

Maple Springs Baptist Church

Series: The Blessed Life

Week 3: The Generous Eye

Proverbs 22:9 (NKJV) “He who has a generous eye will be blessed, For he gives of his bread to the poor.”

Luke 6:38 Acts 20:35

Truth: Satan cannot stop the Blessings of God. But he can try to Distort our Relationship with the Blessings of God.

Jesus once told a parable about coming to someone’s rescue. **LUKE 10:25-37.**

Jesus’ listeners knew this road well. Roughly 18 miles long, it connected Jerusalem to Jericho. The road was notorious for being narrow and full of twists and turns. Even today, the road is known as the “Red and Bloody Way” because so much violence has occurred there. It was easy for thieves to slip in from the surrounding desert wilderness, assault and rob someone, and then disappear back to the desert.

In the story, the man was left there, beaten and half-dead. Thankfully for him, a few others were traveling the road that day. The first was a priest. He would have been at the top of the religious leadership of his day, presiding over worship of the nation of Israel., keeping the traditions alive. Next came a Levite. He was tasked with helping take care of the temple and its articles. He also did not take the time to stop.

The original listeners would have surely expected each of these two men to stop and render aid. Why didn’t they? Jesus does not tell us, and maybe that alone makes the point. Whatever justifications they might offer do not matter. They probably had their reasons for not stopping. We know this because we often face the same temptation and challenges in our own lives.

The 1st obstacle we face when it comes to loving our neighbors is **fear**. Perhaps the priest and Levite thought the situation was a ruse. What if they stopped to help and it was just a scam, with robbers waiting to attack each of them? Our fear about what will happen to us if we get involved is one of the biggest inhibitors to loving our neighbors. It is cleaner, easier, and safer to stay disengaged—to be indifferent. But **indifferent people never make a difference.**

If not fear, then we are confronted with the tyranny of the **urgency of our schedules. Time pressure** can become a moral category for us. Perhaps the priest and Levite felt pressed to make it to an important meeting they were expected to be at. I know this can be true in our lives.

It’s not just priests or Levites of old who can be tempted to pass by and hurry along with internal justifications in mind. That can happen to men and you, too. Pressure can do that to us.

Years ago, researchers at Princeton did a fascinating experiment based on this parable. ... What researchers discovered was that a person in a hurry is less likely to help people.

People in a hurry, hurry by people. Their results seemed to show that simply thinking about helping does not mean we will actually do it. We can be educated beyond our obedience. It also demonstrated that as the speed and pressure in our lives increase, our ethics suffer.

Even when fear for our safety and lack of time do not keep us from loving those in need, our **skepticism** can. Our thoughts can quickly jump to how they might misuse what we offer rather than to what we might offer that they could use. **Skepticism can keep our guard up, which keeps our compassion down.**

The needs of our neighbors can be much more than only economic, but imagine you pass a person with a sign asking for money. I am not oblivious to the fact that some people prey upon the generosity of others. That is a tragedy because it hardens our hearts to those genuinely in need. However, the greater tragedy is to help no one to avoid being taken advantage of by someone.

Skepticism can even begin to shape our perception of the person in need, with little evidence to support it. Perhaps the priest and Levite saw the man bloodied on the side of the road and concluded, "He probably deserved it." They could have presumed foolishness on the part of the man in need: "Well, he probably was carrying a large sum of money, and everyone knows you cannot do that on this road." There is nothing in Jesus' parable that communicates that someone's past foolishness, even if actual, alleviates us from the responsibility to act lovingly.

With the priest and Levite now having passed by, Jesus continues the parable. Most of his listeners certainly thought the 3rd character would be just a common Israelite. Had he done that, Jesus would have made the listeners into the heroes of the story.

In a radical twist, the 3rd person is a Samaritan. 1st-century Jews regarded Samaritans as loathsome and evil people. The Jews regarded Samaritans as loathsome and evil people. The Samaritans practiced a heretical version of Judaism and were ethnically distinct from the Jews. People of that day would not have expected any humane, heroic, or compassionate response from a Samaritan.

The Samaritan, presumably riding his donkey on the road, discovers the beaten man. He stops, gets off his donkey, and does what he can to help him. Apparently, **sometimes we have to get off our donkeys to make a difference.** He takes him to the nearest inn, where the wounded man would have long-term care. The Samaritan pays for all this out of his own pocket and promises to pay for any extra expenses.

This is a parable about loving our neighbors as we love ourselves, yet Jesus never tells us much about the Samaritan's feelings. In our world, we use the word love to mean many things. In the same breath, we can say that we "love" tacos and then turn around and say that we "love" our family members.

When Jesus talks about loving our neighbor, he is not mainly talking about feelings; he is talking about action. Love does.

Jesus' teachings show that many times action leads the heart. Authentic love does not come from only our feelings. Our feelings are not the only part of us. We also have our wills.

Speaking about money (which the Samaritan had to have as well as use, as part of his love for his neighbor). Jesus says, “Where your treasure is, there your heart will be also” (Matthew 6:21). Sometimes feelings follow the determination to do an act of love. Authentic feelings of indifference can be transformed by a genuine will to make a difference.

The Samaritan’s guarantee of paying any extra expenses incurred in the care of the hurting man is an important detail. In Jesus’ day there were no credit cards. The man clearly had just been robbed, so he would not have had any cash. If the amount to nurse him back to health was more than what the Samaritan had paid, the owner of the inn would have been legally obligated to sell the man into slavery as a debtor, as the man would not have had the money to cover the debt. It was the law of the day. The Samaritan is guaranteeing that the man will be not only healthy but also free. Loving our neighbors can often require some thoughtful consideration about all their needs, not just the immediate ones. Love does not have to be sensational to be love. Sometimes it is simply about being available and faithful.

Availability and faithfulness are not necessarily dramatic, but they are inherently costly. This parable makes it clear that **if we love our neighbors only when it requires no time, energy, money, or risk, we will never love our neighbors as ourselves. All love is costly.** That is what Jesus showed us not just in this parable but in his own life when His love for the world led Him to a Red and Bloody Way known as the Cross. He saw we were in need, and it was within His power to help us. Thanks be to God that He did not pass by.

Jesus finishes the story with a simple question: “Which of these three do you think was a neighbor to the man who was in need?” (**Luke 10:36**). The answer is obvious, right? The one who showed mercy. Jesus says, “Go and do likewise” (**Luke 10:37**).

Do you catch the significant twist Jesus makes? The lawyer starts with the question “Who is my neighbor?” In the beginning, it is asked from the perspective of the man who was in need of help.

“Who is my neighbor?” now has become “What kind of neighbor will I be?” What started as a discussion about the nature of the other people has now become an unanswered question of our own nature. That’s the power of these parables: They are complete in their telling yet incomplete in their effect until we decide how we will respond to them. Jesus doesn’t make His original listeners or us the heroes of this story. Instead, He invites us to become heroes, only this time it’s in the stories of our own neighbors who are in need.

TRUTH: A NEED SEEN IS AN ASSIGNMENT GIVEN.

Love your neighbor as yourself. And who is your neighbor? Your neighbor is anyone who is in need that you are in the position to help. It is as straightforward and as challenging as that. So now, in line with the point of the parable, what kind of neighbor will you be?