others
- b. A Christian looks at the lostness of co-workers and takes on their spiritual emptiness as his own problem
- c. He looks at total strangers in public places in terms of “What needs do you have that I can meet? Can I hold the door for you? Can I let you go first in the checkout line? Can I give you the last empty seat on the airplane and wait for the next flight? Can I stop in the rain and help you change your flat tire?”
- d. He is loving his neighbor as himself

E. The Measure: “As I Have Loved You”

- 1. Christ gave us a “New Command”... despite the fact that “Love your neighbor as yourself” is found in the Old Testament

***Leviticus 19:18 "Do not seek revenge or bear a grudge against one of your people, but love your neighbor as yourself. I am the LORD.***

2. But yet Christ later will say that He is giving us a new commandment

***John 13:34 "A new command I give you: Love one another. As I have loved you, so you must love one another.***

3. John picks up on this:

***1 John 2:7-8 Dear friends, I am not writing you a new command but an old one, which you have had since the beginning. This old command is the message you have heard. <sup>8</sup> Yet I am writing you a new command; its truth is seen in him and you***

How is this a new commandment? Jesus Christ's example is the most perfect fulfillment of this commandment in history... therefore, Christ adding the words "As I have loved you" is what's new... a whole new MEASURE of love for our neighbors

***John 15:12-13 My command is this: Love each other as I have loved you. <sup>13</sup> Greater love has no one than this, that he lay down his life for his friends.***

Jesus' willingness to go to the cross for our sins, to suffer under the wrath of God will forever stand as the measure of Christian love for others

***1 John 3:16 This is how we know what love is: Jesus Christ laid down his life for us. And we ought to lay down our lives for our brothers.***

### III. Heart Affection Described: 1 Corinthians 13

A. Basic Concept: Without Love, Sacrifice is Worthless

***1 Corinthians 13:3 If I give all I possess to the poor and surrender my body to the flames, but have not love, I gain nothing.***

B. Love is a Heart State Described in Detail Here

***1 Corinthians 13:4-8 Love is patient, love is kind. It does not envy, it does not boast, it is not proud. <sup>5</sup> It is not rude, it is not self-seeking, it is not easily angered, it keeps no record of wrongs. <sup>6</sup> Love does not delight in evil but rejoices with the truth. <sup>7</sup> It always protects, always trusts, always hopes, always perseveres. <sup>8</sup> ¶ Love never fails.***

If our hearts are not characterized like this, we are not really loving our neighbor as God commands

BUT love for neighbor MUST MOVE OUT into tangible acts of service to others

#### IV. Sacrificial Action Described: Luke 10

***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?"<sup>26</sup> "What is written in the Law?" he replied. "How do you read it?"<sup>27</sup> 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.'"<sup>28</sup> "You have answered correctly," Jesus replied. "Do this and you will live."***

***<sup>29</sup> ¶ But he wanted to justify himself, so he asked Jesus, "And who is my neighbor?"<sup>30</sup> In reply Jesus said: "A man was going down from Jerusalem to Jericho, when he fell into the hands of robbers. They stripped him of his clothes, beat him and went away, leaving him half dead.<sup>31</sup> A priest happened to be going down the same road, and when he saw the man, he passed by on the other side.<sup>32</sup> So too, a Levite, when he came to the place and saw him, passed by on the other side.<sup>33</sup> But a Samaritan, as he traveled, came where the man was; and when he saw him, he took pity on him.<sup>34</sup> He went to him and bandaged his wounds, pouring on oil and wine. Then he put the man on his own donkey, took him to an inn and took care of him.<sup>35</sup> The next day he took out two silver coins 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.'***

A. Context: Earlier in Jesus' life... same issue, same question

B. The Effort at Self Justification

1. The Lawyer is seeking to justify himself, rather than to change himself
2. In effect, he wants confirmation that he already has done enough to please God
3. This is such a warning to us... we excuse ourselves from loving our neighbor as ourselves on many bases... all of them will appear spurious on Judgment Day
  - a. We think we don't need to love our neighbor if he is "undeserving poor"... an able-bodied man who should be working but instead is begging; or someone whose bad choices have led to addictions
  - b. We think we don't need to love our neighbor as ourselves if he is a stranger, or possibly dangerous... or will involve us deeper than we want to be involved
  - c. We all tend to draw the boundary lines around who we should love so tightly that it excuses most of our unloving relationships
4. More on this at the end

C. Two Key Questions the Parable Answers

1. Who is my neighbor?
2. What does it mean to love him as myself?

#### D. The Parable Related

1. The deadly dangerous Jericho Road
2. Five people in the tale
  - a. The victim: we know nothing about him, and that's important... we don't know his nationality, his race, his age, his socioeconomic status, nothing!! It's striking, too, because we know more about those who FAIL to help him than about he himself; Jesus' point is, "Your neighbor is ANYONE in need"
  - b. The robbers: what's yours is mine if I can take it from you; selfish people who are willing to break God's laws and man's in order to get what they want; people are to be used and abused to meet selfish needs
  - c. The priest and Levite: what's yours is yours, and what's mine is mine... PERIOD!! I don't want to get involved at all... they stay on the other side of the road, look away, will not allow the man's sufferings to flow into their minds... WILLFUL IGNORANCE; notice that they are both "spiritual people" who think they are serving God; they might even be on some important spiritual mission... but they pass by on the other side

[Dear friends: the most terrifying sins to me are sins of OMISSION... good works God intended us to do, and we refused to do them out of fear or selfishness

Sheep and Goats: Goats condemned for what they DIDN'T DO!!

***Matthew 25:41-45 Then he will say to those on his left, 'Depart from me, you who are cursed, into the eternal fire prepared for the devil and his angels. <sup>42</sup> For I was hungry and you gave me nothing to eat, I was thirsty and you gave me nothing to drink, <sup>43</sup> I was a stranger and you did not invite me in, I needed clothes and you did not clothe me, I was sick and in prison and you did not look after me.'***  
<sup>44</sup> ***"They also will answer, 'Lord, when did we see you hungry or thirsty or a stranger or needing clothes or sick or in prison, and did not help you?'*** <sup>45</sup> ***"He will reply, 'I tell you the truth, whatever you did not do for one of the least of these, you did not do for me.'***

What will it be like for us to see a replay of our lives and have the Lord point out all the opportunities to serve others that we missed through our self-centeredness!!

- d. The innkeeper: What's mine is yours for a price! This is the merchant, the salesman, who will give anything he has FOR A PRICE; he'll get involved if he gets something earthly out of it immediately



- e. The Good Samaritan: what's mine is yours if you need it. Jesus specifically chooses a Samaritan because it would have been so jarring; as if to say, "If it were a Samaritan lying there, you should take care of him" Notice how far the Samaritan goes in caring for this unknown man
- i) Stopping his own life; investing himself fully;
  - ii) Giving of his time: even spending the whole night caring for the man; this man's well-being has become his whole focus
  - iii) Giving of his money: paying silver coins to the innkeeper
  - iv) Promising to come back later to finish his care and see to his full recovery

#### E. The Summary Command

***Luke 10:36-37 "Which of these three do you think was a neighbor to the man who fell into the hands of robbers?" <sup>37</sup> The expert in the law replied, "The one who had mercy on him." Jesus told him, "Go and do likewise."***

This is a categorical command from Jesus to do "mercy ministry"... loving needy neighbors as yourself

#### F. The Questions Answered

1. Q: Who is my neighbor? A: Any needy person God brings into your life.
  - a. The Good Samaritan didn't know this man at all... he was a total stranger
  - b. However, he could see that he was a human being, created in the image of God, laying by the side of the road bleeding to death... there was no need for a screening process, for an interview, for any kind of filtering at all...
    - i) Human being
    - ii) In need of something
    - iii) Providentially in my life (I see him, I know of his need)
2. Q: What does it mean to love him as myself? A: Sacrificial acts of service that meet the need presented.
  - a. The Good Samaritan does whatever is needed to care for this wounded stranger
  - b. He sacrifices his time: he interrupts his own schedule and diverts himself from his own plans

- c. He sacrifices his compassion: he allows his heart to be wrapped up in the care of this man; he hurts because the man is hurt; he attends immediately to the man's medical needs; he gives of his own medical supplies
  - d. He sacrifices possibly his own safety: the road to Jericho was clearly dangerous, and the robbers might be nearby; this Good Samaritan puts his own concern for his safety aside to meet this man's needs
  - e. He sacrifices his night's sleep: he stays up through the night caring for him, nursing him, seeing to his wounds
  - f. He sacrifices his money: paying the innkeeper his fee, and promising more as needed;
  - g. He sacrifices an element of his future: promising to return and continue this man's care
3. What does "as myself" mean here?
- a. Can you imagine the Good Samaritan saying as he sees the man lying there in his blood, kneeling down next to the groaning man and saying softly to him, "I've really been struggling with my self-esteem recently... I don't really like myself very much; I don't think I can do anything for you right now; let me go get myself together, feel better about myself, then I will be able to love you as I love myself."
  - b. I think the Lord is assuming that the Samaritan, if he himself were knocked to the ground and beaten, if he were able would attend to his own wounds, bandage his own head, get himself to an inn to rest and recuperate, and pay for it if he had any funds available; so therefore he does this for the unknown man lying there

#### G. Provocative Questions Remaining

1. Is mercy ministry NECESSARY to our very existence as Christians?
  - a. The original question was "What must I do to inherit eternal life"?
  - b. Do I have to be the Good Samaritan in order to go to heaven?
  - c. It appears that Jesus sees care for the poor as of the essence of being a Christian.
2. What is the scope and dimension of my life of loving my neighbor? Like the lawyer, aren't we ready to ask "Who is my neighbor?" again and again!

Tim Keller, *Mercy Ministry: The Call of the Jericho Road* lists ways modern Christians seek to escape costly ministry to the poor and needy by making excuses and asking these kinds of questions:

- a. "Just how far do we have to go?"
  - b. "You don't mean that we should pour ourselves out for anyone and everyone do you? Doesn't charity begin at home?"
  - c. "You don't mean that every Christian must get deeply involved with hurting and needy people... I'm not very good at that kind of work; it's not my gift!"
  - d. "I have a busy schedule and I am extremely active in my church. Isn't this sort of thing the government's job, anyway?"
  - e. "I barely have enough money for myself!"
  - f. "Aren't many of the poor simply irresponsible?"
  - g. And realistically... how far should we go? CNN and the internet bring situations like the Haiti earthquake immediately to our eyes and our minds... are we really responsible for every disaster and every suffering person all over the world? Aren't the needs of the poor around the world so overwhelming no Christian can truly address them?
3. What can really transform an individual Christian from selfishness to a true heart of love for neighbor? What will make the church powerful enough to heal the deep hurts, fill the deep needs, and transform surrounding society?
  4. Are we not living on the Jericho Road right now???

## V. Priorities in Love

### A. Gospel Coalition Talk on Mercy Ministry

### B. Laid Out Five Priorities

#### 1. Justification before Ministry

- a. Before you even seek to love your neighbor as yourself, be sure your own sins are forgiven

***John 6:28-29 Then they asked him, "What must we do to do the works God requires?" 29 Jesus answered, "The work of God is this: to believe in the one he has sent."***

- b. BUT that doesn't mean God excuses us from the Second Great Commandment!!

2. Ministry to the Soul above Ministry to the Body

***Matthew 16:33 “What would it profit a man to gain the whole world and forfeit his soul?”***

- a. What good is it to minister to someone’s body which is temporary, but show no concern for his soul?
- b. This is the flaw of the “Social Gospel”... and we’re heading there again!!
- c. BUT that doesn’t mean the ministry to the body isn’t important... Jesus poured out His life day after day healing the sick and feeding the hungry

3. Ministry to the Family of Believers above Ministry to Outsiders

- a. Our top priority in terms of physical provision is our own family

***1 Timothy 5:8 If anyone does not provide for his relatives, and especially for his immediate family, he has denied the faith and is worse than an unbeliever.***

- b. Our second top priority is the family of believers

***Galatians 6:10 Therefore, as we have opportunity, let us do good to all people, especially to those who belong to the family of believers.***

- c. BUT this doesn’t mean we have no responsibility to the poor and needy lost people of the world

4. Ministry to the Poor above Ministry to the Rich

- a. Jesus provokes us with this teaching

***Luke 14:12-14 Then Jesus said to his host, "When you give a luncheon or dinner, do not invite your friends, your brothers or relatives, or your rich neighbors; if you do, they may invite you back and so you will be repaid. <sup>13</sup> But when you give a banquet, invite the poor, the crippled, the lame, the blind, <sup>14</sup> and you will be blessed. Although they cannot repay you, you will be repaid at the resurrection of the righteous."***

- b. BUT this doesn’t mean that we have no ministry to the rich

## VI. Applications and Challenges

### A. Loving Your Spouse as Yourself

- 1. Feeding and caring for the bodily needs of your spouse... fundamental to the command to husbands

***Ephesians 5:28-29 husbands ought to love their wives as their own bodies. He who loves his wife loves himself. <sup>29</sup> After all, no one ever hated his own body, but he feeds and cares for it, just as Christ does the church***

2. Caring for your spouse's spiritual needs

- a. Pray for your spouse as you pray for yourself
- b. Feed your spouse's soul the word of God
- c. Encourage your spouse's development in Christ as you would desire to be encouraged yourself... when you see your spouse take faith steps, speak words of encouragement
- d. Notice your spouse's needs... put her needs above your own as you get home from work after a long day

B. Loving Your Child as Yourself

1. Never forget that your children are created in the image of God... and that while for a time you are clearly in a position of authority, someday you will stand on equal footing with them before the cross and the Judgment Seat of Christ
2. Parent them the way God parents you... encourage them, comfort them, meet their needs as they are sick in the middle of the night; make yourself available to them at night when they want to talk right before bed... don't begrudge the time it takes to shape and mold them for their future

C. Loving Your Neighborhood Partner (Neighbor) as Yourself

1. Be courteous neighbor... manage your homelife in a way so as not to be a burden to your neighbors;
2. Develop the relationship... pray opportunities to meet needs... I know a man in this church who has used his skills and his machinery to bless an elderly widow in his neighborhood... he plowed her driveway during the recent snow storm
3. Be aware of medical issues your neighbor has... try to find ways to be a blessing
4. Be aware of special events and issues in their lives... celebrate with them as appropriate
5. Do not live the present pattern: your home a fortress in which you enter on the weekend and pull up the drawbridge and watch your flatscreen TV for hours and have no relationship with those immediately around you

6. Seek to build a relationship with them for the gospel... pray for a good opportunity to share the good news of Jesus Christ

#### D. Loving Your Fellow Church Member as Yourself

1. Pray for the church phone list... one page a day
2. Be aware of the needs in the church
3. Consider your fellow brothers and sisters, their needs, their special circumstances, their challenges, their spiritual gifts and abilities
4. Pray that God will give you opportunities to build up each member of the Body of Christ here... by word, by note, by acts of service...

#### E. Loving Your Urban Neighbor or International Neighbor as Yourself

1. Pray for the lost in our community
2. Get involved in the urban ministry or the ministry to internationals
3. Seek to lead someone to Christ
4. Pray for a heart to the poor and needy...
5. DURHAM CARES... a great ministry which can match you up with a fruitful ministry right here in Durham... like e-harmony.com for urban ministry

#### F. Loving a Stranger in the Elevator or at the Gas Station as Yourself

#### G. Loving Fellow Employee Neighbors as Yourself

#### H. Loving Lead Story on the News Neighbors as Yourself (Haiti)

1. Sacrifice meals, change your lifestyle, raise some money for the needs of Haiti
2. When you hear of some disaster, bring it to the Lord in prayer and ask if He wants you to be involved in some way
3. Follow the ministries of your own church: FBC had a ministry in Gulfport after Hurricane Katrina; and we have had an ongoing avenue of ministry in Haiti
4. For the other tragedies, maybe it's enough to simply pray for those folks, or for people ministering to them

#### I. Loving Unreached People Group Neighbors as Yourself

1. "Without hope and without God in the world..." Do you care???

2. Pray for the gospel to advance to the ends of the earth
3. Ask the Lord to give you an opportunity to minister to unreached people groups, perhaps through FBC missionaries