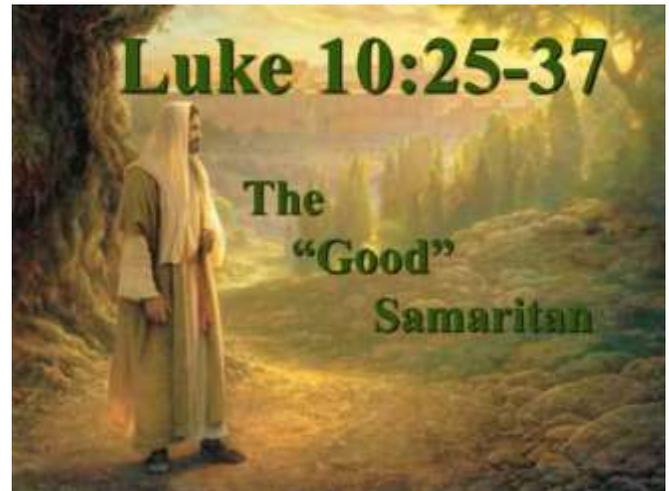


Pentecost 5-July 14th, 2019 Sermon
Baltic and East Nidaros Lutheran Parish



Luke 10:23-37

²³Then turning to the disciples, Jesus said to them privately, "Blessed are the eyes that see what you see! ²⁴For I tell you that many prophets and kings desired to see what you see, but did not see it, and to hear what you hear, but did not hear it."

²⁵Just then a lawyer stood up to test Jesus.

"Teacher," he said, "what must I do to inherit eternal

life?" ²⁶He said to him, "What is written in the law? How do you read it?" ²⁷He 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." ²⁸And he said to him, "You have given the right answer; do this, and you will live."

²⁹But wanting to justify himself, he asked Jesus, "And who is my neighbor?" ³⁰Jesus replied, "A man was going down from Jerusalem to Jericho, and fell into the hands of robbers, who stripped him, beat him, and went away, leaving him half dead. ³¹Now by chance a priest was going down that road; and when he saw him, he passed by on the other side. ³²So likewise a Levite, when he came to the place and saw him, passed by on the other side. ³³But a Samaritan while traveling came near him; and when he saw him, he was moved with pity. ³⁴He went to him and bandaged his wounds, having poured oil and wine on them. Then he put him on his own animal, brought him to an inn, and took care of him. ³⁵The next day he took out two denarii, gave them to the innkeeper, and said, 'Take care of him; and when I come back, I will repay you whatever more you spend.' ³⁶Which of these three, do you think, was a neighbor to the man who fell into the hands of the robbers?" ³⁷He said, "The one who showed him mercy." Jesus said to him, "Go and do likewise."

"The Right Answer" -Sermon by Pastor Randall J. Questad

Grace and peace to you from God our Father and from our Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ. Amen.

"What must I do to inherit eternal life?" This is a question that I will ask confirmation students before they are confirmed. I want them to know to answer to salvation. The lawyer that came to Jesus also wanted to know the answer to this question. But Jesus did not respond with an answer. He instead asked him two questions which revealed the true heart and intentions of the lawyer. The lawyer had come to test Jesus. He did not come to hear what Jesus had to say.

I included verses 23 and 24 which precede the parable of the "Good Samaritan" in the gospel for today. Here Jesus had told his disciples, "Blessed are the eyes that see and the ears that hear. Jesus rejoiced that secrets to the kingdom of heaven were kept from the wise, but were revealed to children.

And now Jesus had a wise man, a lawyer, before him asking, "What must I do to inherit eternal life?" Children know the answer to this question. "Nothing!" There is nothing YOU can do to inherit eternal life. Eternal life is given to you without any work on your part. Jesus said, "I am the way, the truth, and the life. No one comes to the Father except through me." Paul adds, "You are saved apart from the law. You are saved by grace alone, not through your works. You are not the active person in your salvation. You are passive. Jesus gives. You receive. Jesus has done it all for you.

But when the lawyer asks Jesus, "What must I do to inherit eternal life?", Jesus knows what is in the heart of the lawyer and instead of giving him the right answer, "Nothing", he asks the lawyer two questions. First, "What is written in the law?" and secondly, "How do you read it?" These questions pleased the lawyer to hear. His job revolved around the written law and so he was very willing to tell Jesus what was written in the law and more than happy to give his opinion to what it means. The lawyer quotes the summary of the 10 commandments that were written on two tablets from Deuteronomy 6:5. "You shall love the Lord with all your heart, and with all your soul, with all your strength, and with all your mind; and your neighbor as yourself." Jesus tells the lawyer, "You have given the right answer; do this, and you will live."

Why did Jesus tell the lawyer that this is the right answer and not "you don't need to do anything?" Jesus knew that the lawyer did not want to hear this good news. He wanted to find salvation in what he could do. The answer the lawyer gave, the answer that is recorded in Deuteronomy is the right answer. But there is a problem. A problem the lawyer whose eyes can't see. You can't do it. You certainly can't do it with all your heart, soul, strength and mind--ALL of the time.

But the lawyer felt that he could. He apparently felt that he could do the first part of the command by loving God all the time, since when he wanted to justify himself, he only asked about who is his neighbor. But, justifying oneself is not a new idea. We all at one time or another rather listen to ourselves than listen to the truth Jesus speaks.

So Jesus replies to the question of "Who is my neighbor?" by telling a parable. Parables have often been misunderstood to be stories using familiar everyday things or experiences to help people understand the meaning to something. But when Jesus tells this parable, the lawyer doesn't understand anything more than he did before. He doesn't see nor does he hear. And quite honestly many others today don't see or hear either. This certainly is true when you hear the news and they describe someone as a "good Samaritan" based on a good deed done for a neighbor. People have turned the parable of the "Good Samaritan" from a question that was asked about eternal life into how we should treat our neighbors. Salvation is determined on how you treat your neighbor and Jesus is sidelined.

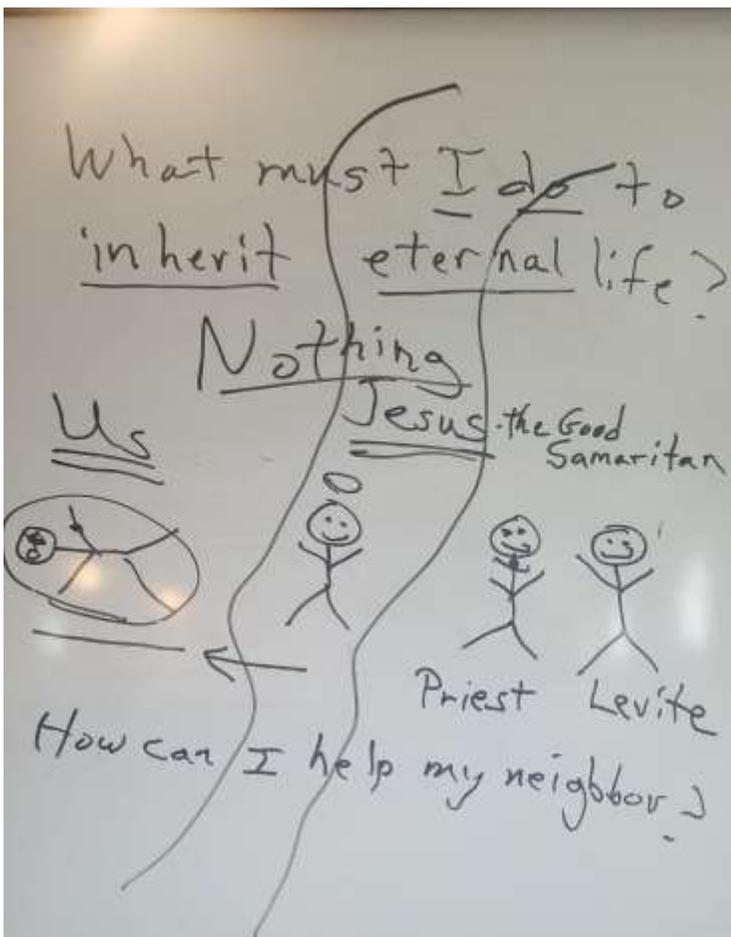
So Jesus lays out the parable about a man who was robbed, stripped, beaten, and described as being half dead. Then a priest comes down the road and passes on the other side. A Levite, someone who works in the church does the same. The priest and the Levite do what the law commands them to do. The law commands them not to come into contact with anyone unclean or someone who is half dead wou. But following the law doesn't save the half-dead person. Following the law leaves the half dead man to die without any hope of new life.

It wasn't until the good Samaritan who didn't follow what was written in the law came by and saved the half dead man. He saved him by doing everything for him. The half dead person didn't even crawl toward the good Samaritan. The good Samaritan came to him when he saw him. Then he took his own oil and poured on the wounds, then applied his own wine, then used his own bandages, then put him on his own animal and took him to an inn where they could continue the care. Then the good Samaritan paid him from his own money enough for a couple day's stay and promised to return to pay for any additional expenses. The good Samaritan didn't set up a repayment plan for what he had done for the half dead man, nor did the half dead man ask the good Samaritan what he could do to help.

Notice how Jesus changes the question of the lawyer. The lawyer wanted to justify himself by wanting to know who his neighbors were. Instead Jesus asks the lawyer, "Which of these three **was a neighbor** to the man who was robbed?" The lawyer replied, "The one who showed him mercy." Jesus told the lawyer, "Go and do likewise." Jesus turned to focus from the one half dead in the ditch to the one who did the saving.

The wise lawyer once again didn't see or hear the point of the parable. The lawyer had asked, "What must I do to inherit eternal life?" In the parable, there was only one person who was saved and it was the man who was half dead. The half dead man did nothing to save or justify himself. The lawyer never saw that in order to be saved, you must realize that you are like the man who was left by the side of the road to die and who could do nothing for himself. You are not like the priest or the Levite who were following the law, nor are you like Jesus the only one who gives salvation. Jesus who saves apart from the law. Jesus who saves by coming near the unclean and giving everything. Jesus who saves and knows that you have nothing to repay him for what he has done for you.

The lawyer asked a good question. "What must I do to inherit eternal life?" Jesus has a good answer for you. "Nothing." I have done it for you. Amen.



This Sunday I taught the parable of the Good Samaritan . Here is my fine artwork depicting us as the ones needing mercy, Jesus as the only one who can deliver the mercy we need to inherit eternal life, and the priest and the Levite who follow the law where nothing gets done.

So what is the right answer to the question, "What must I do to inherit eternal life?"- NOTHING !