

The Mission and the Great Commandment

This series is meant to help us wrestle with what it means to follow Jesus.

- To be known for what He was known for
- To be like Him
- To be on mission with Him

The mission of King Jesus is to establish His Kingdom.

We follow the King when we follow the Great Commandment and fulfilling the Great Commission.

The Great Commandment is this...

³⁶ "Teacher, which is the greatest commandment in the Law?" ³⁷ Jesus replied: "Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind.' ³⁸ This is the first and greatest commandment. ³⁹ And the second is like it: 'Love your neighbor as yourself.' ⁴⁰ All the Law and the Prophets hang on these two commandments." (Matthew 22:36-40) NIV

And... you might be asking, "Who is my neighbor?" You wouldn't be the first.

²⁹ (The teacher/expert of the law) asked Jesus, "And who is my neighbor?" ³⁰ 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. 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, brought him to an inn and took care of him. ³⁵ 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.'" (Luke 10:29-37) NIV

Notice the main characters in the story:

- The beaten man- most likely a Jew.
- A Priest- a member of the Jewish elite
- A Levite- also a member of the elite religious class
- A Samaritan- ethnically and ethically outside of covenant

The Good Samaritan should have been the villain. Jesus makes him the hero.

The parable isn't told to answer, "Who is my neighbor?" but, "What must I do to inherit eternal life?"

²⁵ On one occasion an expert in the law stood up to test Jesus. "Teacher," he asked, "what must I do to inherit eternal life?" ²⁶ "What is written in the Law?" he replied. "How do you read it?" ²⁷ 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.'" ²⁸ "You have answered correctly," Jesus replied. "Do this and you will live." (Luke 10:25-28) NIV

Eternal life= *zoē aiōnios*= life in the next age:

- *Messianic age that the “righteous” Jews would be resurrected into.
- *The expert in the Law needed to become an expert in love.
- *His eternity depended on it and he knew it

Note: 29 But he wanted to justify himself, so he asked Jesus, “And who is my neighbor?”

And Jesus never answers the question. Not in the parable and not at the end. The passage ends with verses 36-37 where Jesus asks a question.

³⁶ ***“Which of these three do you think was a neighbor to the man who fell into the hands of robbers?”***
³⁷ ***The expert in the law replied, “The one who had mercy on him.” Jesus told him, “Go and do likewise.”***

Notice the 2 questions:

- The teacher asked, “Who is my neighbor?”
- Jesus asked, “Who was a neighbor?”

Because the right question should have been, “How can I love my neighbor?”

If “what I must do to inherit eternal life involves loving my neighbor” then the right question is “how can I rightly love my neighbor?” (and assume since God loves everyone that everyone is my neighbor.)

If you follow Jesus you will be known for your love of your neighbor.

Loving God isn’t proven by who and what you refuse to touch but loving the untouchables.

The expert in the Law really wanted to know who he didn’t have to love.

He is the Priest and the Levite in the story who think that sometimes the way you prove your love for God is by not “loving” certain people.

“The LORD said to Moses, “Tell these things to Aaron’s sons, the priests: A priest must not make himself unclean by touching a dead person. But if the dead person was one of his close relatives, he can touch the dead body. The priest can make himself unclean if the dead person is his mother or father, his son or daughter, his brother or his unmarried sister.” (Leviticus 21:1-3)

Jesus is trying to help the teacher become the Samaritan in the story.

He is trying to help us.

Because the road to Jericho and the roads of Las Cruces are still filled with people that might “contaminate” us.

The religious will always find an excuse to pass by.

The righteous will always find a reason to help.

And only the righteous get resurrected to experience life in the age to come.

The Priest and Levite found religious excuses not to help the man.

The Samaritan had the best excuse. The beaten man was a Jew.

He found a reason to love the man. The man needed help and God loved him.

So, the Samaritan demonstrated the love of God.

- *a love that wants and works for the best in others
- *a love that risks being less than “religious” in order to reach those in need
- *a love that sacrifices energy, time, and resources
- *and a love that is willing to do all of these things for those we see as rivals

The Kingdom is inherited by those marked by love for God and a love for others.

It is not inherited by “experts in the law” who cannot love.

It is not inherited by religious people who use their love of God as an excuse on who they should and shouldn’t love.

The Priest and Levite asked, “what will happen to me if I stop?”

The Samaritan asked, “what will happen to him if I don’t?”

The Kingdom belongs to the Good Samaritans not the Goody Two Shoes Saints

Now, you might be asking, “Wait, are you saying that a person inherits eternal life by good works and being the Good Samaritan?”

Question: Is a person saved by good works?

Answer: No. We are saved apart from good works but not without good works.

We find that the New Testament confirms that salvation is a gift received through faith in Jesus. We experience life in the age to come when we are united to the One who is the Resurrection and the life.

John 3:16 declares that:

“anyone who believes in Jesus will not perish but have eternal life.”

I John 5:13 says,

“I write these things to you who believe in the name of the Son of God so that you may know that you have eternal life.”

Jesus said to the religious people of his day,

“You search the Scriptures because you think that in them you have eternal life; and it is they that bear witness about me” (John 5:39)

And we find Jesus praying in John 17:3

“Now this is eternal life: that they know you, the only true God, and Jesus Christ, whom you have sent.”

And the apostle Paul makes it clear in Ephesians chapter 2;

“⁴ But because of his great love for us, God, who is rich in mercy, ⁵ made us alive with Christ even when we were dead in transgressions—it is by grace you have been saved... ⁸ For it is by grace you have been saved, through faith—and this is not from yourselves, it is the gift of God— ⁹ not by works, so that no one can boast.

But...Jesus did not tell this parable to let us off the hook in the hopes we think that he is just trying to help us answer the question, “Who is my neighbor?” He did not tell this parable in the hopes that we the expert in the law would simply reach the conclusion that he was as a sinner and ask Jesus for forgiveness because he realized he didn’t love like he should. If those were the points, Jesus would have answered the question, “who is my neighbor?” He didn’t. He would

have told the expert in the Law, “Hey, the point is you can’t love. You need a Savior. I am here to save you. Believe in me.” Jesus did not say that. He said, “do this and you will live.”

Because as Martin Luther said,

““We are saved by faith alone but the faith that saves is never alone. It is always accompanied by love and good deeds.” (Martin Luther.)

Scripture testifies to this just as much as it testifies that we are saved by grace through faith.

The very next verse in Ephesians 2:10 reads: ***‘For we are God’s handiwork, created in Christ Jesus to do good works, which God prepared in advance for us to do.’***

And James tells us that **“Faith without works is dead.” (James 2:17)**

Paul writes that ***“the only thing that counts is faith expressing itself through love.”*** (Galatians 5:6)

So, the fruit of faith is love. In fact, John would write this,

“¹⁴ We know that we have passed from death to life, because we love each other. Anyone who does not love remains in death. ¹⁵ Anyone who hates a brother or sister is a murderer, and you know that no murderer has eternal life residing in him. (I John 3:14-15)

“⁷ Dear friends, let us love one another, for love comes from God. Everyone who loves has been born of God and knows God. ⁸ Whoever does not love does not know God, because God is love. (I John 4:7-8.)

And, if you are asking who is my brother or sister that John is referring to that you have to love, then you, like the expert of the Law, are missing the point.

The only way that our faith is real is if our love is real.

We cannot separate loving God from loving others.

Being theologically correct and morally pure won’t save us.

It won’t save the world around us.

“³⁴ “A new command I give you: Love one another. As I have loved you, so you must love one another. ³⁵ By this everyone will know that you are my disciples, if you love one another.” (John 13:34-35)

So the Great Commandment is the New Commandment. Because the only way people get a taste of the One True King is to experience the love of that King. And the only way that happens is if we love them.

This is not a guilt trip... It is a love trip.

Only love produces love.

You are loved and free to love.

A final passage from I John 4:18-19 - *“¹⁸ “There is no fear in love. But perfect love drives out fear, because fear has to do with punishment. The one who fears is not made perfect in love. ¹⁹ We love because he first loved us.”*