

Our spiritual inheritance as followers of Christ is taking Jesus at His word – believing what He says is true and acting upon His word in faith. And so the gospel, the New Testament, is our rule and guide on how we should live today. Taking examples from the Sermon on the Mount, Jesus said love your enemies and pray for those who persecute you, so this is what we do. Jesus said in everything do to others what you would have them do for you, so this is what we do. We strive to take Jesus seriously by doing what He said we should be doing, knowing that we have God’s grace to lift us up when we fall short.

Let’s take a passage from Luke 10, Jesus’ story of a Priest, a Levite and a Samaritan.

Jesus starts His story with a man who got beat down & robbed. The priest (or pastor) saw the man, went to the other side of the road and kept moving. The Levite (minister, deacon, dedicated church person) saw the man as well, went to the other side of the street, and kept it moving. Then a Samaritan (someone society looks down on), came to where the man was; and when he saw him, he took pity on him. He went to him (he didn’t go to the other side of the street) and bandaged his wounds, pouring on oil and wine (the good stuff – expensive). Then he put the man on his own donkey, brought him to an inn and took care of him.

After telling this story, Jesus asked, “Which of these three do you think was a neighbor to the man who fell into the hands of robbers?” The law expert replied, “The one who had mercy on him.” The Samaritan, who met the physical, material, financial and emotional needs of the man in his path. The church folk, the ones that should have, didn’t.

Jesus said: “Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind.’ This is the first and greatest commandment. And the second is like it: ‘Love your neighbor as yourself.’ All the Law and the Prophets hang on these two commandments.”

As Christians, our inheritance is taking Jesus seriously. We want to love the Lord our God with everything we have. The other part is making sure we love our neighbors as ourselves. And in doing this, loving our neighbor, we should avoid trying to define who our neighbor is and be like the Samaritan in Jesus’ story love the ones God puts in our paths – family, classmates and co-workers, and our actual neighbors.

Our actual neighbors? It’s easy to shut the door and stay inside our homes (our sanctuary). The pressure to interact is not the same as it is with family & co-workers/classmates. We can choose not to interact with our neighbors and just live in our homes. But this group was put on our path. We don't live where we live by accident. We live where we live because God has placed us in our specific neighborhoods for a reason. And if we claim our heritage of taking Jesus seriously, then that means that we should walk outside of our homes and go to the people on our block, get to know them, and if needed, bandage their wounds or allow them to bandage our wounds. The power of loving our actual neighbors, taking this passage seriously (literally), is that we are living out Jesus’ command and great things can happen through those relationships we develop with those who live a stone’s throw away from us.