

What Is Our Responsibility To Other Human Beings?

Luke 10:25-37

Rev. John Park

“What must I do to inherit eternal life?” A trap question! When I was in seminary, one professor told the students, “If you want to make someone wrong, just ask his view on the Trinity. Because, no matter how you answer, you are never right about the Trinity.” I find this question a lawyer asks the same; no matter how you answer, you will likely be wrong, because it sounds like you can earn salvation based on a “law” premise.

Jesus, however, has no problem in answering this question. Love God and love your neighbour and you will live. Someone may say, “Well, this is earning salvation based on the Law, which is no longer true in this era. This is the Old Testament thinking. We now live in the era of grace and truth (See John 1:17).” Well, at the same time, I don’t think our fundamental ethical call to love has changed. If you consider the four verses prior to today’s reading (i.e. Luke 10:21-24), it’s clear that those who love God will hear Jesus, come to him, respond to him and receive his benefits. Then, later Jesus makes clear, such people will receive not only forgiveness but God’s Spirit, who enables believers to become a different kind of person (See Luke 24:47, 49; Acts 2:38). Then, yes, you are able to fulfill this fundamental call to love. The difference is that one group tries to love God and love neighbours out of obligation and the other group loves genuinely out of a changed heart by God’s love.

Then it says, “But wanting to justify himself, he asked Jesus, ‘And who is my neighbour?’” (v29). Now, the lawyer wants to put a limit on the scope of this love. It’s natural for someone, who tries to love out of obligation, to put a limit on the scope of responsibility. There was a king who wanted to find out how much his servants loved him. So, one day, at the top of a hill, he asks them, “If you love me, jump off the hill.” One servant jumped off, but another servant ran and stopped in front of the edge. The king asked, “Why aren’t you jumping off?” The servant said, “King, this is as far as I love you.” Love out of obligation will only give to justify himself, and hence he won’t give beyond sacrifice. When it hurts, when it demands sacrifice, when it becomes bigger than we can handle, we quickly justify ourselves and step back to where we belong, our comfort zone.

Jesus’ answer is clever. Instead of answering his question directly, he gives a parable, and through this parable, Jesus reserves the lawyer’s perspective. The lawyer wants to know if he can be a neighbour to a select, elite few. Jesus tells him through the Samaritan’s example, “Let the neighbour be you.” It’s not about whether or not that person deserves my love; it’s about whether or not my love is genuine enough to stretch myself beyond my comfort, my obligation and my convenience.

I guess there is a difference between love out of obligation and love out of a changed, genuine heart. Imagine if a couple says something like this in a wedding, “I take you to be my husband/wife to have and to hold from this day forward, for better but not for worse, for richer and not below Canadian average income standard, in sickness you go to the hospital and not inflict your germs and/or any inconvenience caused by your sickness on me, and hence only in health, to love and to cherish, or we really mean give and take, friends with benefits, and contract on mutual interests.” Love is jealous and will demand every bit of you until you fully give yourself to the object of your love. John in his letter says, “Let us love, not in word or speech, but in truth and action” (1 John 3:18).

It’s interesting to note that Jesus picks a Samaritan as the highlight of the story. Jesus then asks a simple question: “Which of these three, do you think, was a neighbour to the man who fell into the hands of the robbers?” (v36). The lawyer cannot bring himself to identify the man by his race. The idea of a Good Samaritan

was an oxymoron to a Jew. So he says, “The one who showed him mercy.” To this, Jesus says, “Go and do likewise” (v37). The point is clear: it’s not about how you look; it’s something deeper that will manifest itself through our actions. Apostle Paul warns us that there will be people who may hold to the outward form of godliness but deny its power (2 Timothy 3:5).

For the rest of sermon, I would like to invite one of our church members, Kevin Ahn, who was recently ordained as a new elder, and Kevin is going to share his experience of working in the organization called Compassion, a Christian organization that serves child development programs in 25 countries. I am a big fan and sponsor of Compassion; I personally sponsor a child in Colombia through Compassion. Today’s focus is through this short interview, I would like us to think how we can engage the world we live with in God’s love and compassion to our neighbours.

What do you do and what is Compassion?

- I work as a database developer for Compassion, which is a Christian Charity that supports child development ministry in 25 countries around the world. Compassion’s mission is to release children from poverty in Jesus’ name, and it provides a holistic approach to child development.

Why and how did you get involved with Compassion?

- I grew up in a Christian family and always had a heart for helping people. Then, about 8 years ago, I had a chance to attend a charity event in South Korea which was organized by Compassion Korea and I started to sponsor a child then. A couple of months after the event, I received a call from a job agent. She was explaining about a charity organization without mentioning its name. I asked the name, and she said it’s Compassion. I believe that was a call from God.

What is one thing you can share with us that you have learned from your work at Compassion about loving your neighbour?

- One thing that amazes me is that Compassion partners with local churches to support children. It enables local churches to share the Good News of Jesus with children. I went to Nicaragua for a staff training trip, and I met Compassion-sponsored children. I asked them what their favourite activity is, and they answered it was Bible study. Some children recited memorized verses. Many parents came to church because of their children. I went to see a family, who lived in an extremely poor and dangerous neighbourhood, and I saw an inscription of a scripture verse on the wall, which was taken from Haggai 2:9, “The latter splendor of this house shall be greater than the former, says the Lord of hosts; and in this place I will give prosperity, says the Lord of hosts.” It just shows how sponsoring a child has not only impacted the child alone, but his whole family as well. Loving one child makes an incredible ripple effect, and we sometimes don’t realize our love for one person can create a tremendous ripple effect around us.

Thank you, Kevin, for your experience with us. I would like to finish this sermon with a video from Compassion. It’s about a pastor, who shines shoes to raise money to sponsor children through Compassion. This video really made me think about what it means to love my neighbours.

(Video - <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=omMO5K4vKqE>)

People of God, we call ourselves Christians, who supposedly know the love of God through His Son, who willingly died for our iniquity and gave all for us. That love should also move us to love our neighbours as ourselves, giving ourselves for the sake of God’s Kingdom and His glory. Amen.