



EMPOWER THE POOR
Luke 10:25-37; James 1:27

Good morning. If you have a Bible, and I hope you do, let me invite you to open with me to Luke 10. I'm going to have to ask you to bear with me, I'm less than 100% voice yet again this morning. I'll try not to let that resound throughout the room today.

Yesterday marked the day where almost 500 years ago a 34-year-old monk named Martin Luther nailed 95 theses on the church door at Wittenberg and altered the course of European history forever. It was the birth, many would say, of the Protestant Reformation, a reformation that, whether we realize it or not, we are indebted to in this room today. Salvation by grace alone through faith alone in Christ alone, a God-centered, grace-saturated gospel that over the years had been covered up by man-centered teachings, gospel-less traditions. There's a lot we have to learn about the reformation and a lot we have to learn from the reformers.

This morning, I want to draw our attention in particular to the relationship between recovery of the gospel and relief for the poor. I want us to see, think about this morning how the beauty of the gospel is attached to care for the poor. And I want to lean particularly on another reformer, John Calvin, who was born in 1509. This year marks 500 years ago that John Calvin was born. And Calvin was known really more than anything for his exposition of scripture. He preached the Word. He preached through the Word line by line, word by word, chapter by chapter, book by book.

If you were in the church that John Calvin was preaching in, pastoring, you would've spent about 5 years in the book of Acts, well over 200 sermons in Acts. And then you would've moved on to 46 sermons in 1 and 2 Thessalonians, 186 sermons in 1 and 2 Corinthians, these are consecutive, 186, 159 sermons through Job - can you imagine being in Job for 3 years? Two-hundred sermons through Deuteronomy, 353 sermons through Isaiah, like you'd spend half your life in Isaiah.

Just to give you a picture, Calvin preached one particular text on Easter Sunday morning in 1538, and afterward, he was banished by the city council from preaching in that town. And so he comes back three years later, and in his first sermon, he picks up on the same text he left off with.

But this was not just an academic exercise for Calvin. Calvin, one of his great contributions to Christianity, was showing how the Word plays out in practice and particularly in public life. He was living in a day where the church was filled with corruption, all kinds of sales of indulgences, just drowning in luxuries. And Calvin spoke in particular about the church's use of resources for the sake of the poor. When he was talking about deacons in his *Institutes of the Christian Religion*, I want you to hear what he said about these leaders in the church compared to what they were in the early church and how the church was using leaders in that day. And I want you to hear how he connects the gospel with care for the poor.

Calvin wrote,

The Romanists today charged deacons only with ministering at the altar, reading or chanting the gospel, and goodness knows what other trifles. There's nothing of alms, nothing of the care for the poor, nothing of that whole function which they once performed. The deacon, who was the steward of the poor, received what was given in order to distribute it. Today, the poor get nothing more of those alms than if they were cast into the sea. What the church has done with deacons is they have provided that not one penny of all the church's goods should come to the poor, to whom at least one-half belong.

Did you catch that? Calvin was saying that half of the church's resources belong to the poor. The deacons were stewards of the church's resources for the sake of the poor and that is at least one-half of the resources of the church. That was a stinging indictment in the church in his day, and I would say it's a stinging indictment of the church in our day. Half of the church's resources to the poor is hardly the picture we see, whether in this church or the church landscape we are part of. We're working on getting there, but what I want us to see this morning is how firm commitment to the gospel leads to deep compassion for the poor.

Now, I want us to see how they go together. This is so huge because there are all kinds of social justice causes that we hear about in the world today. And we see social justice sometimes trumpeted by the mainstream media, other times trumpeted by Hollywood, other times trumpeted by, well, just a variety of different places. What I want is to see is that there is a care and concern and mercy for the poor that is distinctly gospel driven; that the gospel, in the hearts of Christians, creates a concern and a compassion for the poor that is unique, that is different from anything else in the world; that there is a mercy that comes directly from God to his people in the gospel that plays itself out in the world, that is totally different from any other social justice cause or concern or compassion that we might see in the world. And I want us to pray that God would give us that kind of distinctive mercy in our world today.

And I want us to look at a familiar passage in the Scripture, I'm convinced one of the most familiar stories in all the scripture, but one of the most fundamentally misunderstood stories in all the scripture, the parable of the Good Samaritan.

And what I want us to do - Jim has already the text for us. I want us to walk, kind of like we did with Ruth, verse by verse through the story, and I just want to make sure we catch the weight of the story. We are not as sensitive as first century hearers would've been when they heard this story. There are things that should cause us to perk up that maybe we don't perk up at because we don't realize the original context. I want us to make sure we get a grasp on this story. We're going to walk verse by verse through it, and then there will be some notes on the screen as we think about, okay, what is this heart of mercy look like in action? And how can we have the kind of mercy that Jesus is talking about here in the way we live today? And you've got space in the worship guide you received when you came in that hopefully will provide some room for you to write down some of the things that the Lord might teach us this morning.

Luke 10:25, "*On one occasion an expert in the law stood up to test Jesus. 'Teacher,' he asked, 'what must I do to inherit eternal life?'*" Now, a couple of things here, expert in the Law, literally a lawyer, but not a lawyer like you or I would think of a lawyer today. We think of lawyers in terms of civil or criminal law. In this context, government in Israel, this is a picture of an expert in the Law of Moses and the Mosaic Law and the Old Testament law and all of the rules and regulations have been added to that in Judaism.

And this picture is, this is an expert who knows the law of God backwards and forwards, and he comes up to Jesus and asks Him a question to test Him. "*Teacher...what must I do to inherit eternal life*" (Luke 10:25). And that is a good question.

I want us to realize - I could only wish that every heart and mind and life in this room were consumed with that question, "What must I do to inherit eternal life?" This is the question of all questions. There is no more important question for any one of us to answer in this room. The world would say - there's all kinds of questions you need to answer and just inundates us with a temporal and a trivial: "How am I going to advance my career?" "How is my team going to do?" "How am I going to take care of this or this or this, it's right in front of me?"

And the adversary would like nothing more than to get our minds focused on those questions and lose sight of the fact that every single one of us in the room is going to be around forever. You're going to be around forever, and each one of us will spend forever either in eternal life and joy or in everlasting suffering and death. And so there is no more important question for you to ask and answer in this room than, "What must I do to inherit eternal life?" God, raise our eyes to see the gravity of this question, it's a really good question.

And so Jesus responds, "*What is written in the Law?*" he replied. '*How do you read it*'" (Luke 10:26). He answers a question with a question. Don't you hate it when somebody does that? And Jesus was a master at it, and he's doing it for a reason. He says, "You're a lawyer, what does the Law say?"

And the man replies, "*Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your strength and with all your mind*" (Luke 10:27). He's quoting there from Deuteronomy 6, the Shema, Great Commandment. And then, "*Love your neighbor as yourself*" (Luke 10:27). He's quoting there from Leviticus 19:18, "*Love your neighbor as yourself.*" Now, we know that he's on the right track here because there's a couple of other points in the gospel where Jesus is asked the same question, and He gives the same answer.

So, Jesus looks back at him, and He says, "*You have answered correctly,*" Jesus replied. '*Do this and you will live*'" (Luke 10:28). Now, some raised their eyebrows at this, "Is Jesus saying that we can earn eternal life?" Let's just hang for a minute and try to figure out exactly what Jesus is saying here, but He is saying, "Love God with everything you are, everything you have, love your neighbor as yourself; this is the path to eternal life. Do this and you will live."

Verse 29 says, "*But he wanted to justify himself,*"—Luke gives this little commentary here—"*so he asked Jesus, 'And who is my neighbor'*" (Luke 10:29). So, don't miss this, the man is wanting to determine, this expert in the Law is wanting to determine who classifies as a neighbor so that he can make sure he is doing enough to inherit eternal life. You got that? This is key. The man is asking this question, wants you to determine who is classified as a neighbor that he's supposed to love so that he can see if he measures up, so that he can see if he is doing enough to inherit eternal life. So, that's his question that leads into this story, verse 30.

"*A man was going down from Jerusalem to Jericho, when he fell into the hands of robbers. They stripped him of his clothes, beat him and went away, leaving him half dead*" (Luke 10:30). Now, if you're listening to this, you know Jerusalem to Jericho about 17 miles pretty much downhill. Jerusalem 3,000 feet above sea level, Jericho 1,000 feet below sea level, you dropped 4,000 feet over 17 miles. It's a very steep journey, and it's filled with all kinds of cracks and caves and crevices where people could hide out. It was known as the bloody

way because it was very easy for someone to be hiding, a gang of robbers to be hiding in a cave and to prey upon unsuspecting passersby.

And that's exactly what happens, he is attacked by this gang. This man, presumably a Jewish man, walking down the road, falls in the hands of robbers, they strip him of his clothes, beat him, and leave him half dead, literally hanging on to his life. There he is, no clothes, no possessions, wounded, beaten, and hanging on to his last breath.

And then verse 31 says, "*A priest happened to be going down the same road*" (Luke 10:31), pause for a second - yes! A priest happened, it's the same kind of literary tool that we saw in Ruth. Do you remember when Ruth "just so happened" to go into the field of Boaz and Boaz "just so happened" to come up and see Ruth at this time. It's... Yes! Of all things, it just so happens that a priest who knows that Leviticus teaches, the Law teaches to care for a stranger who is in need; a priest who knows that Exodus 23 talks about even if your enemy has a donkey stuck in a ditch, you should help the donkey out of the ditch much more so the enemy if he is stuck in the ditch. So, a priest who knows, yes, this is the responsibility of the Law toward the people to care for the needy! And so, wonderful, a priest happened to come by.

"*And when he saw the man, he passed by on the other side*" (Luke 10:31). Literally, he walked the opposite way. The word is he saw him, he turned the opposite way and walked around him. Well, that's a bit surprising.

Verse 32 says, "So too, a Levite," a Levite was basically a priest's assistant. The priest had responsibility for the primary sacrificial duties in the temple, and the Levite would care for, maintain the temple and do a variety of other things. And so a Levite, who also knows what the priest knows, "*when he came to the place and saw him, passed by on the other side*" (Luke 10:32), same Word, went the opposite way. And so there's some tension that is built. The drama begs the question, "Well, then who in the world is going to care for this man?"

And this is where Jesus goes right for the jugular, and He says in verse 33, "But a Samaritan." And as soon as we see that word come onto the scene, if we're hearing this in a first century Jewish mindset, our blood immediately begins to boil. Samaritans, the dreaded half-breeds, hated for hundreds of years, hated by the Jews, deep division on every level.

And so here's a man who has seen a priest come by and ignore him, a Levite come by and ignore him, and now a Samaritan whose heritage has taught him - this Samaritan's been taught not to just walk around the guy but to step on the guy. And you can feel the sense of the expert in the Law—"a Samaritan?" And Jesus says, "*a Samaritan, as he traveled, came where the man was; and when he saw him, he took pity on him*" (Luke 10:33). The half-breed, hated one, stops when the priest and the Levite did not. What did he do? "*He went to him and bandaged his wounds, pouring on oil and wine*" (Luke 10:34). This is creating new wounds, as the story is being told, in this expert in the law's life, "No, this is a Samaritan who's doing this?"

And, "*Then he put the man on his own donkey, took him to an inn and took care of him*" (Luke 10:34). The Samaritan stops, Jesus said, and he went over to him, he saw the gravity of his wounds, began to bandage them. How? The man had everything stolen from him, including his own clothes. This means the Samaritan is taking his own possessions, his own clothing, maybe some reserve he had, maybe ripping his sleeve off and bandaging this man's wound with his own clothes, pouring oil and wine on it to soothe it, to comfort the man, to prevent any further infection.

The man is obviously not able to get up, and so the Samaritan picks him up in his arms and lays him on his donkey where he now walks the man to an inn where he can be cared for. They get to the inn, *"The next day he took out two silver coins and gave them to the innkeeper. 'Look after him,' he said, 'and when I return, I will reimburse you for any extra expense you may have'"* (Luke 10:35). This is amazing, he foots the entire bill. He leaves the innkeeper with an open account, "Whatever it takes, make sure this man is provided for. I will come back for him and care for him when I get back. Give him everything he needs."

And at this point, the expert in the Law is stunned into silence. And Jesus looks at him and says, *"Which of these three do you think was a neighbor to the man who fell into the hands of robbers"* (Luke 10:36). Now, catch this, Jesus has totally reversed the question. He's changed the question completely. This expert in the Law was trying to determine who would be classified as a neighbor so that he can know who he has to care for. Jesus turns the question on its head and says, "It's not about determining who your neighbor is, it's about defining what it means to be a neighbor." See that? Major shift. Not about determining who a neighbor is but defining what it means to be a neighbor who cares for those in need.

And so Jesus asks this question. Listen to the reply, verse 37, *"The expert in the law replied, 'The one who had mercy on him'"* (Luke 10:37). The guy couldn't even bring himself to say Samaritan. He didn't say the Samaritan had, no, "The one who had mercy on him." It's like he doesn't even want to admit it. And Jesus says, *"Go and do likewise"* (Luke 10:37).

And in a short story, Jesus has just shattered the religious elite and shocked the religious teachers into realizing that there is a love that supersedes religious knowledge and religious position and religious status. There is a love that they have not even begun to realize. Now, what is the point of this story?

The Point of the Story...

There's a whole history of misinterpretation when it comes to this parable. Many have done with this parable what people do with a lot of different parables and taken every single detail and tried to make it stand for something different. This is a dangerous thing to do with parables 'cause you - this is arbitrary, you can make anything fit, whatever you want to. And so some have said, "Well, okay, in this story, the man who was robbed is like a sinner who was beaten down in his sin, and so the Samaritan is Jesus who comes to him. Now, the priest and the Levite, they represent the Law and the sacrifices because they're not enough to save, only Jesus can save, and so Jesus comes, saves, takes him to the Inn. The Inn is the church," this is a very popular interpretation of this passage, "The inn is the church where believers are cared for." Some have even gone so far as to say the two silver coins represent baptism and the Lord's Supper as sacraments in the church to help care for the person, and so on and so on. Now, this is extremely arbitrary. It's not a responsible, wise way to interpret parables.

This is not Just a Story About Helping Other People

But even if we don't go down that road, this story is so familiar to us that we automatically think, "I've heard this before. This is a story about helping other people. When you see somebody in need, when somebody's hungry, you give them food. When somebody needs a ride, you give them a ride. When somebody's on the side of the road and needs help, you help them; that's the story." And what I want us to see this morning is this is not just a story about helping other people. This is not just a story about helping other people. There's something deeper here. There's something more profound at work.

You say, "Well, how do you know? How do you know you're not just going to take it off somewhere that we shouldn't go?" Well, because the story is told in a context. And this story, the context in which it is told begins with a question, and it's a question that even comes before, "Who is my neighbor?" The ultimate question in this passage is what? "What must I do to inherit eternal life?" That's the question that precipitates this discussion that leads to this story.

This is a Story About Needing a New Heart

And so we need to see this story not isolated from the context that precedes it but in the context which precedes it. We need to realize this is not just a story about helping other people, this is a story about needing a new heart. This is the fundamental point of the story, not just about helping other people. That's part of it, which we'll see in a second, but this is a story about needing a new heart. Think about it with me.

If this story was just about helping other people then wouldn't it have been told in a different way? Couldn't you accomplish that purpose? Maybe even a more effective way couldn't Jesus have accomplished this? And maybe if you or I were wanting to get across that point, we would say, "Okay," to the expert in the Law, "imagine a Jewish man," somebody who the expert in the Law could identify with, "Imagine a Jewish man is walking down the road, and he sees a man who is beaten, has been robbed, and is lying there half dead. And as the Jewish man gets closer to him, he realizes this is a Samaritan. And even though there's deep-seeded prejudice against Samaritans, the Jewish man stops and cares for him and takes him to an inn and provides for him. And so this is a story about helping other people, about caring for other people, even when your prejudices may be against him." That would communicate that story.

So, why does Jesus take us on this roundabout tale with a priest and a Levite, all leading to the focal point of the story when He introduces a Samaritan as the hero? Why does Jesus tell the story this way? Think about it.

Because Jesus knows that as soon as He mentions the Samaritan as the hero in the story, as soon as He even mentions a Samaritan, there's going to arise in this expert in the law's heart a deep-seeded hatred toward that Samaritan. And what Jesus is doing is He is uncovering, exposing a lack of mercy and a lack of love at the core of this man's heart that needs to be radically transformed. What Jesus is doing is He is intentionally showing this man that in wanting to justify himself and in his hatred towards Samaritans, he is demonstrating a total lack of love and total lack of mercy. That's the point, the man needs a new heart.

And if we are going to be merciful - this is key - anybody can tell a story in the world today about someone who's in need and you should care for them; that's not the biblical gospel picture of mercy that we're seeing in Luke 10. What we're seeing here is something exposed in our hearts that if it is not changed will inhibit our ability to show mercy in the world around us. And when it is changed, when our hearts are transformed by the mercy of Christ, we will show radical mercy that is unlike anything else in this world.

So, how, church, how do we get that kind of heart of mercy? How can we as a church, as individuals and families be marked by, characterized by radical mercy that is distinct from the world, that people would look at the church, even more specifically the Church at Brook Hills and say, "There is a mercy flowing from that church, that people, those individuals and families, there's a mercy flowing from them that looks totally different than anything else in the world." How can we get that heart of mercy?

The Heart of Mercy...

I want to show you very, very simply three steps toward a heart of mercy that Jesus was just showing.

See the Love God Requires

First, see the love God requires. This is the starting point. See the love God requires. When this lawyer asked Jesus what he needed to do in order to inherit eternal life, Jesus did not point him to the Law because the Law could save him. Jesus pointed him to the Law because the Law shows us our need for salvation - key. He did not point him to the Law because the Law could save him, he pointed to the Law because the Law shows our need of salvation. What does the Law say?

The Law has two main requirements that are emphasized here. Number one, undivided love for God, a heart and a mind totally, perfectly, completely absorbed in love for God, an affection for God, this is what the Law requires, undivided love, undivided affection for God. And then second, the Law requires unselfish love for others, "Love your neighbor as yourself."

Think about this picture of this Samaritan. Samaritan comes upon a person that he doesn't even know. The only way I could describe it, trying to get the picture of this bloody way. Picture it like you are walking through a dark alley in the inner city, and you see a man groaning over on the side. He's been hurt, a gang has obviously come upon him and beat him, left him for dead. And when you see him, you realize that there's a gang who did this to him and that gang could be in the darkness watching you at this moment.

And so, is your first instinct to run to him or run away from that scene? "Well, I mean, if I ran away from that scene, I would call somebody and tell them to go." Well, sure, but let's not be too hard on the priest or the Levite here. Let's see ourselves in this picture and realize that this was unselfish love that without question, without hesitation, somebody he doesn't even know, someone whom he is supposed to despise, he goes to that person, the Samaritan does, and begins to care for him.

Have you ever done that? Have you ever seen someone in need, in urgent need, and immediately, without question or hesitation, done whatever it takes to meet that need? Have you ever done that for somebody? I'm guessing you have. I'm guessing just about everybody in this room has for somebody and that somebody that you've done it for is you.

When you found yourself in urgent need, you immediately responded without question or hesitation to make sure that your need was provided for. And Jesus says, "Love your neighbor like that. Love strangers, love enemies like that." Is that natural? Absolutely not. Who can measure up to this standard? Undivided love for God, unselfish love for others, who will attempt to justify themselves in front of that standard? No one can and that's the point. See the love God requires. That leads to the second step.

Embrace the Love God Offers

See the love God requires and then, second, embrace the love God offers. Embrace the love God offers. Don't miss this, this is key to understanding this story. We need to realize our poverty. In order to care for the poor, we need to realize our own poverty. And this is what Jesus was doing in this man's heart and life, and he wasn't getting it. He wasn't getting.

If you think about it, what if, in this conversation, Jesus had said, "What is written in the law?" And he said, "Love the Lord your God with all your heart and mind, soul and strength, and love your neighbor as yourself." And Jesus said, "You're right, you've answered correctly. Do this and you will live." What if the man, after hearing Jesus say that, would've responded, "I can't do that. I can't love God with all that I have. I can't love my neighbor like I love myself. I can't show this kind of love. Have mercy on me, oh God, I cannot live up to the standard." If this man, this expert in the Law would've responded like that, the whole conversation would have changed, would it not have? The whole conversation would have changed.

What this man needed to do was realize his own poverty. He thought he was spiritually rich. He was spiritually poor, trying to justify himself. And so, in order to have this kind of heart and mercy, we need to realize our poverty and that frees up the way for us to now receive His mercy. We realize our poverty, and we see His mercy.

Don't miss it. The man whom the expert in the Law can identify with in the story is the man who has been beaten, who is in need. And yes, we want to be careful not to make some of those allegorical errors where we take every single little detail and apply it to different things, but the reality is this picture is undoubtedly showing us the pattern of God's mercy all throughout scripture.

The reality of scripture is that, yes, indeed, you and I were once dead in our sin, lying in our disobedience, deserving of eternal death, and God on high impoverished His one and only Son to come to us amidst the wounds of our sin to heal us, to raise us up, to cleanse us and make us whole, and He did pay the price for all of that. This is the mercy of God toward us, and this is so key. We will never be able to show divine mercy to others until we receive divine mercy ourselves. We'll never be able to show God-like mercy until we know God-like mercy, the depth of who we are, and this is what makes Christian, gospel-driven mercy distinct, that if you do not cry out for mercy from God, no matter how good you might be according to the standards of this world, you are limited in the mercy you will show because there's a mercy from God that we need in our own hearts, that then overflows into others' lives.

Give the Love God Desires

This is the beauty, we see the love God requires, we embrace the love He offers, "Have mercy on me," and that leads to the third step, we give the love God desires. Now, there is a mercy in us that flows out of us toward others. And this, brothers and sisters, is gospel, grace-driven mercy. It's so important, it's why we see over and over and over and over and over again throughout scripture that love for God is connected to love for others, because when love for God is a reality in your heart then love toward others is the supernatural overflow of what God has done in your heart.

His love, mark this down, God's love is compelling. His heart, His mercy, His grace in us changes us and transforms the way we view others, so that - this is so key, I want to bring this back in because it's something I want to keep constantly before us... We are not motivated to care for the poor by guilt.

This is such a fine line, and I want to be cautious, as your pastor, as we talk about radical concern for the poor. I believe it is important for us to come face to face with the realities in the world around us. We need to see poverty for what it is. We need to see our wealth for what it is. But if that's all, if we just stop there and we say, "We've got to give to the poor because we've got so much money, because we feel bad if we don't," then that will only go so far, and it will wear us out. So, I want us to avoid that.

It doesn't mean we can't open our eyes to these realities. We need to see these realities, we need to realize we are not motivated to care for the poor by guilt, we are motivated to care for the poor by the gospel, because we have a God who sent his son to become poor so that we might become rich. This is 2 Corinthians 8 and 9, this is gospel motivation for giving, because Christ, in His very being, has done this in our hearts and our lives and that overflows into others.

Why would you, in a dark alley, see a groaning man in a dangerous situation and go and help him? Why would you look at a prostitute or an alcoholic or a drug addict, or someone who is despised or dangerous or dirty or diseased, why would you look at those who are in worse conditions? Why would your heart be drawn to them? Why would you go to them without question or hesitation?

Because you know that even though you may not have ever experienced those particular physical conditions, there was a day when you were totally despised, and you were dead in your sin. And the danger of sin immersed and engulfed you, and there was nothing in you to draw anyone to you. And Christ came and pursued you, and He reached down into your wounded, dead heart. And He gave you life, and He cleansed you, and He made you whole, so that now it just makes sense to show that kind of mercy to others, that now we don't sit back and hide behind smoke screens that are so common in American consumeristic culture, "Well, here's the reasons why we can't give to the poor: this, this, this or this." And yes, there are ways we must be wise, we must be wise with how we use God's resources, but when the mercy of God has so transformed your heart, then mercy overflowing to others is compelled by God.

Some say, "Well, are we really supposed to care for the poor who have brought poverty upon themselves? What about the poor who have made decisions in their lives, bad decisions, and brought about their poverty, are we still supposed to care for them?" This is where I love Jonathan Edwards, he said,

If they are come into poverty by vicious idleness, laziness, or self-indulgence, we are not thereby excused from obligation to relieve them unless they continue in those vices. If we do excuse ourselves from caring for them, we will be acting in a manner contrary to the rule of loving one another as Christ loved us. Christ has loved us, pitied us, and greatly laid out himself to relieve us from all that want and misery which we brought on ourselves by our own folly and wickedness. We foolishly and perversely threw away those riches with which we were provided upon which we might have lived and been happy to all eternity, and He loved us.

Yes! We all have brought poverty upon ourselves, and Christ has come to us and saved us and redeemed us with His mercy and His love. And so we don't think about mercy the way the world thinks about mercy, we think about mercy radically different. The gospel transforms...

His love is compelling, His love is comprehensive.. The mercy expressed through this passage is not just enough to get by. Mercy does not restrict who is loved. Clearly part of the point of the story, is to emphasize this religious leader, who is looking to minimize who his neighbor is, needs to realize that his neighbor is anyone who is in need.

You can almost hear the typical American standing with Jesus here saying, "How far do we have to go with this thing?" Like, "Obviously, we have to be careful about this and this and this and this. Well, who do I really have responsibility for? Isn't this the government's job?"

Well, I hardly have enough to take care of myself." And Jesus is saying, "Love your neighbor as yourself." This is so different.

A mercy that does not restrict who is loved, and a mercy that does not restrict how much one is loved. He underwrites this man's entire recovery from start to finish. He keeps giving and giving and giving, he doesn't just throw him a check and pass on by. He is involved in this man's life. His love is compelling, His love is comprehensive, and His love is costly.

Don't miss it, mercy from God takes risks. It takes great risks to stop in the alley and go to the man, risking safety, schedule, health, money, all on a guy he didn't even know, all on a guy whom some in his community would chastise him for even looking at. Don't miss it. Priest, Levite, Samaritan, all three see the man's need, only one steps out and takes the risk to meet the man's need.

It is one thing, Church at Brook Hills, for us to be inundated and see the need around us when it comes to the poor, and it's a whole other thing when the people of God do what you're doing in so many different ways and take a step out and take some risks into the unknown. "Don't know what all this means, what all this will look like."

Yes! Mercy from God takes great risks, mercy from God involves great sacrifice, personal investment sacrifice. The Samaritan is intimately, personally involved in this man's life. I love what one commentator said. Commentator said, "Jesus is attacking the complacency of comfortably religious people who protect themselves from the needs of others." He is attacking the complacency of comfortably religious people who protect themselves from the needs of others. Oh, I do not want to be counted among - I don't want us to be counted among those who protect ourselves from the needs of others, who isolate and insulate ourselves from the needs of the world around us in Birmingham and all nations.

Mercy from God takes great risks, involves great sacrifice, and mercy from God leads to great reward. Here's the picture, this costs the Samaritan, no question, it costs the Samaritan, and it will cost any individual, any family, and it will cost this church. When we begin to let the mercy of God and the gospel flow from us into this city and all nations, the cost will be great. But I beg you to consider that the cost of not showing this kind of mercy is far, far, far greater.

The cost of seeing need and turning the other way and walking around, the cost is great for those who are need, clearly for those who we'll talk about next week, the billion-and-a-half people who do not have the gospel who will continue to live and die without ever hearing the gospel, the cost will be great for them; the cost will be eternally great for them. The cost will be great for those 26,000 kids who die every day of starvation and preventable disease, the cost will be great for them if we continue to spend our resources on ourselves.

But I want to submit to you that the cost will not be great for them, it will be great for us as we walk by turning a deaf ear and blind eye to those needs because we will miss out - don't forget the context - we will miss out on that which is eternal life. We will miss out on the infinite joy, the infinite joy of receiving the mercy of God and reflecting the mercy—that mercy to the world around us. We will miss out on the infinite joy and satisfaction that comes in a heart that is just overflowing with mercy.

Do we want that kind of heart? Then see the love He requires. We can't manufacture the love for God and love for others like this, so embrace the loves He offers. Cry out, call out

for mercy upon your own soul and then with that mercy inside of you, a God-given, gospel-saturated mercy, let it flow into others around us.

God, may we, as individuals, families, and as the Church at Brook Hills, be marked by radical gospel-driven mercy for the needs in the world.

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