

A Big Neighbourhood

by Jim Cymbala

The sermon emphasizes the importance of showing compassion and kindness to those around us, and of putting biblical principles into practice in our daily lives.

Duration: 35:53

Scripture: Matthew 4:4, Matthew 15:11, Mark 7:19, Luke 9:3, Acts 16:31, Romans 3:23-24, Ephesians 2:8-9

Topics: "Christian Life"

Description

In this sermon, the preacher emphasizes the importance of being a good neighbor and following the example of Jesus. He shares a personal story about encountering someone in need and highlights the need for discernment when helping others. The preacher then delves into the story of the Good Samaritan from Luke chapter 10, emphasizing the depth and significance of the parable. He concludes by emphasizing the importance of loving God and growing in our love for Him, while also recognizing the importance of reaching out to others and being a neighbor to those in need.

Transcript

The name of this message is A Big Neighborhood, because I wanna talk about neighbors, because Jesus spoke about neighbor. Who is my neighbor in the story of what is called the Good Samaritan? Some of us know that story, but I don't think we know the depth of it and the coloring and texture of it. And we're gonna read from Luke chapter 10.

Let's look. On one occasion, an expert in the law stood up to test Jesus. Now, every word is important when you read it.

So notice the key word here is, he just didn't come with a question. He came to test Jesus. So there's some hidden motives in this.

He's not coming openly and sincerely. He's coming to find out if he can trip Jesus up, as many of the teachers of the law tried to do. Teacher, he asks, what must I do to inherit eternal life? That is a very important question.

What do I have to do to know that when I die, I will live forever with God? I would say that's the number one question in the universe for all of us. Some people have a lot of money, some people have less money. But one second after you're dead, it won't matter what money you had.

To my friend Larry Goss and to Andre Crouch, they're in a place where money is totally irrelevant. All the things we're worrying about, they're not even thinking about it. And they're just starting eternity.

Unless you believe that Jesus is a total charade and a total religious fake, then you have to take his word serious. There is life after death. So this was the question.

What must I do to inherit eternal life? What is written in the law, he replied, Jesus did. How do you read it? 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. You have answered correctly, Jesus replied.

Do this and you will live. We're gonna get back to that sentence and what he just said in a second. But he wanted to justify himself.

So he asked Jesus, and who is my neighbor? I'm supposed to love my neighbor as myself, but who is my neighbor? Is everybody my neighbor? In reply, Jesus said, a man was going down from Jerusalem to Jericho, the capital city to a town northeast near the Dead Sea in Israel. When he was attacked by robbers, they stripped him of his clothes. They beat him and they went away, leaving him half dead.

A priest happened to be, a religious person, happened to be going down the same road. And when he saw the man, he passed by on the other side. So too a Levite, that was the priestly tribe.

When he came to the place and saw him, he passed by on the other side. But a Samaritan, who the Jews despised, they weren't allowed to have any dealings with Samaritans. This is what makes the story so hard to take for the Jewish people who were listening to Jesus.

But a Samaritan, the ones you hate, the ones you look down on and call dogs. But a Samaritan, as he traveled, he came where the man was, and when he saw him, he took pity on him. He went to him and he bandaged his wounds, pouring on oil and wine.

And then he put the man on his own donkey and brought him to an inn and he took care of him. The next day, he took out two denarii and he gave them to the innkeeper. Look after him, he said, and when I return, I'll reimburse you for any extra expense you may have.

Which of these three do you think was a neighbor to the man who fell into the hands of robbers, Jesus asked. The expert in the law replied, he wouldn't say Samaritan. He said the one who had mercy on him.

And Jesus told him, and to us today, go and do likewise. That one we can apply to all of us, even though he was talking to that man. So let me just tell you one thing about this story.

I noted already that the man was there to test Jesus, so you have to be careful now. He's not asking a sincere question, he's asking a question to trip Jesus up and that helps us understand how Jesus answered. But I want you to note here something about how to correctly read the Bible.

One of the rules of understanding the Bible is to compare scripture with scripture and understand context and where you're reading. So as I mentioned several times in the last year, there's two covenants or two testaments in the Bible, the old and the new. The old was given to Israel, the Jewish people, it was characterized by the giving of the law and the main person in that testament is Moses who received the law and gave it to the people of Israel.

Then God said, I'm gonna make a new covenant and the old one will be done away with, it'll pass away. And the new covenant will be when I write my laws in people's hearts, not on stone. When people put their trust in the one that I send to die for their sins, when they put their trust in him, they're gonna be born again and have a new life, a new power inside of them.

I will write my laws in their minds and engrave my ways on their hearts and they're gonna be different not because there's a law on a stone, they're gonna be different because I'll be living in them through the Holy Spirit and that's what Christianity is about, that's what the new covenant is about. You don't earn salvation, no one can live a good enough life to ever go to heaven. You can't earn eternal life by living a certain way.

You receive Jesus as your savior, he's the gift that God gave us, amen? And everyone who believes on the Lord Jesus Christ shall be saved, the Bible says. By the works of the law, no one will ever be accepted by God because all have sinned and come short of the glory of God. We've already messed up, can't undo it.

But Christ came to die for our sins. We read the New Testament in a different way we read the Old Testament. There's many passages in the Old Testament and principles that are not restated in the New.

So the question is when you read the Old Testament, you ask when you see a command, don't eat pork, don't eat these fish, don't eat this, don't eat that. Or women after they give birth can't come and worship. They have to be purified and all this and that.

You read that and then you ask yourself is that repeated and restated in the New Testament? Because if it isn't, it doesn't apply to us. Capital punishment for different cursing your mother and father. Christians do not practice that.

We don't take territory, we don't kill our enemies. It's a different covenant. Now even when you read the New Testament, you have to understand that the Gospels and their teaching are not exactly the final word that you read in the epistles.

Why and what do I mean by that? Okay, the man came and asked Jesus what must I do to inherit eternal life? The answer that Jesus gave him is something you will never find Paul or Peter or any of the apostles ever telling anybody. Nobody inherits eternal life by loving the Lord your God with all your heart, soul, strength, and mind and your neighbor as yourself. That is not an answer anybody would give in the New Testament.

In the book of Acts, we have every sermon that was recorded by Luke and none of them told the people this is what you do to inherit eternal life. You love the Lord your God with all your heart, soul, strength, and mind and your neighbor as yourself. Now you'll go to heaven.

That is not the message. But as Jesus was approached by this trickster, he had not died. He had not shed his blood.

He had not risen from the dead. Even when he told his own disciples about what he was gonna do, they couldn't understand what he was doing. And after he rose from the dead, he told the disciples go into all the world and preach the what? The Gospel.

What is the Gospel? Repent of your sins and believe on the Lord Jesus Christ and you shall be saved. End of story. That's the Gospel.

Not do this or do that. I love the Lord your God. Should we love the Lord our God? Yes.

And we grow in love. How many love him more this year than you did five years ago? Lift your hand. Well, I see.

But you're not more saved than you were five years ago. You're just growing in your love for God. You follow what I'm saying.

So there's a lot of teaching in the Gospels because Christ had not completed his mission. We shall call it transitional. But then there's other principles which you see restated over and over and over.

Let me give you an example on something we read this week that no one obeyed in the book of Acts or since then. No evangelist, no preacher has ever obeyed what Jesus told the 12 when he sent them out for the first time. In Luke nine, he takes the 12 disciples and he tells them to go out.

This is how you have to, when you read scripture, say wait a minute, is this repeated? Who's he talking to? Is it just for them or is it for us too? That's how you have to read the Bible. So notice this, never found again. He told them, take nothing for the journey.

Don't even pack a suitcase. No staff, no bag, no bread, no money. And no change of shirts.

I hope they had deodorant in those days, right? No extra shirt. Whatever house you enter, stay there until you leave that town. If people do not welcome you, leave their town and shake the dust off from your feet as a testimony against them.

So they set out and went from village to village proclaiming the good news that the kingdom of God was near and healing people everywhere. So don't take a shirt, don't take any money, don't stay at a hotel, nobody does that. Nobody did that in the book of Acts.

Paul would go and stay at one place, sometimes move, and he would travel and stay one place, he stayed for three years. So what you have to do when you read the Bible and the New Testament is always say, what's happening now? Is this an eternal principle for all of us, which we're gonna get to one now, or is this transitional? Am I reading something in the Old Testament about food laws and this and that? Even in the Gospels, you know, what Jesus has not yet completed what he came to do, so obviously he can't say, oh, believe on the Lord Jesus Christ and what I did on the cross, what cross? What cross, you're here, you're 31 years old, what cross? Oh, and by the way, my blood will wash away, what blood, what are you talking about? So, that's a little thing to happen on the way because someone could read that and say, this is the message I gotta tell my family. You wanna go to heaven? Love the Lord, your God, with all your heart, soul, strength, and might, and your neighbor as yourself.

And you'll go to heaven. But how much do I have to love the Lord, my God? How do I know that I loved him enough to get to heaven? Mm, that's a good question. I love most of my neighbors, I don't love some.

Does that mean I'm lost? You get it? How many get it? See, by the works of the law, nobody will ever be saved. How many are happy it's a gift that God gave us his son, Jesus Christ? It's by grace that you're saved, not of works, lest anyone should boast. No one's gonna be in heaven, I love God more than you.

Never. Everyone in heaven is gonna be, thank you, Jesus. Thank you, Jesus.

Worthy is the lamb. So, this man came to test Jesus, and Jesus gave him an answer. And what's interesting, though, I want you to notice is Jesus said, in answer to your question, what's written? What does the Bible say? And even though Jesus had not accomplished his mission yet, it's very interesting that he said to them, look how he treasured the Bible.

He said, you have a question? I'm not giving you my opinion. What does the Bible say? Wouldn't that be good if all of us did that? Any question in life, any time you hear a preacher talk, any time you hear a televangelist or a radio preacher, someone hands you a track, or someone starts arguing about something with you theologically, just say, I don't care what your pastor said. I don't care what Pastor Simbala said.

I don't care what the Brooklyn Tabernacle's position is on it. What does the Bible say? The only valid truth is the truth, theologically, that we find in the Bible. What does the Bible say? Jesus said, how do you read the scriptures? Don't go by opinions.

Don't go by stuff you hear on TV. Because right now, we're living in a day where everyone makes up their own religion. They pick and choose what verses they want to believe in the New Testament.

They pick and choose what a Christian is. And they're maneuvering and revising what Christianity is. And our question should always be, to anyone at all times, what does the Bible say? No, but I follow this prophet, and he hears from God.

I don't care about that. What does the Bible say? How many are with me? Say aloud, amen. What does the Bible say? That's what the, what does the Bible say? Listen, you're worshiping on the wrong day.

You're going on Sunday. You got to worship on Saturday. You won't be saved.

You can't be saved. What does the Bible say? I got the messages of Peter and Paul in the Bible. What did they say? Did they ever mention that? No, you got to believe in this woman.

She's a prophet. What does the Bible say? Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ. No, you got to pray to his mother, or else you're not going to be honored by God.

What does the Bible say? Where did somebody pray to his mother in the Bible? Boy, it simplifies things, doesn't it? What does the Bible say? But you won't be able to answer that unless you know what the Bible says. That's why we're reading through the New Testament, right? What does the Bible say? You know, but pastor, I feel, listen, if I go by what you feel, I got to talk to 10,000 people to see what they feel. That's going to be crazy, right? What does the, say it with me the whole sentence.

What does the Bible? That's what Jesus was asking. So then he said, to get out of the question, well, who's my neighbor? Because he had answered, loved your Lord your God with all your heart, soul, strength, and mind, and your neighbor as yourself. Jesus said, spoken well.

He went, yeah, but who's my neighbor? And then Jesus tells this famous story. He says a man was traveling from Jerusalem to Jericho. So if you and I were looking at the map, here's the map, this carpet is a map, which is way off of, oh, well, let's look at it like this, because Israel is longer than it is wide.

So if this is Jerusalem here, in the southern part of Israel, that's north, that's south, then the Dead Sea, which is over here, Jericho is right over here. It was 20 miles away. But the interesting thing about the road that went from Jericho to Jerusalem, he was traveling it from Jerusalem to Jericho, is Jerusalem is 2,300

feet high, 2,300 feet above sea level.

But Jericho is 1,300 feet below sea level. So you were making a dip of 3,600 feet down. And the road was narrow, and it had lots of turns.

And as we study history, we find out it was called the Road of Blood, or the Red Road, why? Because it was so torturous and so steep going down, and imagine coming from Jericho up to Jerusalem, that brigands and thieves and robbers, posses of people who wanted to steal would just be waiting and lurking. And that's why it was known by everyone, you don't travel on that road unless you're in what we would call a posse, but they would call back down there just a large group, a caravan of people. You travel in a caravan because numbers will provide safety.

Otherwise, you're gonna be beat down, you're gonna be robbed, it's too dangerous. And the saying was in those days, never go from Jerusalem to Jericho at night. Once the sun goes down, do not be on that road.

It's just too dangerous. So some people feel, you know, this guy in a way was asking for it because he was traveling all alone. And sure enough, as he was traveling, some robbers jumped on him, which was not an uncommon thing.

So they attacked him, and they robbed him. They took what he had, and they took it away. They not only did that, they beat him, and hurt him, and injured him, and then ended up leaving him half dead.

And there he was, lying on the road, life leaving him, bleeding, whatever was wrong with him. Who knows who else could come, what predator animals might be around. He's helpless, and he's hopeless.

Coming on that road was a priest, a religious dignitary. And when he saw this man, who was also Jewish, he saw this man, and he saw him laying there, and blood, and realized what had happened, and the guy's just half naked. He passed by, instead of helping him, he went on the other side of the road, and said, you know, like, whatever.

You know, we all have problems, folks. And that's your problem, that's not my problem. It's so easy to be religious, and not have a heart for people.

This man knew all the verses, he was a priest. He knew all the theology, he knew all about Moses, he would argue till three in the morning with you, about the holiness of God. But when it came to the people, when it came to helping somebody was beat down, he went to the other side of the road.

Religion can do that to you. He was followed by a Levite, from the tribe of Levi. And he also was part of the religious establishment, and when he checked it all out, he looked at it and said to himself, not only is that your problem, and all that, but you know, listen, it's like this.

I got a schedule. You know what I'm saying? I got a schedule to keep. Everybody got things to do.

And I can't break my schedule to take care of some guy, I don't even know you, whoever you are, bleeding to death. I don't like know you, and I have to be somewhere. Because you know, hey listen, everybody got a schedule.

You can't just be interrupting your schedule. How you gonna get anything done, if you just, you know, stop and help some poor soul, you know. And you know what, somebody else could do it.

I'm not the only person walking on this road. So, he went by. Now the guy's life is leaving him.

And then Jesus said, a Samaritan came. Ooh, you don't say Samaritan to a Jew. They were despised.

The Samaritans were the people who had the land of Samaria, which is in between Judah in the south and Galilee, where Jesus was raised, in the north. They were so despised that when Jews went from Galilee to Judea to go to Jerusalem to worship at the feast, they would go and cross the Jordan River and go around, just not to walk on the dirt of Samaria. The rabbis taught that you had to be purified if the dust of Samaria got in your sandals.

That's how they were despised. They had kind of like a hybrid religion. They were half Jew and half mixed with the Assyrian and Babylonians that had conquered Israel.

Oh, they were despised. How blinded we get by our prejudices. So now the guy's already getting nervous, and Jesus is doing it just right.

So a Samaritan came. And he had compassion on him. He not only had compassion, he went to him.

You know, it's one thing to have feelings. It's another thing to do something. A lot of us live on half-baked feelings.

Oh, you know, I got a great love for people. I know, but what do you do? No, but I really feel for people. I have this gift, like I just feel for people.

I know, but who do you help? No, I don't have time to help, but I got a lot of feeling inside of me. Come on, I mean, we're laughing, but is this not true? Is this not true? In other words, he got involved in someone else's life, someone he didn't even know. I wonder, don't want to be up in anybody's grill, but I ask it for myself and for all of us.

I wonder how many of you were involved in somebody else's life outside your own family? Oh, no, a lot of, all my amens, Lord, forgive them. They don't say amen anymore. That's a good question.

I'm not talking about your family, because unbelievers take care of their families. That's no big thing. Whose life are you involved in? You haven't seen anybody attacked? Oh, I don't mean by thieves, robbers.

As I close, you don't know anyone attacked by the devil? Attacked by their own family? Attacked by their own learning disabilities? You don't know anybody who's been robbed of their dignity? You don't know anyone who's been robbed of their dignity and their future? And their potential has been stolen from them by the forces of darkness? You and I don't meet anyone like that every day. You don't know anyone who's been hurt? He was bleeding and wounded. You don't know anybody who's walking around, but they're a basket case inside, because they've been pounded and pounded and pounded.

We used to have someone who used to work in our band, and all his father ever told him every day of his life when he was growing up, you know what, you're stupid. You're never gonna amount to anything. You don't think that has an effect? I'm asking you a question.

You don't think that has an effect? We don't meet people who are half dead? I meet them all the time, walking wounded. They're living, but they have no life. They exist.

They're nothing. Do we pass by the other side? Because, you know, some of them must have thought this. You know, if I get involved, where will this end? Adia, would you please help me? Give me a little direction on this, Adia.

Where will it end if I start to help? I mean, where will it lead? I mean, how much time will this take? Would I have to like, you know what I'm saying? Spend some money? Where will this end? One thing leads to another. There's unintended consequences. You know, how long will this take? You know, who is he? You know, how long will it take for him to? No, no, no.

The good Samaritan didn't think about any of those things. And here's the key, of course, to the story. What made him different than the other two? Not because he was a Samaritan.

Because he was moved with mercy. The only people who treat others with extreme kindness and help them get up from the dirt that they're laying in, or the sin that they're trapped in, or the paralysis that's overcome them, the only ones, we Christians are supposed to be that, we're light and salt, the only ones who do that are the ones who are moved with compassion. You can't teach this.

I'm trying to teach it. I'm doing my best. God's helping me, I can tell.

You're listening. We're all right with God here. We wanna learn, don't we? But unless God comes in and starts to move our hearts with his love, why he stopped was he had compassion.

When you don't have compassion, I don't care how many verses you know, or if you sing in the Brooklyn Tabernacle Choir, or if you're a pastor symbol and wrote some books, when you don't have compassion on people and you're not willing to feel what they're going through, put yourself in their shoes. Just put yourself in their shoes. Anybody can judge somebody.

Listen, you could've looked at the dude and said, hey, that's what you get for traveling alone on the road of blood. You know, there are signs like don't go here alone. Listen, pastor symbol, I believe in this.

You make your bed, you sleep in it. The guy was stupid, he got what he deserved. That's a thing a lot of us use.

She's the one who stuck the needle in her arm. I didn't tell her to. I know, but what are you gonna do now? She's near the end.

Hey, listen, I can't save the world. The good Samaritan didn't save the world. He just saved one person.

And Jesus told a story about him in a parable form. The good Samaritan puts wine and oil on his wounds and brings him to Holiday Inn that was right nearby there. They had a good one.

Had a pool too, but that one there. And brings him in the Holiday Inn and tells the guy, now listen, here's some money. Let him stay.

He needs to rest. He needs to get back his strength. And I'll come back, and whatever else he needs, give it to him.

It's on me. But who is the guy? Was he related to you? No, I don't know him. No, I know, but what's he in your group, in your family? He's like, oh, he's from Barbados like you are.

I get it. He's from, no, no, I'm Samaritan, he's a Jew. He probably hates me.

But I'll do it anyway. Oh, no. Now you're talking Christianity.

He not only had compassion, he did something. I lived some years in my earlier life, teenager, a little bit into my 20s, God stirring me. I lived on religious feelings.

I thought if you feel things like, ooh, we had a good meeting, ooh, glory. And so I lived on feelings like a lot of you do. You have feelings.

You don't alter your life. You don't get involved with hardly anyone. But you got feelings, especially in the service.

You're lifting your hands, we hear the sermon. I got, ooh, I got such compassion on the world. You know, Pastor Semel, the fields are ripe unto harvest.

But the laborers are what? They're few. We need some laborers. Okay, that's great.

I'm all with you. But Jesus said, you go and do likewise. Not look on a road in Israel for a guy half dead.

Just, here's who your neighbor is. Whoever's hurting and needs ministry, that's your neighbor. Oh, but I'm not used to those kind of, that's the point.

You know why Jesus could say that? With such authority. And I'm done. Because he saw you and he saw me attacked.

He saw you and me robbed of heaven, of a relationship with God. He saw what sin did to you and me. He saw us beat up.

By a lot of it, yeah, demons and the devil and all of that. But a lot of it is because we sowed and we were reaping. We made a mess and now we got the result.

And he didn't say, you know, that's the way it works. You mess up like you did. What are you crying for now? No, he didn't do that.

That's what you and I do. He had so much compassion, he went to the cross for us. He said, because what the thieves came, I'll restore what the locusts have eaten.

I'll restore what's been robbed. I recover stolen property. Why? Isn't that the testimony of all of us who are Christians? How many were just like that man, laying there half bleeding to death in your own way, and Jesus came by? Come on, lift up your hand.

Isn't that the way it was? Now look, some of you were making \$300,000 a year, but you're still laying with no hope. You just may be on a nicer road. And some of us were on some, you know, little dirt trail.

But Jesus came by. I'll tell you, that's my testimony. I am only here for one reason.

Only God knows how weak I am. Only God knows what a mess up I am. Only God.

But he touched me. He touched me. And all the joy that fills my soul.

Something happened and now I know he touched me and made me whole. Is that not the testimony that all of us have? Let's put our hands together and just thank God that he touched us. So this year, since we're early, I wanna be a better neighbor.

I wanna be more like the Good Samaritan. Better yet, I wanna be more like Jesus. Anybody with me here? I wanna have wisdom.

Not everybody for hawking for money out on the street. We're supposed to empty our wallet too. Some of them take it and someone was asking me for money on livings in the street awhile back and could you have a little money? I said, what do you need the money for? Oh, I'm hungry, I have it.

I said, good, I'm gonna take you to the corner here. I'm gonna give them some money. They're gonna feed you at the diner.

No, no, I don't have time to eat now. I said, no, then I'm not giving you money. I thought you were starving.

Now you have no time to eat? What, do you have a schedule to keep here? What are you doing there? But you know what? I prophesied to you. Tomorrow you can be a good Samaritan or someone. Might be just in a conversation.

Might be a sentence you say. Might be some money you give them. It might be a prayer you give them, but we can help somebody.

Please don't tell me. Please don't tell me you're not involved in anybody but you and your hubby and your wife and your family and that's it and you're all together because you gotta take care of your family. God says that, I'm all for that.

I'm down for that. But Jesus told the man, you go and do likewise. Help people.

And then Jesus went to the cross and then rose from the dead. And that's why we're here today. I wonder how he sees us.

You know, when he found us, we were probably just like that man who was beaten on the road. Half alive, bleeding, sore, crying, frustrated, empty, potential rob, future taken away from us. But he's so full of mercy.

Just close your eyes right where you're sitting. Oh, I can't dismiss yet because there might be one person. You were attacked.

They robbed you. You're just hanging on today and somehow God brought you in the building. And other people have passed by, they haven't tried to help you.

I'm not the good Samaritan, but I want to tell you about Jesus. He will lift you up. What you need, he will give you.

Your future will be secure, not just in this life, but in the world to come. If you'll just humble yourself and say, Jesus, I need you big time. January 11th, I need you big time in my life.

He will help you. Thank you for passing by this way, Jesus, today. Thank you for passing by.

Thank you for lifting up. Thank you for bringing healing, tears of repentance, encouragement from your spirit and word. Thank you that you're still in the business of lifting up people half dead, Lord.

I ask your blessing upon every man and woman and young person who's in the front. Today, their new life begins. Because the good Samaritan has come.

And I'm so happy that you're the one who said, whatever they owe, I'll pay. I'll go to the cross, I'll pay, I'll pay. They don't have to pay, I'll pay.

Thank you for paying our debt, a debt we couldn't pay. Thank you, Jesus. Before I give the final amen, every eye close.

I ask all of you here now that have come forward, be here Tuesday night in the prayer meeting, be here this afternoon, be here next Sunday, and start just walking with Jesus. If you need to be baptized, they'll hand you a card, you can fill it out. But we're gonna hug on you and love on you while everybody else is dismissed.

Father, give us a beautiful rest of the day. Bless us and make us a blessing. Keep us, our eyes open so that we can be a good Samaritan.

We pray it in Jesus' name and everyone said, amen. Greet one another as we greet our friends here.

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