

LOVING LIFE

Luke 10:25-37

And behold, a lawyer stood up to put him to the test (that “him” is Jesus), saying, “Teacher, what shall I do to inherit eternal life?” He said to him (this is Jesus speaking now), “What is written in the Law? How do you read it?” 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.” And he said to him, “You have answered correctly; do this, and you will live.”

But he, desiring to justify himself, said to Jesus, “And who is my neighbor?” 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. Now by chance a priest was going down that road, and when he saw him he passed by on the other side. So likewise a Levite, when he came to the place and saw him, passed by on the other side. But a Samaritan, as he journeyed, came to where he was, and when he saw him, he had compassion. 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. 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.’ Which of these three, do you think, proved to be a neighbor to the man who fell among the robbers?” He said (this is the lawyer speaking), “The one who showed him mercy.” And Jesus said to him, “You go, and do likewise.”

God, I pray that you would open up your word to us this morning – not the clever, craftiness of man’s words, but your inspired word -- that it would bring change into us this morning, that it would root deep in us and it would spread and impact everything that we do, that we would be changed today because of the words in this Book. These are not just words; these are your words. By the power of your Spirit, change us through the words that we study today. We pray in Jesus’ name. Amen.

On January 27, close to this date, almost 63 years ago – it was 1956, in Montgomery, Alabama, the pastor of Dexter Avenue Baptist Church received a phone call. It was around midnight. The caller

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said, “We are tired of you and we are tired of your mess. If you’re not out of town in three days we are going to blow your house up and blow your brains out.” The man was 27 years old. Many of you know who I am talking about. This was Martin Luther King, Jr.

Leading up to this event, Dr. King was already at the center of the Civil Rights Movement in a lot of ways. He had just moved to Montgomery less than a year earlier. Montgomery was a highly segregated city. A year prior to this, the Supreme Court had ruled that schools were to be desegregated, that students would be able to come together. That was the decision *Brown vs. Board of Education*.

Then a year later, closer to the time when he received this call, a worker from the NAACP was sitting on a bus. Her name was Rosa Parks. She refused to give up her seat to a white passenger on the bus and was arrested. This led to a monumental movement at that time called the Montgomery Bus Boycott. Martin Luther King Jr. was asked to be the spokesman of that movement and to lead the protests.

So, this was the mess that the caller was referring to at that point. Dr. King hangs up the phone and starts trying to figure out, “How am I going to get myself and my family out of Montgomery without looking like I’m running away, without looking like a coward?”

As the story goes, he starts to pray. He prays out loud in his kitchen. He is praying to the Lord, asking, “What do I do?” And he feels that the Lord really speaks to him in that moment, clearly saying, “Martin Luther, stand up for truth, stand up for justice, and stand up for righteousness.” So he stayed. And God used him to help lead this country through one of its most important seasons of history, in the battle for equality and the battle for life.

Tomorrow is Martin Luther King Day. In 1983, President Ronald Reagan signed a bill that created this holiday. I believe it wasn’t until years later that it was actually first observed. This is a day that’s set apart to help recognize this man who uniquely stood for life.

Amazingly, one year later, the same president issued a proclamation on January 22 (again, very close to this date) designating that day to be National Sanctity of Human Life Day. That was as a response to the Supreme Court’s decision a decade earlier to legalize abortion in all 50 states. So today, next Sunday, this week, around this time, churches all over the country, people all over the country will think and reflect on life, on God’s gift of life. They will reflect on the lives that have

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been lost to abortion, and to commit themselves to celebrating and protecting human life at all stages.

So today, this is what we are doing. We are focusing on life – the importance of life, human life. Life has value. We have been made in the image of God. We have been created fearfully and wonderfully -- uniquely created -- and because of that, we have value. Because breath is in our lungs, there is value in us. All human life has value.

I'll tell you what, Hawaiians felt the importance of life this weekend. I don't know if you saw what happened yesterday. Before I show you what they saw, just know that it didn't happen. This happened, but the event it advertised did not happen, so no one freak out as we tell it. But they got this message in all caps. This is what they got:

EMERGENCY ALERT

BALLISTIC MISSILE THREAT INBOUND TO HAWAII. SEEK IMMEDIATE SHELTER. THIS IS NOT A DRILL.

What?! For 40 minutes, there was no corrective measure taken. There was somewhere between 10 and 40 minutes where there was no retraction. There was no other message or any word on what was happening. It said, "THIS IS NOT A DRILL." That was the only true part. It wasn't a drill. It was just a huge mistake. Something happened to the emergency broadcast system and it had Hawaiians freaking out. You could go look at articles about how people were responding. There was one article about this mother: "What I went through in those 10-30 minutes when I thought we were being attacked." It's terrible! That's a big oops from the government.

Events like that can really help put things into perspective for us – that life is precious, that because we have been made in the image of God, we have value. And not only that, we have to stand for life, asking the question: What does that even mean? What does it mean to stand for life? If I asked you if you think life is important, you'd say, "Yeah, I do. I believe life is important." "Do you believe life is precious?" "I do believe life is precious."

Often when we get those questions asked of us, we think primarily and initially in terms of our own life. Because I like my life, and I think my life is precious. I might intellectually say your life is precious too, but really, my life is more precious because I want to preserve my life and do what I can to satisfy the needs of my life. Although we would be hard pressed to admit that out loud, let's

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just face it. We tend to act that way and think that way. What does it mean to stand for life? What does it mean to be Pro-Life?

We stand, like the lawyer in this story, asking the question: Who is my neighbor? Who deserves my help? Who deserves the attention? How far do I need to go in order to help or care about someone else? This story helps us. It does. It provides context. It provides a situation for us, so let's go over this story quickly. This is the Good Samaritan. You understand that that word and that term is used in everybody's language all over the world. If someone says, "Oh, you're such a Good Samaritan," there is a context there usually people understand.

In the story, a lawyer stands up, and this lawyer is not like our attorneys. This is a lawyer who is excellent and skilled in the religious law, the Jewish law. It says a lawyer stands up and he wants to test Jesus. It says he was hoping to tempt him or to test him. Why would you want to test Jesus? Well, because Jesus was welcoming everybody. He was hanging out with all the wrong people, according to the Jewish law. He was hanging out with those who were in violation of the law.

So of course, a lawyer comes up and says, "This guy is in violation of the law. Let me put him to the test. Let me ask him this question: How do I inherit eternal life?" He thinks Jesus is going to say, "Oh, it doesn't matter what you do. The law is not important. It doesn't matter how you act. It doesn't matter how you live, because that's who Jesus was hanging out with." They are saying, "We are going to show him. We are going to prove that he is a liar, that he is ungodly."

So he says, "What do I do to inherit eternal life?" That was the big care for them, truly -- what happens after this life. Life is important, life is precious, but there is also maybe a life to come, so he is saying, "Well, what do I do to get eternal life?" He think he is going to trap and expose Jesus. But Jesus turns it around, of course, as Jesus always does, and asks a question. He says, "Well, you know the law. You read it twice a day. You understand it." He says, "What does the law say? How do you read the law?"

The lawyer does what he is supposed to do. He summarizes the law based on the summation of the Old Testament. He says you love the Lord your God with everything. Love God with everything - heart, soul, mind, strength. And you're supposed to love other people as yourself. What does that mean? It means you love people with the same energy and fervency and passion that you use for you own life - you go and extend that to other people. Jesus says, "You got it. That's right. Now go do that and you will live."

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And here is the moment. This is the pivotal moment in the story, because this is the problem that Jesus dealt with over and over and over again in Israel. We hear that, hopefully you hear that, and you go: That's hard. That's not just hard, that seems impossible -- to love God perfectly, continuously, consistently, and show that same love that's been given to me, and love other people perfectly, so much so that it's the same love that I would use to preserve my own life.

The lawyer should have heard that and recognized his own need, recognized that he was not doing that. He can't do that. He is unable to do that. He won't do it in the future. He should have said, "Oh no, I'm in trouble. I am in constant violation of the law and therefore I am in opposition to God." He should have fallen on his face repenting and saying, "I'm sorry. I can't do that. I need help." But he doesn't do that, right? What does he say? The author gives us this little descriptor. He says, "But, wanting to..." what himself? "Justify himself." What does it mean to justify yourself?

Let's just see. Who likes to be right here? Yeah. I like to be right. I am right a lot, so that helps. Don't argue with me, because you're wrong. I always fight against needing to justify myself, to be right, to always win, to always have the right answers, and that's exactly what this guy does. He wants to expose Jesus. He wants to justify himself. And here Jesus is now exposing him. He says, "You need to love God perfectly, with everything you have. Go do that and you'll have eternal life." In order to be right he says, "Who? Who is in the camp? Who is the one that I need to do this to? Who is my neighbor?"

It's a telling question that the lawyer asks. Why does he ask that question? What is he trying to get at? Listen, I have two of my children in the front row here. If one of them is not acting right towards the other, I just say, "Hey, love your brother. Just love your brother." What's the first thing that they want to say back to me? Well, I'll tell you. They say, "What if he does this? Okay, I'll love him, but what if she says these words to me, or what if he acts this way towards me?"

There is a question in that, saying, "Listen, I get it, Dad. I know you want me to love. And I do. I will. But there is going to be a time when something comes up that will mean I do not have to love them anymore. Then you are going to give me the green light and I can do whatever I want to my sibling in order to justify myself." This is what we do. This is the question that the lawyer asks. The grown-man lawyer, who knows the law perfectly, is trying to find the loophole. He says, "What's the minimum I need to do?"

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What does Jesus do? Jesus tells a story. Jesus is always telling stories. I just wonder what everybody does. At some point do they start saying, “Oh guys, here we go. Get ready, Peter, he’s going to tell a confusing story again.”

So he tells this story. He says, “Look, I’m going to answer your question. Do you want to know what the minimum is to truly follow God? Let me tell you a little story about three men who are face to face with someone in desperate need, and you are going to understand by the end of it.” It’s about loving God so much that your love for others will be shocking. It will be unbelievable, because this story is shocking. If we don’t have the cultural understanding of what’s going on here, we won’t get the full weight of what Jesus says. Every story Jesus told was shocking. It was the very thing that made his enemies want to kill him.

You have what’s most likely a Jewish man walking on the street. He gets jumped. He gets robbed. He gets beaten. He gets stripped of his clothing and he is left half-dead, half-dying, dying on the side of the road. That’s the scenario. These robbers come and take care of business for this guy.

We are then presented with three people passing by. The first two are labeled a priest and a Levite. These are two men, religious leaders in the land who were experts in Jewish law. These were actually the ones who were in charge of helping the poor, of distributing funds to the poor when there was a need. These guys come, they see the man there (that’s what the word says), and they decide to take an alternate route, saying, “I’m not going to deal with this right now.”

Then you have a third guy coming by. He is given the title of “Samaritan.” That doesn’t trigger any alarms or bells usually to us. But this is the part where things would have gotten uncomfortable. This is where you would have heard a gasp coming from the crowd, saying, “No, no, no, no. No. Not a Samaritan.”

You see, Samaritans were hated. Hated. They were seen as impure, forgive the term: half-breed. When Israel was taken captive by the Babylonians, they took a bunch of Israelites away to the enemy’s land, and some stayed. The people that stayed were then populated by the enemy, Gentiles who stayed in the land also. They ended up marrying and having babies. Those babies grew up into adults, and the pure line of Israel was broken. It was mixed. It was tainted. They were seen as traitors.

They were hated by the Jews, so much so that later, when Israel came back, when they were granted access back into the land, wanting to rebuild Jerusalem, rebuild the temple, and rebuild the

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walls, the Samaritans came and said, “Hey, we want to reconnect. We want to get back to our Jewish roots. We want to help you build the wall. We want to help you build the temple,” but the Jews said, “No, no, no. We hate you. Get away. We don’t want you. We don’t want your help.”

So the Samaritans got angry and left. They went and built their own temple. Then the Jews got really upset about that and they went and destroyed that temple and killed some of the Samaritans. So this is racial tension at its worst. They hate each other. They are at war with one another. Then here comes the knight in shining armor in the story – the hated Samaritan.

When a Jew would travel from north to south, Samaria would be a place they’d have to go through, but the Jews didn’t even want to set foot in the land. They would go around to get to where they were trying to go. I can’t understand that, because in my car when I drive, I want every fast route imaginable. If I hit a red light, I’m all undone. Forget adding days, maybe weeks onto your journey because you just can’t stand someone so badly. This is what hatred does in us. It makes us insane.

Here’s the story. That’s it, right? Jesus gives the answer. This is the illustration to answer the question: Who is my neighbor? Whose life is valuable enough for me to pay attention? Here it is. The knight in shining armor, the hero of the story, the most hated man in Israel saves the day, tends to the dying man, binds his wounds, gives him drink, gives him shelter, and saves his life. What do we learn from this?

I’m going to give you three things that I think we can pull out. They kind of build off of each other. There is a strong connection here between how we love God and ultimately what our hope is in and how we love people.

- I. Loving God means loving life.
- II. Loving life means risking everything.
- III. Risking everything means gospel hope.

- I. Loving God means loving life.

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What do I mean by this? This is the primary connection point here, and maybe the simplest to understand. I mean that a person who truly knows God, who loves God, who worships God, even imperfectly (because that's all we can do), will love creation, will love human life, will value life, will see the value and the importance in human life, and will stand up for life.

Look, we read early on in the scriptures, right away in Genesis chapter 2, that God creates the earth. He creates all the things that inhabit the earth and waits till the very end to create his special creation, man. It says he forms him from the dust of the ground and he breathes the breath of life into his nostrils. It is one of the most beautiful pictures in all of scripture, one that I am just constantly amazed at.

No matter how that really looked and felt in that moment, there is a point in that illustration that God has created us specially and uniquely. He didn't do that with any of the animals. He didn't do that with anything else in all of creation – not the trees, not the clouds, not the ground. It was humans. It was mankind. Then from the man he creates woman and he creates this perfect union to demonstrate his love for us. We, then, are to go and show that to the world by marriage and by loving one another. It is an amazing picture and it shows us that we have been given the breath of God in us, the life of God, the essence of God in us, and we are valuable because of that.

There is an inherent worth in all of human life. The Ten Commandments were given to us to show the character of God – how he thinks and how he views creation and us and himself. The first four commandments all have to do with our relationship with God and how we are to view him. Then 5, 6, 7, 8, 9, 10 all deal with our relationship with one another – how we are to value life, how we are to value the creation that God has put before us.

We have that very specific commandment – the sixth commandment -- that deals with the taking of life: murder. Don't murder. Do not murder. It means more than just avoiding killing. Jesus comes in later to fill out the picture for us. He says, "Look, you think you did well by not murdering anybody. There's so much more going on here. If you have hatred in your heart toward another person, then you are doing it.

When we say we are to value life, it's not just avoiding hurting other people. That's too easy. It's actually more than that. It's so much more than that. We are living life to actively pursue the wellbeing of others. That's the character of God. That's what he means when he tells us these things. Every commandment has something that we are to do and not do.

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He says, "Do not murder." We are to not do this. But we are also to do something else on the other side, and that is to stand up for life and actively pursue life. There is the question again: For who? Who is my neighbor? I think this story shows us a lot. But especially, we are to stand up and preserve and protect and be ambassadors for life, for the most vulnerable in the world, the voiceless, the weak, the marginalized, the outcast, the disenfranchised, the orphan, the unborn, those who have been historically oppressed. Loving life means that you see this, and not only that you agree intellectually with this, but you also see the problem.

See, these guys all came on the road. Two men saw the problem and decided to leave. The third man saw and actually acted on it. Part of standing up for life, part of loving life, is that we see the problem, and not only see it, but we let it move us with compassion. That's what the scripture says. It says the third man finally saw. But what? It said, "But...he had compassion" on him.

Guys, we sometimes are a compassionless people. As Christians, we need to be the most compassionate people on the face of the earth. Historically we have been, but we've also been problematic at times with the way that we communicate things and the way that we see certain situations. Everybody does this, but I'll just speak to the house today - those who know the Lord, at least those who are interested in listening about the Lord - we use extreme cases as arguments to or to not do something. Sometimes those things are just not helpful. We use the outliers, the most extreme cases to try to prove a point. Whereas we see that God says, "Look, you see the man dying on the side of the road? Have compassion. Go do something." Everything in the Samaritan was taught to hate the man dying on the side of the road.

Loving life means you see the problem, you see the crime, you see the injustice, and you act. We can't all do the same things to make a difference in the world, but we can absolutely act. We can change the spheres of our world where we live. Doing nothing is not an option. Saying nothing is not an option.

If you choose to ignore that the problem exists, it's a problem. Guys, we have a problem. There are a lot of problems. Whether or not what was allegedly said happened this past week, about certain countries and about people from those countries - I don't even think it matters if the president said it or not, because it came out in one way or another. Someone either crafted that story or it was actually said, and they're both wrong. Both are horrendous and both are terrible.

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This is not a political conversation. This is a conversation about life and what is valuable. We need to see the problems. We see and we need to act. We need to have compassion. “Well, I just don’t feel compassion for this person” – that’s a problem! We need God to do something in us to change how we see, because more and more we are becoming less compassionate people. As a whole we are less empathetic. I always get apathetic and empathetic confused. I have to be careful when I say it. We are apathetic. We have bad empathy (this is good grammar everywhere) because we are more isolated than ever. It’s so easy to see some characters on a screen and say, “Oh well, that stinks.” Or we are so inundated with all of it we are like, “Ugh.”

The place we get to live this out most is right here -- right here, in this room, where we have people from all over. We have people who are dealing with things from every walk of life. We can show the love of Christ in such a unique way and strengthen one another, because this is a community that can go out into the world together and make a difference. When we leave this place, we are filled, we are fueled. We can go out and say, “Okay, loving God means loving life, so I’m going to love life at all costs this week.”

It’s not going to be with just the people that are like you, or have the same bank account as you, or the same color skin as you, or the same experiences as you. That’s the minimum. We are not trying to do the minimum. We are not trying to look for loopholes, for who’s in and who’s out. There’s too much of that happening.

Look at what Tim Keller says. This is really helpful. This is us. We are all here. This is me, for sure. He says:

We instinctively tend to limit for whom we exert ourselves. We do it for people like us, and for people whom we like. Jesus will have none of that. By depicting a Samaritan helping a Jew, Jesus could not have found a more forceful way to say that anyone at all in need -- regardless of race, politics, class, and religion -- is your neighbor. Not everyone is your brother or sister in faith, but everyone is your neighbor, and you must love your neighbor.

Yes. I get it. It is hard. And I get that this involves risk, because it is risky to live this way. That goes into the next point.

II. Loving life means risking everything.

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I'm not saying just a little bit of risk; I'm saying risking everything. If we just use the illustration of the story, the Samaritan risks everything to go help! First of all, the guy is still alive, so obviously the robbers could still be close by. They didn't finish the job. Maybe they were waiting to get this guy also. He gives his money. He gives his animal. He gives his wine, and Band-Aids, and everything he's got to help. He even gives his money and takes him to an inn. He says, "Take care of him and I'll pay you more. It doesn't matter." He risks everything he has. This is not necessarily some rich man who has stuff to spare.

Living like this will bring risk. It might be physical risk, emotional risk, or relational risk. Look, there is the risk of pride. That quote I just read – there is a risk when you extend yourself to help someone that is not like you or is outside of your comfort zone, right? Helping someone we wouldn't normally help. It's easy to show people love who love us back, or who we like, or who will repay us in some way. We really live this out when we extend ourselves to someone who is outside the fence. Maybe it's an indicator to get rid of the fence.

Giving yourself to the cause of life will involve risk and most of us just do not like that. I get it. I don't always like that, because I like comfort. I want to be comfortable. We want to know what the outcomes are going to be, right? We like that. "Okay, if I exert this much, I want to know how it's going to end up. Am I going to get jumped by the robbers if I help this guy? Because that's a little dangerous, and I don't know if I should extend myself in that way."

Listen, "extending" yourself – that word alone -- when we extend we leave ourselves vulnerable to attack. The life that God has given to us is not one to say, "Protect yourself at all times, and if there's an opportunity to give aid, or give help, or love someone, or love me, then go ahead and do it." That's never the message in scripture. The message is always: "Extend yourself. Remove the fences that you are holding yourself in by or keeping people out of, and extend and go." You want to help the orphan? Yes, you are going to get beat up. You want to help the most vulnerable in our world? You are going to feel it. Talk to anybody who has done foster care, who has adopted, or who has extended themselves in any way to go after those who are abandoned and lost and neglected.

Do you want to stand against abortion? You're going to have problems. You're going to have to deal with some things. You are going to have to deal with tough question. It doesn't mean you stay silent; it means you better have good answers, which I'm not going to give you here. You want to

stand up for racial equality? You're going to have to deal with some things that are extremely uncomfortable, and answer some uncomfortable questions, and probably have some conversations with people you don't normally have conversations with. They are going to be uncomfortable because you are going to hear things you don't want to hear. But this is what God has called us to. There is no choice. There is no option to say, "It doesn't exist. I'm going to close my eyes." Or, "It exists, but what can I do?" Or, "I don't care." None of those are good options or acceptable before the eyes of the Lord.

Let me just say that it's okay to be uncomfortable. It's actually really good. We need more discomfort in our lives. Good things happen when we're uncomfortable. You just have to look at the illustration of exercise to see that. It's the most uncomfortable thing we do, and it provides such a great benefit. There are deeper things going on. There is a joy in the midst of it. There is a joy in the midst of the extending and on the other side of the extending. Even though you are going through pain, there is a joy that something great is happening because God is honored in it. You are living for God. You are living for him in a way that is showing that "I don't care as much about myself, but I care about you." We show it by extending our love, risking everything. What causes Martin Luther King to pick up that phone, hear that phone call, hang up, and say, "Alright, I'm going to keep going?" Anyone would have been understanding and said, "Get your family out of here."

Men and women throughout history have stood in the face of unthinkable opposition to stand up for what's right. It's never easy. It's never comfortable. It's never painless. It's always profitable. It's always worth it in some grander picture. In the Bible we are told that for the joy that was set before him, Jesus endured the cross. The founder and the perfecter of our faith - for the joy that was set before him, went to the cross, endured the cross.

We can ask ourselves, "How do we do this? How?"

III. Risking everything means gospel hope.

Risking everything takes something deeper going on. To even be able to do that there is a gospel hope that must be at the foundation of it. Because look, how can any of us live this way? It's hard. It's very hard. We are all uncomfortable right now, even just talking about it. It's like, "Ugh, I don't like dealing with these things." I understand that. We hear this story, see the Good Samaritan's

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story, hear him say, “Go and do the same,” and we say, “I don’t even know how to begin to do that. I don’t have the strength to do that. I don’t know what that means.”

I’m going to tell you how we find the strength. I don’t want to make this too simple, but it’s not about following rules. It’s not about me getting up here and saying, “Don’t be a racist. Don’t hate people. Go love people. Don’t kill babies. Don’t do _____.” Already, you are like, “Yeah, alright, that’s fine. Okay, Adam, I won’t do those things.”

It has to be deeper than that. We live in a moral worldview that says, “Okay, there is some morality I need to live by, so I’m going to follow this set of rules.” Even if you’re not a Christian, you might have rules you want to follow. If you’re a Christian, you say, “Well, the Bible says, ‘Do this,’ so I’ve got to do it. I’m just going to hold on tight and keep making it happen and hopefully more good will happen than bad.” Look, that’s not going to bring you life. All it’s going to do is bring oppression on you. It’s going to bring weight that shows you that you can’t do it. And it’s going to bring a lot of guilt when you don’t do it.

The other side of it is what I’m saying by gospel hope. There is something deeper happening when we look at this. Love for life comes from an understanding of grace. We ask all the wrong questions. We want to be like the lawyer and we want to ask, “Who is the neighbor? How much is this going to cost? What if they don’t deserve my help?”

The question that we should be asking is this: What if I were the one lying in the ditch -- beaten, robbed, dying, bloody, and my only hope in the world is an act of free grace from someone that initially I thought was an enemy? Would that change the way that I view my way of life?

Friends, let me tell you, this is the point that Jesus makes: We are the ones in the ditch. This is not: Go be like the Good Samaritan. You’re this great Samaritan. Go and do these great works. No, it’s: “You’re in the ditch. You’re hopeless, helpless, and totally without what you need, unless someone comes and pulls you out of the ditch.

When we can see that, when we can get that, when we look at the scenario and say: “Wow, unless God moved upon my life, I was hopeless, helpless, dead in my own sin. But God came -- not because I was beautiful or lovely or I did some great things. He just came and said, “I see you. I love you. I’m going to save you. I’m going to pull you out of the ditch.”

Special Message – Loving Life

Luke 10:25-37 | Sunday, January 14, 2018 | By Adam Greenfield



That's the motivation we have. That's the gospel hope that we have. If we just say it's about rules: Don't do this, don't do this, don't do this -- that's the problem. That's what we sound like too often when we are typing our Facebook posts and we are out there in the world. The evangelical name looks and sounds nothing like it's supposed to sound like.

We have something that we hold onto that is so much deeper than a bunch of rules. It is a life that has been found in Christ. And when we see that, we love God. We say, "God, thank you for what you've done." We sing the songs: "How Great Thou, How Great Thou Art, How Great Thou Art," because of what God has done for us. We love him so much that it just flows out! We are not dealing with all the questions of who is a neighbor and who is not. We just want to love people!

When we see injustice, we just want to act. We say, "Look at what was done for me. I want to help you! I think you need help. Can I help?" Our condition without God is what that man was dealing with in the ditch. When we really understand our true condition, we will love.

Look, we forget it all the time. That's why you come here and get reminded. That's why we live in small groups – so we can remind one another: "Hey, man, you're in the ditch. Don't forget that you were saved." This is how we love other people now. That's why we do this. We are not just trying to fill seats. We are trying to impart a message that needs to be told and heard by millions and millions of people.

When Martin Luther King hung up that phone, only the Lord could give him the vision and the strength to stay and to continue his work, and he did. He stayed. He became one of the greatest men in human history. He stood for life, and God used him to do amazing things. I wish I could tell you more of the things that happened. I also wish I could tell you that things got really easy for him after that point – that God spoke to him, then God just removed all enemies everywhere that he went.

No, it was actually the complete opposite. God preserved him, but his house was firebombed. His life was threatened. He was thrown into prison, and on April 4, 1968, 50 years ago, he was assassinated while standing on a motel balcony in Memphis. It doesn't make sense. You ask why his life was cut so short, why all these things... We are not given the answers, but we are given hope that God uses people, imperfect people, to do amazing things. The point of this message is not: Go be like Martin Luther King when you leave, and go be like the Good Samaritan, and that other nice guy you know that does really good things for people. No, that's not the picture at all.

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The point is: Jesus has saved you, and our life is a response to that. The point is to value life like the Lord values life -- to love him, to submit your life to him, to be amazed by grace, by how he shows you mercy every single day, and let that breed an uncompromising and shocking love for other people.

A lot of problems exist in our land right now. They are varied and they are severe. Church, we need to be different. I would just tell you that if you've been affected by abortion, there is forgiveness in Jesus Christ. There is comfort in Jesus Christ. There is peace in Jesus Christ. My mother had an abortion after me. I know I would have had a brother or sister somewhere, somehow, that I will never meet this side of heaven. But I know that God is bigger than that.

If you have experienced racial prejudice, gender prejudice, any of the bigotry that exists in our world, I am sorry. If you have experienced it here, we are sorry. I want to tell you that we care, and we are active in the opposition of that, and that there is life in Jesus Christ, and hope in him. We have a great God who is doing things that we cannot see. Let the Good Samaritan be a place for us to see the love that God extends to us when we are in our deepest pit. Let it be an example for us to say: This is how we live for Christ.

Church, let's stand and sing.