

The Fruit of the Spirit

Part 10 – Love Your Neighbour

Luke 10:25-33

And behold, a certain lawyer stood up and tested Him, saying, “Teacher, what shall I do to inherit eternal life?” He said to him, “What is written in the law? What is your reading of it?” So he answered and said, “‘*You shall love the LORD your God with all your heart, with all your soul, with all your strength, and with all your mind,*’ and ‘*your neighbour as yourself.*’ “ And He said to him, “You have answered rightly; do this and you will live.” But he, wanting to justify himself, said to Jesus, “And who is my neighbour?” Then Jesus answered and said: “A certain *man* went down from Jerusalem to Jericho, and fell among thieves, who stripped him of his clothing, wounded *him*, and departed, leaving *him* half dead. Now by chance a certain priest came down that road. And when he saw him, he passed by on the other side. Likewise a Levite, when he arrived at the place, came and looked, and passed by on the other side. But a certain Samaritan, as he journeyed, came where he was. And when he saw him, he had compassion.

See if you can answer this question: Who is the greatest disciple of love in the New Testament?

How many think it’s John because he wrote so much about love?

Who thinks it’s Paul because he wrote the love chapter in 1 Corinthians 13?

In fact it was Peter.

We know this because he asked Jesus to pray for his mother-in-law!

Galatians 5:22-23

But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, longsuffering, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, self-control. Against such there is no law.

This is now the tenth message in this series on The Fruit of the Spirit.

Who is my neighbour?

W.C. Fields was an actor and a brilliant comedian.

He was very fond of alcohol, women and an avowed atheist.

On his deathbed, someone came to visit him and found him looking through a Bible.

They asked him what he was doing.

He said, “Looking for loopholes.”

The lawyer in Jesus’ story was also looking for loopholes.

When Jesus said he was to love his neighbour as himself, he asked, “And who is my neighbour?”

In other words, to whom exactly do I have this responsibility to love them?

In answer, Jesus told a story which I’m going to retell in a modern setting.

A black power activist was walking through an unsavoury part of town, when he was attacked by a gang, beaten up, robbed and left for dead.

And along came a priest, saw him lying there bleeding, and passed by on the other side of the road.

Then along came a pastor, who took a closer look and then continued on his way.

Then along came a white supremacist.

He performed some emergency first aid, put him in his car, and took him to a motel.

He looked after him that night, then when he left in the morning, he gave the manager several hundred dollars and said, “Look after him till I come back. And if it costs any more, I’ll pay for it.”

Just like white supremacists and black power activists, the Jews and Samaritans were enemies.

There was certainly no love between them.

So what does it mean to love your neighbour?

There are some important points in Jesus’ story that teach us what this means.

1. Love is generous

Notice how the Samaritan gave generously of his time and money and resources.

He handed over two denarii to look after the Jewish man.

A denarius was the daily wage of a soldier.

The minimum wage of a private in the Australian Army is \$48,325.

So two days’ pay is almost \$400.

Handing over that much is pretty generous, isn’t it?

What is generosity?

Jack Welch, Founder and Distinguished Professor at the Jack Welch Management Institute at Strayer University talks about the generosity gene: The generosity gene is an in-the-bones, personality-deep craving to help other people improve, grow, thrive, and succeed.

Notice that it’s got a lot more to do with than just money.

A generous person not only gives of their money, but their time, their talents, their skills, their resources.

The Samaritan was generous with all those.

And God makes promises to that kind of person.

2 Corinthians 9:6-8

But this I say: He who sows sparingly will also reap sparingly, and he who sows bountifully will also reap bountifully. So let each one give as he purposes in his heart, not grudgingly or of necessity; for God loves a cheerful giver. And God is able to make all grace abound toward you, that you, always having all sufficiency in all things, may have an abundance for every good work.

So for the generous person, God promises abundance.

Our son, David, was 19 and saving up for his first car.

Always exciting for a young guy to have the prospect of owning his own car.

So he saved all his money from his job at Subway (while also paying his university fees).

Then when he came close to having enough, he had a change of heart.

The church didn’t have a drum kit. So he decided to buy a drum kit instead.

It wasn’t a donation to the church, but that’s still a pretty generous thing for a teenager to do.

And we didn’t suggest that he do it either, so he made that sacrifice himself.

He bought the drum kit which was a real blessing to the church.

Then a young couple came to our church.

They were only there a month, but without knowing anything about what he had done, they gave David a car.

What does the Scripture say?: He who sows bountifully will also reap bountifully.

Here are some promises to generous people:

Proverbs 11:25

The generous soul will be made rich, and he who waters will also be watered himself.

Proverbs 22:9

He who has a generous eye will be blessed, for he gives of his bread to the poor.

So how do you become a generous person?

Isaiah 32:8

But a generous man devises generous things, and by generosity he shall stand.

The first time the Hebrew word for “devise” is used in the Bible is in Exodus 18:19

And how it’s used gives us an idea of the meaning of this word.

This is what happened.

Moses responsible to judge all Israel, and was wearing him out.

In Exodus 18:19-24, His father-in-law said, “Listen now to my voice; I will give you counsel.”

The word translated “counsel” is the same word translated “devise” in Isaiah.

And Jethro proceeded to give Moses a carefully thought out plan together with a procedure for its implementation.

It was a detailed plan of action.

This is what this word is getting at.

To devise generous things is much more than an occasional random act of generosity.

It’s deliberate; it’s planned; it’s a lifestyle.

Alli and I looked at each other recently and said, “God has been so faithful to us financially throughout COVID. What can we do to pass the blessing on?”

We decided to increase our regular giving to Open Doors.

That’s how Alli and I plan our generosity.

We celebrate financial milestones by increasing our giving to missions that are important to us.

2. Love looks out for the best interests of others

Philippians 2:3-4

Let nothing be done through selfish ambition or conceit, but in lowliness of mind let each esteem others better than himself. Let each of you look out not only for his own interests, but also for the interests of others.

Love has the best interests of others in mind.

This is exactly what the Samaritan man did.

He could have walked on like the priest and the Levite.

I’m sure he had other things to do.

But he looked out for the interests of someone else.

Let me illustrate this using marriage which is supposed to portray how Christ loves church.

Imagine this.

Alli and I are walking past a cinema, and we look in the window.

There's an ad for the latest action movie: it's got Arnie, Bruce Willis, Vin Diesel, Sly, and a stack of men with big muscles.

They sure can fight, but somehow they're not smart enough to figure out how to put a shirt on!

The movie is called *Death of The Viper King*.

It's got aliens, monsters, explosions, fights, and a helpless, beautiful girl who needs rescuing.

Everything a guy wants in a man-movie.

Me: We should go to the movies sometime.

Alli: That'd be really nice.

I look over, and she's looking at a completely different movie: *Love's Tender Kiss*.

Someone please shoot me now, because I know exactly what's going to happen in that movie.

Nothing, absolutely nothing!

Guy meets girl, they fight, but they realise they love each other, but then there's a misunderstanding,

She thinks he's done something bad that he hasn't done, he can't express his feelings, finally the misunderstanding gets cleared up. Yadi yadi yada

Yeah, I know; it's a highly original plot.

Suppose that for some reason we could both go to one, or both go to the other movie.

We had to make a choice.

Which one should I choose?

The Bible tells me which one to go to.

Philippians 2:3-4

Let nothing be done through selfish ambition or conceit, but in lowliness of mind let each esteem others better than himself. (4) Let each of you look out not only for his own interests, but also for the interests of others.

Love sacrifices for others.

Jesus was the ultimate example of this.

He didn't go with His own preference.

His preference was "Father, take this cup away from Me."

But He drank from the cup of self-sacrifice, just for us.

Love looks out for the best interests of others.

On 2nd May, 1962, a lady by the name of Gladys Kidd put this advertisement in the *San Francisco Examiner*: "I don't want my husband to die in the gas chamber for a crime he did not commit. I will therefore offer my services for ten years as a cook, maid, or housekeeper to any leading attorney who will defend him and bring about his vindication."

One of San Francisco's best lawyers, Vincent Hallinan, saw the ad and contacted her.

He took on the case and got her husband released from all charges.

Later, the lawyer refused Gladys Kidd's offer of ten years' free labour, saying that he was happy to have saved an innocent man from death.

A great story with a happy ending, but that woman was prepared to give ten years of labour because of her love for her husband.

Love looks out for the best interests of others.

3. Love is demonstrated in acts of service

Galatians 5:13-14

For you, brethren, have been called to liberty; only do not use liberty as an opportunity for the flesh, but through love serve one another. For all the law is fulfilled in one word, even in this: “You shall love your neighbour as yourself.”

1 John 3:18

My little children, let us not love in word or in tongue, but in deed and in truth.

That means: don't just talk about it; act like it.

Love is active - not just something you feel, but something you do.

When the Samaritan man found the Jew half dead, he didn't just lean over him and offer kind words: It'll be okay.

He did something.

In fact, he couldn't have done much more: he bandaged his wounds.

I don't know if you've ever thought about this.

Where did he get those bandages from?

He wasn't riding around on his donkey with a first-aid kit in the boot.

He probably tore something up.

Then he used some of his oil to soften the wounds.

Then he used some of his own wine to disinfect them.

Then he transported him to a motel on his donkey.

Then he paid for his care, his food, and his accommodation.

Talk about acts of service!

That Samaritan showed love even to the point of loving his enemy.

Proverbs 3:27

Do not withhold good from those to whom it is due, when it is in the power of your hand to do so.

When JFK was inaugurated as President in 1961, he said, “Ask not what your country can do for you, but what you can do for your country.”

Apparently he stole that from his headmaster.

I'm stealing too: Ask not what your church can do for you, but what you can do for your church.

Ask: What can I do to bless my church family?

And small acts of service or generosity can go a long way.

Acts 9:36-39

At Joppa there was a certain disciple named Tabitha, which is translated Dorcas. This woman was full of good works and charitable deeds which she did. But it happened in those days that she became sick and died. When they had washed her, they laid her in an upper room. And since Lydda was near Joppa, and the disciples had heard that Peter was there, they sent two men to him, imploring him not to delay in coming to them. Then Peter arose and went with them. When he had come, they brought him to the upper room. And all the widows stood by him weeping, showing the tunics and garments which Dorcas had made while she was with them.

This woman wasn't famous, didn't start orphanage, didn't write a book, didn't rule a nation.

She was an ordinary woman who had a skill and used it to bless her brothers and sisters in Christ.

And that made her extraordinary.

That's why she had such an impact.

Who is my neighbour?

My neighbour is anyone in need, especially my church family.

What are you offering your church family to demonstrate love?

And I'm not just talking about on Sundays.

Are you reaching out to your brothers and sisters, showing love?

What you do matters, and what you don't do matters too.