

Beyond the Bare Minimum

Luke 10:25-37

Introduction

Pass/Fail: In undergrad (W&M; “Hark Upon the Gale”; TJ) they allowed you to take a certain number of pass/fail classes non-major and non-required (elective) classes. This makes it sound easy, all I have to do is get a D- or above (Great Ideas of Physics). But, inevitably, you don’t go to class, you don’t do the homework, you barely try on the assignments, and you end up at the final exam asking: what is the lowest score I can get and still pass?

The Bare Minimum: Many of us end up in the pass/fail mentality in so many areas of life. What’s the bare minimum I have to do to pass?

- What’s the bare minimum I must clean for my parents to let me play video games?
- What’s the bare minimum I must work out to lose weight?
- What’s the bare minimum I must do to be a good person?

Setup: This is the underlying attitude of today’s questioner when he asks Jesus, “What shall I do to inherit eternal life?” He’s not looking for deep transformation but rather the minimum requirement.

- Jesus turns this pass/fail question upside down, showing that eternal life isn’t about meeting a minimum behavioral standard.
- Instead, grace is a transformative gift that empowers us to reflect the boundary-breaking love of Jesus.

²⁵ And behold, a lawyer stood up to put him to the test, saying, “Teacher, what shall I do to inherit eternal life?” ²⁶ He said to him, “What is written in the Law? How do you read it?” ²⁷ 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.” ²⁸ And he said to him, “You have answered correctly; do this, and you will live.” ²⁹ But he, desiring to justify himself, said to Jesus, “And who is my neighbor?” ³⁰ 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. ³¹ Now by chance a priest was going down that road, and when he saw him he passed by on the other side. ³² So likewise a Levite, when he came to the place and saw him, passed by on the other side. ³³ But a Samaritan, as he journeyed, came to where he was, and when he saw him, he had compassion. ³⁴ 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. ³⁵ 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.’ ³⁶ Which of these three, do you think, proved to be a neighbor to the man who fell among the robbers?” ³⁷ He said, “The one who showed him mercy.” And Jesus said to him, “You go, and do likewise.”¹

¹ ²⁵ Καὶ ἰδοὺ νομικὸς τις ἀνέστη ἐκπειράζων αὐτὸν λέγων, Διδάσκαλε, τί ποιήσας ζωὴν αἰώνιον κληρονομήσω; ²⁶ ὁ δὲ εἶπεν πρὸς αὐτόν, Ἐν τῷ νόμῳ τί γέγραπται; πῶς ἀναγινώσκεις; ²⁷ ὁ δὲ ἀποκριθεὶς εἶπεν, Ἀγαπήσεις κύριον τὸν θεόν

1. Context: A Question with Limits (vv. 25-29)

²⁵ And behold, a lawyer stood up to put him to the test, saying, “Teacher, what shall I do to inherit eternal life?” ²⁶ He said to him, “What is written in the Law? How do you read it?” ²⁷ 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.” ²⁸ And he said to him, “You have answered correctly; do this, and you will live.” ²⁹ But he, desiring to justify himself, said to Jesus, “And who is my neighbor?”

Insincere Question: ²⁵ And behold, a lawyer stood up to put him to the test,

- Lawyer (νομικός): What’s the difference between a lawyer and a herd of buffalo? The lawyer charges more. Why do you bury lawyers ten feet deep instead of six? Because deep down, they really are good people. 99% of lawyers give the rest a bad name.
 - He is not a “civil” lawyer (like we think of) but an expert in Jewish law (the Torah, the laws of the Pentateuch, maybe even the entire Hebrew Bible). He is a religious expert (which did have civil implications as there was no separation in Jewish thought.² (does have civil implications in a theocracy).
- The purpose of his inquiring was to “test” Jesus (πειράζω). This is not a **sincere question** (e.g., “Are we there yet?” is not asking for a travel update but expressing frustration that we’re *not* there yet).
- This is how Satan is described when he tempts Jesus in the wilderness, as “testing the Lord.”³
- This is often the tactic of Jesus’ opponents. They want to see if they can trap him with controversial questions about the Hebrew Bible (e.g., divorce, taxes, resurrection, etc.). Original “gotcha” journalism.
 - *Sidenote* Be careful not to approach Jesus to test him, to make him prove himself, to meet your terms and conditions, rather than approaching from a posture of faith. Do you sincerely want to follow him?⁴

Contradictory Question: saying, “Teacher, what shall I do to inherit eternal life?”

- He asks the right question (with the wrong motive). This is *the* question.

σου ἐξ ὅλης [τῆς] καρδίας σου καὶ ἐν ὅλῃ τῇ ψυχῇ σου καὶ ἐν ὅλῃ τῇ ἰσχυί σου καὶ ἐν ὅλῃ τῇ διανοίᾳ σου, καὶ τὸν πλησίον σου ὡς σεαυτὸν. ²⁸ εἶπεν δὲ αὐτῷ, Ὁρθῶς ἀπεκρίθης· τοῦτο ποιεῖ καὶ ζήσῃ. ²⁹ ὁ δὲ θέλων δικαιῶσαι ἑαυτὸν εἶπεν πρὸς τὸν Ἰησοῦν, Καὶ τίς ἐστίν μου πλησίον; ³⁰ ὑπολαβὼν ὁ Ἰησοῦς εἶπεν, Ἄνθρωπός τις κατέβαινεν ἀπὸ Ἱερουσαλὴμ εἰς Ἱεριχὼ καὶ λησταῖς περιέπεσεν, οἱ καὶ ἐκδύσαντες αὐτὸν καὶ πληγὰς ἐπιθέντες ἀπήλθον ἀφέντες ἡμιθανῆ. ³¹ κατὰ συγκυρίαν δὲ ἱερεὺς τις κατέβαινεν ἐν τῇ ὁδῷ ἐκείνῃ καὶ ἰδὼν αὐτὸν ἀντιπαρήλθεν· ³² ὁμοίως δὲ καὶ Λευίτης [γενόμενος] κατὰ τὸν τόπον ἐλθὼν καὶ ἰδὼν ἀντιπαρήλθεν. ³³ Σαμαρίτης δὲ τις ὁδεύων ἦλθεν κατ’ αὐτὸν καὶ ἰδὼν ἐσπλαγχνίσθη, ³⁴ καὶ προσελθὼν κατέδησεν τὰ τραύματα αὐτοῦ ἐπιχέων ἔλαιον καὶ οἶνον, ἐπιβιβάσας δὲ αὐτὸν ἐπὶ τὸ ἴδιον κτήνος ἤγαγεν αὐτὸν εἰς πανδοχεῖον καὶ ἐπεμελήθη αὐτοῦ. ³⁵ καὶ ἐπὶ τὴν αὐρίον ἐκβαλὼν ἔδωκεν δύο δηνάρια τῷ πανδοχεῖ καὶ εἶπεν, Ἐπιμελήθητι αὐτοῦ, καὶ ὃ τι ἂν προσδαπανήσης ἐγὼ ἐν τῷ ἐπανάρχεσθαί με ἀποδώσω σοι. ³⁶ τίς τούτων τῶν τριῶν πλησίον δοκεῖ σοι γεγενῆσθαι τοῦ ἐμπεσόντος εἰς τοὺς ληστές; ³⁷ ὁ δὲ εἶπεν, Ὁ ποιήσας τὸ ἔλεος μετ’ αὐτοῦ. εἶπεν δὲ αὐτῷ ὁ Ἰησοῦς, Πορεύου καὶ σὺ ποιεῖ ὁμοίως.

² Theocracy. Maybe slight difference with Roman influence but still think mainly “Jewish” religious law.

³ Matt 4:7, Lk 4:12

⁴ 1 Cor 10:9

- Rich Young Ruler: “What good deed must I do to have eternal life?” (Matt 19:16). Philippian Jailer: “What must I do to be saved?” (Acts 16:30). **This is the question you should ask.**
- What is eternal life?⁵ It certainly has a **temporal** element (i.e., lasts forever). But it also has a **qualitative** element (it’s a type of life), a *life worth living*. **How can you experience a life that is truly satisfying and lasts forever?** And this is eternal life, that they know you, the only true God, and Jesus Christ whom you have sent (Jn 17:3). *True life* and *life worth living* is found only in Christ.
- But the question is only good if you ask with the right motive!
- You can see the problems with the lawyer’s mindset even in the way he is asking the question: “What [must] I **do** to **inherit** eternal life?”
 - *Inheriting* is not about *doing* but about *being*. You inherit because of who you are, not what you do. In fact, the way to *inherit* is usually to *become* a part of someone’s family!
 - A lot of us want to know what we can *do* to get the blessings of God rather than asking how I *become* a child of God.
- Jesus doesn’t answer his questions directly. He doesn’t fall for the trap. He doesn’t let the lawyer dictate the terms of the conversation. He answers his first question (v. 25) with a question (v. 26), then his second question (v. 29) with a story (vv. 30-35) and another question (v. 36).

Questioning the Question:²⁶ He said to him, “What is written in the Law? How do you read it?”

- “You’re an expert in the Torah (Bible, OT, etc.), why don’t you tell me?”
- Jesus is trying to uncover how the lawyer’s perspective, intentionally or unintentionally, is leading him to the wrong answer.
- How you ask the question determines (or at least strongly influences) your answer (e.g., Google “why is everything terrible,” and you’ll get articles confirming it).
 - “What you see and hear depends a great deal on where you are standing, and on what sort of person you are” (C. S. Lewis, *Magician’s Nephew*). Too many people use the [Bible] like a drunk treats a light post, for support rather than illumination.
 - Too often, we don’t see things as **they are**; we see things as **we are**. “I believe every word they said because it’s exactly what I wanted to hear.”

By the Book:²⁷ 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.” The lawyer, as a good student does, answers the question correctly. Jesus commends his answer: “You have answered correctly.”

- His answer is from Deuteronomy 6:5 (love God) and Leviticus 19:18 (love your neighbor). **Paul** on two occasions, says the OT law is summed up in the idea of loving your neighbor as yourself.⁶ Jesus himself sums up the law with this same answer

⁵ Jn 3:16, 36, 4:14, 36, 5:24, 39, 6:27, 40, 47, 54, 68, 10:28, 12:25, 50, 17:2, 3

⁶ Rom 13:8-10, Gal 5:14

elsewhere: love of God (**vertical**) and love of others (**horizontal**) summarize all of the various components of the law (cf. Ten Commandments, “two tables”).⁷

Impossible Action: do this, and you will live. 🛑 That's it? Just do that. 🙄

- **Love God with Everything:** The **main verb** is “love,” the **object** of that love is “the Lord your God,” and the **extent** of that love is “total” (i.e., “all”). Christopher J. H. Wright, missionary and OT scholar describes the essence of Deuteronomy 6:5, quoted here :
“‘Love the Lord your God with total commitment (heart), with your total self (soul), to total excess.’ Loving God should be ‘over the top!’” The most repeated word in this verse is “all.” That is the hard part. Loving God with all, nothing held back.
 - We so often want to love God with *some* of our hobbies, *some* of our time, *some* of our money, *some* of our relationships (“I surrender some”).
- **Love Others Equal to Yourself:** The next object is your neighbor. Be honest: which one of us can care for, focus on, carry the burdens, and think about others as much as we do ourselves? We are self-absorbed. We vote for our self-interests. Politicians were less likely to vote for conscription if they had a draft-eligible son at the time of the vote.⁸
- Not only can you not **do** this (at least in your own power), it is not really something to be **done**. Love can't really be commanded.
 - “Whether for good or evil, each man lives by his love” (Augustine). You do what you love, but you don't necessarily love everything you do. I pay my taxes and go to the dentist because I need to; I don't love doing it. It's a duty. You don't have to convince me to wrestle with my baby boy or go to dinner with my wife, though. It is natural because I love it.
 - The law is a way of life intended to guide God's people, but it also serves as a mirror, revealing how we fall short and need God's power to live that life. “It's a way of life, not the way to life. We should live by it, but we can never be saved by it” (Keller). We need someone to give us life and transform our love.

Self-Justification: ²⁹ But he, desiring to justify himself, said to Jesus, “And who is my neighbor?”

- He needs to **justify** himself (δικαιῶσαι). He wants to prove that he has done enough to be righteous. He wants to be affirmed rather than transformed.
- The command *must* be reasonable and doable. There have to be limits to who and how much he is to love. If not, these commands are impossible.
- In Leviticus 19:18, it actually says: 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. Debate: Is it enough to love people like me (e.g., nation, ethnicity, religion, etc.)? If you read further in Leviticus 19, you learn that the question is answered: You shall treat the stranger who sojourns with you as the native among you, and you shall love him as yourself (Lev 19:34). The lawyer was engaged in *selective* reading. He defined neighbor in a way that made sense to him.⁹ E.g., Weight loss plan, read the part

⁷ Matt 22:37-38. Rabbinic sources generally agree that these two ideas sum up the law.

⁸ <https://now.tufts.edu/2024/02/27/how-personal-interest-swaps-politicians-votes>

⁹ Cf, Rich young ruler lacked giving up his wealth. Lawyer lacked loving his neighbor.

about exercise, but stop reading before you get to “avoid potato chips and ice cream” (especially after 9 pm).

- In what ways are you and I limiting God’s call to love others?

2. Story: An Unexpected Hero (vv. 30-35)

³⁰ 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. ³¹ Now by chance a priest was going down that road, and when he saw him he passed by on the other side. ³² So likewise a Levite, when he came to the place and saw him, passed by on the other side. ³³ But a Samaritan, as he journeyed, came to where he was, and when he saw him, he had compassion. ³⁴ 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. ³⁵ 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.’

Desperate Need: ³⁰ 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.

- This is the part everyone knows (e.g., re-enact in VBS, Star Wars, slo-mo, etc.).
- It’s a straightforward story at first. The original audience would have been familiar with the details and sympathetic to the initial characters.
- An unnamed man (age? job? position?). **Everyman?** (oppressed, in distress, left for dead).
- The journey from Jerusalem to Jericho was 17 miles, literally down (3,000 ↓), filled with rocky outcroppings where robbers would hide to ambush travelers going to and from worship in the temple.¹⁰
- He’s half dead, but if someone doesn’t help he’ll become whole dead (Wilkin).

The Good Guys?: ³¹ Now by chance a priest was going down that road, and when he saw him he passed by on the other side. ³² So likewise a Levite, when he came to the place and saw him, passed by on the other side.

- The “lawyer” would have seen these two Jewish men as exemplary heroes.
- The priest would likely be coming from his obligatory temple service back to his home in whatever surrounding town (e.g., week or two of service a year; National Guard or Reserves of Judaism).
- The Levite, while not a priest, was from the clan that priests come from (all priests are Levites, but not all Levites are priest). This would be like the Varsity and JV religious leaders; the Batman and Robin of the clergy; the mall cop to the actual cop; the Paul Blart to John McClane.
- Why did they pass by?

¹⁰ Some assume this man is a Jew because he is coming from Jerusalem and going to Jericho, two Jewish cities. Jesus is speaking to a Jewish audience. The distinction between the Samaritan and the Jew wouldn’t make sense if he wasn’t. (but so is the Samaritan).

- (1) Many scholars have **speculated** that these religious leaders were afraid of becoming **ritually unclean** by *potentially* interacting with a corpse, requiring purification rituals that could take more than a week, *potentially* delaying their trip and the day-to-day of their life. **#inconvenient** If the man died on his watch, he would have to pay for the funeral. **#expensive**
 - That may be the case (hence crossing the street).
- (2) It's just as likely that these men simply ignore the wounded traveler for understandable reasons. If they stop and help, they might be the next victim! The only thing worse than one dead traveler is two.
- We live in a day where Clergy (32%) are less trusted than Chiropractors (33%), but that hasn't always been the case in America (67%) and certainly not in Ancient Israel.¹¹ The audience of Jesus' story would have seen these men as upstanding, righteous, pillars of the community. They are the good guys and if they had a reason not to stop and help, **it's unfortunate but understandable**. We all know this: there are limits to our ability to help.
- **#Slackivism**: Feeling bad but doing nothing isn't just a modern phenomenon. We love to care from a distance, "It's unfortunate, but I can't get involved." **We justify inaction with feelings of sympathy.**

The Bad Guy?: ³³ But a Samaritan, as he journeyed, came to where he was, You can hear the **gasp** in the crowd. Samaritans and Jews had vitriolic **hatred** for one another. The word "Samaritan" was used as an insult (racial slur?) against Jesus by the Pharisees.¹²

- Samaritans were ethnically mixed with foreign settlers in after the Assyrian destruction of the Northern Kingdom.
- They developed different religious traditions: a different temple location (Gerazim vs. Jerusalem), only the Pentateuch (with some important differences), they claimed to be direct descendants of Joseph's half-Egyptian sons (Ephraim and Manasseh).¹³
- In Ezra/Nehemiah, the Samaritans opposed the rebuilding of the Jerusalem temple after the Babylonian captivity with political pressure, cultural opposition, intimidation, and threats.
- The hostility continued into the time of Jesus: the Jews destroyed the Gerazime temple¹⁴, and the Samaritans defiled the Jerusalem temple with human remains on the eve of the Passover.
- The Jews saw the Samaritans as genetic, ethnic, and religious half-breeds who held heretical beliefs and practiced a corrupted form of worship.¹⁵

¹¹ Gallup, Lifeway

¹² Jn 8:48

¹³ Aseneth; theological also connected to Shechem (cf. Rape of Dinah). Almost eradicated (Byzantine Christendom; Muslim expansion). Comeback to 900 in 2022 (some offshoots, 20,000 Brazil). Gerazim temple destroyed by Maccabees (John Hyrcanus) ca. 128 BCE (concomitant to time when Samaritan Pentateuch was likely being written down; hence crossover with LXX).

¹⁴ ca. 128 BC.

¹⁵ In today's terms, maybe the priest would be equivalent to a respected pastor, and the Levite a well-known church leader. The Samaritan would be someone completely outside that circle, someone viewed with suspicion or hostility, like a Muslim businessman.

Generous Response: This outsider responded in the opposite way of the religious insiders. He displayed an **attitude** of courageous compassion rather than selfish fear. He **personally** intervened, putting his safety at risk and treating the injured man's wounds.¹⁶ He provided for the man from his means (his own animal) and opened up a line of credit to ensure he was provided for during his recovery.

- He not only had the ability and means to help the injured but also the desire to put love into action.¹⁷
- We too often want to give when it doesn't burden us, when it doesn't impact our bottom line. We help with the leftovers. **That's not sacrificial love; that's convenient charity.** True generosity, gospel generosity means bearing the cost, feeling the burden ourselves.
 - If you only love when it doesn't cost you anything then you'll never truly love (e.g., have kids when I'm ready; there's a wrong time, but you'll never be ready; they will impinge on your freedom, your budget, etc.).

Boundaries: Love of neighbor crosses all boundaries. It loves those on the "other side" of the political aisle, theological spectrum, on the other side of bad choices and even illegal actions. It loves those who have been beaten up by life and those who have wandered into the ditches of the world.

- Do not withhold good from those to whom it is due, when it is in your power to do it (Prov 3:27).
- "Let no one seek for whom he should do good; let him do it to all people. For when you search for whom to do good, you lose the opportunity of doing it" (Augustine).
- The question isn't how dangerous it is to help but how dangerous I will become if I don't help.
- What boundary is God calling you to cross to serve others? What risk is he calling you to take? What sacrifice is he calling you to make?

3. Twist: The Need for Mercy (vv. 36-37)

³⁶ Which of these three, do you think, proved to be a neighbor to the man who fell among the robbers?" ³⁷ He said, "The one who showed him mercy." And Jesus said to him, "You go, and do likewise."

Different Question: ³⁶ Which of these three, do you think, proved to be a neighbor to the man who fell among the robbers?" ³⁷ He said, "The one who showed him mercy."

- Your status as neighbor is not guaranteed by proximity but by behavior. Your status as neighbor isn't determined by intent but by action.
- Notice Jesus doesn't "answer" the question that was asked (who is my neighbor?) but asks a different question (which proved to be a neighbor).

¹⁶ Some Church Fathers saw the oil and wine as sacramental (e.g., Ambrose).

¹⁷ Remember Leviticus 19 (it always comes back to Leviticus: stay tuned for Jan/Feb '25). Israelites were commanded to leave a portion of their fields unharvested for the poor to help themselves to. They had a built in plan to put love into action. #margin Sometimes we have to say 'no' to some things to free us to say 'yes' to others. You might need to simplify your life to free you to invest in mercy.

- The disdain for Samaritans continues as the lawyer won't even say the word "Samaritan."

Impossible Command: "Go and do likewise." Is this our only option? Be better, try harder, do "good-er." How does anyone live like this? Not only is moralism anti-gospel, it's impossible. Guilt, obligation, and duty might get you started, but they can't take you the distance. Moralism is short-term fuel at best—it always leads to burnout and eventual failure.¹⁸

- Only a heart transformed by the love of Christ can sustain a life of true compassion and sacrificial love.

Who Are You?: Who are you in the story? Am I the Priest, the Levite, or the Samaritan? Am I the good guy or the bad guy? The truth is, you and I are the man left for dead. We have been attacked by sin and Satan; we have been ignored and passed by. Left to our own efforts, we will surely die.

- The story and the **context** make it clear that the Good Samaritan is none other than our loving Savior, Jesus Christ.¹⁹
 - Most of Luke has been dealing with this question: "Who do you say I am?" And he's been showing he is the Messiah, the Savior that will suffer and die to rescue them.
 - Last week we saw that Jesus sends us out in his power, but our joy is not in this divine authority (even over demons) but in the fact that our "names are written in heaven."
 - The gospel is not a moralizing book about being a nice little Christ, but an announcement of the identity of Jesus and how that changes everything!
 - Even the next story (sneak peak) of Martha's frustration with Mary for not being a hospitable host makes this point. She was rightly sitting at the feet of Jesus. If the point was simply about good behavior then she wasn't be a good sister or neighbor to Martha (but that's not the point).
- Even the description of the Good Samaritan as compassionate is a nod to his identity: When God describes himself to Moses, he describes himself as "compassionate" (Ex 34:6). One of the most frequently used terms in the gospels to describe Jesus is "compassionate."²⁰ "When he saw the crowds, he had compassion on them, because they were harassed and helpless, like sheep without a shepherd" (Matt 9:36).
- Without a miraculous intervention, each of us will die in our sins. But along comes a compassionate man, rejected by the Jewish religious leaders of his days, with the means and power to save us. "The Samaritan, who is Christ, finds us and heals us; He bears

¹⁸ "Until you've been crushed by the mercy God requires of you, you won't be humble enough to receive the mercy God offers you" (Keller).

¹⁹ Cyril of Alexandria, Tim Keller, Ambrose, N.T. Wright. "The man who was going down is Adam, Jerusalem is paradise, and Jericho is the world; the robbers are hostile powers. The priest is the law, the Levite is the prophets, and the Samaritan is Christ. The wounds are disobedience, the beast is the Lord's body, the inn, which accepts all who wish to enter, is the Church. The manager of the inn is the head of the Church, to whom its care has been entrusted; and the fact that the Samaritan promises he will return represents the Savior's second coming" (Origen).

²⁰ See Ortlund, *Gentle and Lowly*. Matt 9:36, 14:14, 20:34, etc.

our sins and brings us to His Church. He takes on himself the burden of our sin and promises to return²¹, providing for us in His absence” (Cyril of Alexandria).²²

Engine: And here is the power to go, and do likewise. “Jesus is the ultimate Good Samaritan. We are the ones lying in the road, helpless and broken, and He stops to save us at great cost to Himself. When we see that we are the recipients of that radical grace, we are empowered to ‘go and do likewise’” (Keller).

- You will never be able to be a neighbor like this until you receive the neighborly love of Jesus.
- Our only hope for salvation was an act of free grace from an enemy who doesn’t owe us anything. We were saved by someone who owed us nothing but rejection.
- The call of this passage demands love that cannot be demanded, it requires love that cannot be required, it can only be generated by an experience of true love.
- “We love because he first loved us” (1 Jn 4:19). We cannot love like Christ unless we have experienced the love of Christ.
- The gospel is an experience of grace that transforms us into gracious people. We love to earn our love but because we have been loved (e.g., divine order of operations).
- The forgiveness, compassion, and mercy we extend is not out of a **duty** to prove our righteousness but **delight** to share with others what we’ve been gifted by Christ.

Conclusion

So What:

1. Receive, don’t achieve.

- Don’t strive to “be the Good Samaritan” to prove yourself. If you think you have to earn your way to heaven, then every good thing you do is an act of self-interest, not altruism.
- Instead, receive Jesus’ gift of mercy. Like the wounded man, we need rescue.
- Only when we experience Christ’s mercy can we truly “go and do likewise” from a transformed heart.

2. Remember, don’t forget.

- If you’ve been rescued by grace, don’t fall back on performance. Go back to that moment of salvation when Christ rescued you.
- Remember and relive that feeling of gratitude and wonder. Let it fuel your love of God and others.

3. Share, don’t hold back.

- Sacrificial love flows from those who have been loved sacrificially.
- Because Jesus crossed every boundary to reach us, we’re called to love others with the same radical mercy.
- Who is God calling you to love without reservation?

²¹ Leave the deposit of his Holy Spirit with the promise to return.

²² Egyptian Church Father, c. 376-444 A.D. (famous for *theotokos*, anti-Nestorianism).