

**LAMPLIGHTER**  
**FEBRUARY 2010**

**THEME: “Jesus Spoke to Them in Parables – Love Your Neighbor!” LK 4:10-12**

*“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. {31} A priest happened to be going down the same road, and when he saw the man, he passed by on the other side. {32} So too, a Levite, when he came to the place and saw him, passed by on the other side. {33} But a Samaritan, as he traveled, came where the man was; and when he saw him, he took pity on him. {34} 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. {35} 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.’” (Luke 10:30-35 NIV)*

My Fellow Good Samaritans,

The so-called Golden Rule exists in many of the world’s major religions:

**Islam:** “None of you is a believer if he does not desire for his brother that which he desires for himself.” (Sunna)

**Judaism:** “That which you hold as detestable, do not do to your neighbor. That is the whole law; the rest is but commentary.” (Talmud, Sabbath, 31)

**Brahmanism** (Orthodox Hinduism): “Such is the sum of duty: do not do to others that which, to you, would do harm to yourself.” (Mahabharata, 5, 1517)

**Buddhism:** “Injure not others in a manner that would injure you.” (Udana-Varga, 5, 18)

**Confucianism:** “Here certainly is the golden maxim: Let us not do to others that which we do not want them to do to us.” (Analects, 15, 23)

**Taoism:** “Consider that your neighbor gains and loses that which you lose.” (Tai Shang Kan Ying Pian)

**Christianity:** “In everything do to others as you would have them do to you.” (Jesus in Matthew 7:12)

The parable of the Good Samaritan goes much deeper than simply doing good and befriending one’s neighbor no matter how honorable and valiant might be these acts of kindness. The context of this parable is framed within a conversation that took place between Jesus and a lawyer. The lawyer’s objective was two-fold. His first objective was to test Jesus. The second goal was to justify himself through his fulfilling of the law.

**To Test Jesus:** His first question is “What must I do to inherit eternal life?” Jesus does not answer his question, but he gets the lawyer to answer his own question. Jesus asks the lawyer: “What is written in the law?” “What do you read there?” After his probing, the lawyer responds by quoting (**Deu 6:5 NIV**) “Love the LORD your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your strength;” and (**Lev 19:18 NIV**) “Do not seek revenge or bear a grudge against one of your people, but love your neighbor as yourself. I am the LORD.” The man gives the right answer, but does he act on it? In effect, the lawyer asks, “What, having done, will I inherit?” Jesus tells the lawyer, “If you want to inherit eternal life by your actions, just continually love God and your neighbor with the totality of all that you are. The lawyer wanted a list of do’s and don’ts, but no line is drawn, and no list is given. Jesus makes clear that the requirements are limitless.

For this reason, we might ask, “What can anyone do to inherit eternal life?” The answer is: Absolutely nothing! God has done it all for us already in the person of Jesus Christ who paid the penalty for our sins. People receive an inheritance as a gift, not as a reward for some performance. (Est 6:7-11 NIV) “So he answered the king, ‘For the man the king delights to honor, {8} have them bring a royal robe the king has worn and a horse the king has ridden, one with a royal crest placed on its head. {9} Then let the robe and horse be entrusted to one of the king's most noble princes. Let them robe the man the king delights to honor, and lead him on the horse through the city streets, proclaiming before him, ‘This is what is done for the man the king delights to honor!’ {10} ‘Go at once,’ the king commanded Haman. ‘Get the robe and the horse and do just as you have suggested for Mordecai the Jew, who sits at the king's gate. Do not neglect anything you have recommended.’ {11} So Haman got the robe and the horse. He robed Mordecai, and led him on horseback through the city streets, proclaiming before him, “This is what is done for the man the king delights to honor!”” In Christ God delighted in honoring us and clothing us with the robe of salvation.

**To Justify himself:** The lawyer does not give up on the hope that he can earn his own entrance into eternal life. He does not know mercy. He lives by his intention and ability to present himself as a righteous man before God. He wants to see himself as fully righteous. So he asks, “Who is my neighbor?” If Jesus answers, “Your relatives and friends,” he can respond, “I have fully loved these.” Then Jesus will praise him and say, “You have fully kept the law.” The lawyer can then depart, accepting praise for his good works and enjoying a newly won honor and confidence. However it would be confidence in himself and not in our Lord and Savior Jesus. God says in the following passages: (Hosea 6:6 NIV) “For I desire mercy, not sacrifice, and acknowledgment of God rather than burnt offerings.” (Micah 6:1-8 NIV) “Listen to what the LORD says: ‘Stand up, plead your case before the mountains; let the hills hear what you have to say. {2} Hear, O mountains, the Lord's accusation; listen, you everlasting foundations of the earth. For the LORD has a case against his people; he is lodging a charge against Israel. {3} ‘My people, what have I done to you? How have I burdened you? Answer me. {4} I brought you up out of Egypt and redeemed you from the land of slavery. I sent Moses to lead you, also Aaron and Miriam. {5} My people, remember what Balak king of Moab counseled and what Balaam son of Beor answered. Remember your journey from Shittim to Gilgal, that you may know the righteous acts of the LORD.’ {6} With what shall I come before the LORD and bow down before the exalted God? Shall I come before him with burnt offerings, with calves a year old? {7} Will the LORD be pleased with thousands of rams, with ten thousand rivers of oil? Shall I offer my firstborn for my transgression, the fruit of my body for the sin of my soul? {8} He has showed you, O man, what is good. And what does the LORD require of you? To act justly and to love mercy and to walk humbly with your God.”

A careful comparison reveals a significant truth. While the first statements call the faithful to refrain from doing harm to others, Jesus calls His followers to devote life to doing good to others. Furthermore, Jesus removed all limits as to who the neighbor is and how far one should go in serving that neighbor. While helping one's neighbor, loving your enemies and praying for those who persecute you is always worthy of our attention, we cannot redeem those things for our salvation. They merit nothing! But thanks be to God, He reached out to us – His neighbors in need.

**Close with prayer, the Lord's Prayer, Benediction, and Song – #21 “I Love to Tell The Story”**