

Series: Parables: Did You Hear That?
Message Title: ***The Parable About the People in Your Neighborhood***
Date: Sunday, August 19, 2018
Scripture: Luke 10:25-37
Speaker: David H. McKinley
Location: Warren Baptist Church, Augusta, GA

Introduction

August 31, 2001, was a very sad day for many who grew up in the Boomer Generation as the final episode of *Mr. Rogers' Neighborhood* was broadcast on PBS.

The show first aired on February 19, 1968, when the sneaker-wearing, sweater-donning Fred Rogers posed the question over and over as he sang, "Won't you be my neighbor?"

While Fred Rogers was not known for his rowdy fans, he was loved and admired for the way he taught and nurtured preschoolers over 3 1/2 decades, and now his influence and memory are shared by several generations from Boomers to Millennials.

I mention this very iconic personality from our American culture because the issue that drove Fred Rogers into children's programing

was a desire to teach and model love, respect, kindness, honesty, service and good will.

While many may calculate and speculate the many lessons learned from Fred Rogers about life in childhood, I want us to explore and answer the bigger question before us today: Who is my neighbor?

Who are the people in your neighborhood? What does it mean to be a good neighbor?

I present these questions because it is the specific point of discussion between a lawyer whose name we do not know and a teacher whose name we know very well—Jesus.

“And behold, a lawyer stood up to put Him to the test, saying, ‘Teacher, what shall I do to inherit eternal life?’ He said to him, “‘What is written in the Law? How do you read it?’ And he answered, ‘You shall 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 your neighbor as yourself.’ And He said to him, ‘You have answered correctly; do this, and you will live.’ But he, desiring to

justify himself, said to Jesus, 'And who is my neighbor?'" (Luke 10:25-29 ESV).

From the outset, we know the reason for this discussion was not to get an answer, but to create an issue—"test... desiring to justify himself."

On this day in a conversation, a lawyer wanted to use his cunning sense of legal finagling to discredit Jesus and to promote himself.

Likely this was a matter provoked by the exclusive claim Jesus made in Luke 10:22:

"All things have been handed over to Me by My Father, and no one knows who the Son is except the Father, or who the Father is except the Son and anyone to whom the Son chooses to reveal Him" (Luke 10:22 ESV).

The lawyer "stood up" to challenge this claim that Jesus made regarding knowing God and revealing Him.

The question was proposed by the Lawyer with the intent to ensnare or trap Jesus. It

was among the most generic of all questions, but follow up questions created an answer and an echo that reverberates to us today.

This morning I want us to explore four critical questions to help us answer the question posed by Fred Rogers, "Won't you be my neighbor?"



Q#1. What Must I Do to Inherit Eternal Life?

"You talk about revealing the Father to us. What about the Law and the demands given by God to our forefathers? What must we do?"

To some degree, all of us focus on present life and future life. The biggest question everyone must ask and answer is this: What am I living for and what happens when I die?

Funny, the very question posed by the lawyer is contradictory: "What must I do to inherit?" You don't do anything to gain an inheritance. You are born into it. Try as you may, blood is thicker than work!

You can work all your life for a company or business, but it is not likely to be willed to you. It is probably going to be given to someone within the family. Years ago there was an advertisement by E.F Hutton (American stock brokerage firm founded in 1904). This ad appeared in the 1980s: "They made money the old fashioned way; they earned it!" The truth is, E.F. Hutton's descendants enjoyed money the best way—they inherited it! Palm Beach illustration.

An inheritance is a gift, but like so many, this lawyer saw the Old Testament law as a means of gaining, earning and meriting the favor of God.

He was concerned about life—real life, a legacy and eternity. But it was a trap. The lawyer wanted to ensnare Jesus by getting Him to contradict the Law and the teaching of the rabbis. But Jesus turned the tables and said, "How do you read it?"

Too many people want to give answers before they help to engage the right questions. Jesus' rebuttal was with a question. The Lawyer had to respond with the

comprehensive, traditional answer. See Luke 10:27. The answer was found in the *Shema*—“Hear.”

“Hear, O Israel: The LORD our God, the LORD is one. You shall love the LORD your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your might” (Deuteronomy 6:4-5 ESV).

The Jews would recite this as a fixed prayer daily.

“You shall not take vengeance or bear a grudge against the sons of your own people, but you shall love your neighbor as yourself: I am the LORD” (Leviticus 19:18 ESV).

Love the sojourner, poor, victim, handicapped. In the New Testament, it is referred to as the Great Commandment. See Matthew 22:35-40.

So Jesus affirmed, “Great! Do it!”

Suddenly the answer made the lawyer accountable to be more than he could be. Do you love God 100%? Do you love your

neighbor 100%? So the Lawyer tried to exegete the answer.

Q#2. Who is My Neighbor?

The lawyer is not going to like where this goes! Jesus tells a story. I don't know if this story is true or simply a parabolic illustration, but this story is about to convict and contradict all who hear and seek self-justification.

"Jesus replied, 'A man was going down from Jerusalem to Jericho, and he fell among robbers, who stripped him and beat him and departed, leaving him half dead. Now by chance a priest was going down that road, and when he saw him he passed by on the other side. So likewise a Levite, when he came to the place and saw him, passed by on the other side. But a Samaritan, as he journeyed, came to where he was, and when he saw him, he had compassion. He went to him and bound up his wounds, pouring on oil and wine. Then he set him on his own animal and brought him to an inn and took care of him. And the next day he took out two denarii and gave them to the innkeeper,

saying, "Take care of him, and whatever more you spend, I will repay you when I come back." "Which of these three, do you think, proved to be a neighbor to the man who fell among the robbers?" He said, 'The one who showed him mercy.' And Jesus said to him, 'You go, and do likewise'" (Luke 10:30-37 ESV).

This story is likely the best known and most often referenced parable in our culture today, along with the Prodigal Son.

Over 30 states have "Good Samaritan" laws to protect those who intervene on behalf of people in need and hundreds of hospitals bear this name in the U.S. and beyond.

Note Jesus' answer was not, "Who is your neighbor?" but "Won't you be a neighbor?"

See Luke 10:36. Who proved to be a neighbor? Jesus turned the question completely around. And now we hear and see undeniable and inconvenient truth. "A neighbor is anyone who evidences love by acting to intervene in the lives of those in need."

That is what Jesus does in all our lives, and to know Him and to have the knowledge of God revealed (Luke 10:22) is to live for a different purpose than those who go through life without Christ.

This is love, real love. Authentic love is visible, not just verbal. Love is not an emotion; it is an action. It is compassion in action!

For the believer, it is a life marked by attitudes and actions that show the reality of Christ in us.

“By this we know love, that He laid down His life for us, and we ought to lay down our lives for the brothers. But if anyone has the world’s goods and sees his brother in need, yet closes his heart against him, how does God’s love abide in him? Little children, let us not love in word or talk but in deed and in truth” (1 John 3:16-18 ESV).

The lawyer set a trap to expose Jesus, but Jesus trapped the lawyer in the clutches of mercy and love. Jesus traps are always traps of love. And what He was doing here was showing the lawyer that in legal measures

what justified his life would only bring condemnation and judgment.

What he needed, just like the victim on the Jericho road, was mercy intervening to save and deliver him—even from his own sin of self-righteousness.

Some need to be saved because they have no religion and others need to be saved because they are trapped in religion!

Q#3: How Can I Be a Good Neighbor?

The least likely! A Samaritan. This is a story filled with contrasts and contradictions.

What Does It Mean to Be a Good Neighbor?

- **Live As If It's Not All About You**

A priest and a Levite came along—good men, good reputations, doing good things. Yet they saw the man (probably a fellow Jew) as a cause for interruption and contamination.

But like so many, life was all about them and their agenda. God can't get your attention

because you are so self-focused. Notice “on the other side.” This man was in their way!

We know there are people in need in front of us, but they deserve more than apathy or even sympathy. They need us to choose to get involved and to engage them at their need.

• **Learn the Difference Between Justification and Justice**

See Matthew 23:23.

“He has told you, O man, what is good; and what does the LORD require of you but to do justice, and to love kindness, and to walk humbly with your God?” (Micah 6:8 ESV).

There are many in our world who are weak and vulnerable: widows, orphans, single mothers, abused, unborn, sick, poor, and many more. We are called by God not only to have awareness and sympathy, but to engage and to act on their behalf.

Sadly, we often choose justification over justice. Justice is a commitment of the heart

to identify neighbors in need and act on their behalf.

- **Love People That Aren't "Your People"**

All people matter to God. Compassion = love that is beyond our comfort zone.

There was no greater rub in the ancient world than that of the Jews and Samaritans—major social and racial divide. Samaritans inhabited the region we know as the West Bank today. They were descendants of Ephraim and Manasseh (sons of Joseph) who intermarried with Canaanites and were half-breeds. Own religious traditions were despised.

Warren is growing and changing in color, culture and community. Many families have adopted children who are different from biological children, foster care, merger of race and background. Something to celebrate.

Remember our goal is not diversity, but biblical Christianity—a neighborhood of people of all backgrounds meeting the needs of a community without Christ.

• Lift Others Through Compassion and Generosity

The gospel opens your heart and your hands. Forgiveness and rescue changes everything.

“Ministry that costs nothing accomplishes nothing.” —J.H. Jowett

Q#4: Did You Hear That?

See Luke 10:37. Go and do likewise!

The wise man “hears and does.” See Matthew 7:24.

“He who has ears to hear, let him hear” (Luke 8:8).

> The outcome and intent was to expose the lawyers need for mercy. We all need God’s intervening mercy. We can’t justify ourselves before God; only Jesus can bring justice. He does this by paying the price for our sin, sorrow and suffering.

> When we are recipients of this mercy, we want to show mercy, kindness and

compassion to others. God's transforming love causes us to become conduits of love in a world of need. Christian living is motivated by grace, not guilt.

> Because of what grace has done for us, grace prompts generosity in and through us.

I opened this message with a reference to a Presbyterian minister, Fred Rogers, and I close with the words of a Presbyterian minister from Edinburgh, Scotland:

"I fear that there may be many hearing me who may know well that they are not Christians, because they do not love to give. To give largely and liberally, not grudging at all requires a new heart. An old heart would rather part with its life-blood than money. Oh, my friends, enjoy your money. Make the most of it. Give none of it away. Enjoy it quickly, for I can tell you, you will be beggars throughout eternity."—Robert Murray McChesney (Scottish pastor, died of typhus at 29. 7,000 attended his funeral)

Jesus is better than a Good Samaritan; He is the Great Samaritan, God's only Son, our Savior!

Christ took on flesh to intervene for you.
He saw. He was moved with compassion.
He sacrificed Himself and gives a hope and
future to all who look to Him.

See Luke 10:22. Today not just in this story,
but the truth about God's Son has been
revealed to you to see and know and
experience His neighborly act of grace and
generosity toward us.

"For you know the grace of our Lord Jesus
Christ, that though He was rich, yet for your
sake He became poor, so that you by His
poverty might become rich" (2 Corinthians
8:9 ESV).