

Go And Do Likewise
Luke 10:23-37

(adapted from a sermon by, Rev. Chad D. Trouten
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Grace to you and peace from God our Father and our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ.

The question asked by the lawyer in today's text could have been asked today. It is how most of the lost souls in our world think: "Teacher, what shall I do to inherit eternal life?" People have been asking a version of this question for centuries. It is what religions try to answer. Even well-meaning Christians give various answers to the question. Some say, "Do what Jesus would do." Others quip, "Keep your promises to God and your family." Still others offer, "Follow the principles for Christian living found in the Bible." An older answer is, "Do penance and stay in the good graces of the church."

Jesus has the lawyer answer his own question, "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." To which Jesus responds, "You have answered correctly; do this, and you will live."

But the question, of course, is wrong-headed from the beginning. It wrongly assumes *you* can **DO** something to inherit eternal life.

Jesus has a point to make in answering this wrong question and granting the false assumption. He wants to show that it is impossible. If you want to **DO** something to merit eternal life? Then keep God's Law – perfectly.

To keep the Law perfectly means you have to love God with everything that you are. It also means you will love your neighbor, even your enemy, as your very self. Show mercy to everyone, even to those whom you hate. Do this and you will live. And if you don't do this, you will die. If you fail to be perfect in any of these requirements, then you have failed to inherit eternal life.

Of course, the lawyer had indeed failed to do these things, just like you and I have failed to do these things. So where is there hope for eternal life?

We can see how the initial question is wrong-headed by cutting it a little short: "What shall *I* do to inherit?" What does anyone **DO** to inherit anything? An inheritance does **NOT** come to you because of anything you *do*, but because someone freely chose you to receive it. Usually you were born into an inheritance – and nobody chooses which family to be born into. Inheritance happens when someone dies and you are named in the last will and testament. You do not **DO** anything to inherit; the testator chooses you and places you into a relationship with him so that when he dies, you receive the inheritance.

Does the nature of the case change when the inheritance is eternal life? **NO!** God is the testator and you are the heir. You don't **DO** anything to inherit eternal life. Rather, God has chosen you to be His heir, just as He chose Abraham. God has named you in His last will and testament to

receive the inheritance of eternal life. God has placed you into a relationship with Himself, a relationship which you had destroyed by your sin. God restores that relationship, so that when He dies, you receive the inheritance.

My friends, He has died. God died on the cross and there confirmed His testament to you. Once a testament is confirmed, no one can annul it or adds to it [Gal 3:15]. He has transferred His estate to you, and you possess eternal life. You do nothing to inherit eternal life; God has done everything necessary, even the dying, to freely bequeath eternal life to you.

So why didn't Jesus answer the lawyer's question by saying, "You ask the wrong question, for you can do nothing to *inherit* eternal life. Rather, God freely bequeaths eternal life to you, through the death of Christ." That would have been the Gospel answer to the lawyer's question. Instead, Jesus directs the lawyer to the Law, "What is written in the law? How do you read it?" [v. 26]

Jesus answers this way because He knew the man needed to be convicted of his own sin before he would be ready to hear the Gospel in faith. The lawyer was a self-righteous sinner, for he thought he was good enough. He wanted to prove to Jesus, this new teacher on the scene, how good he was.

Dear friends, those who want to justify themselves according to the Law need to be convinced that this is impossible. This is when God's Law needs to come crashing into their lives in all its severity, it must destroy all the self-supports that all men would like to build. This Law of God says, "You cannot justify yourself before God." Through this Law, God has confined all under sin.

It must happen in this way so that the promise of the Gospel might then be given and received by faith in Christ Jesus to those who believe.

Jesus was pointing this man to the Law in order to prepare him for the Gospel. He was convincing him that he was condemned under sin before freeing him to life with the promise of the Gospel.

Too many people miss this important distinction. Even many well-meaning Christians point to this text and say, "See, Jesus gives us the answer to our question, 'What shall I do to inherit eternal life?'. He says we should love God. He says we should love our neighbor.

Our text's lawyer is understands he hasn't done this perfectly, that's why he asks, "And who is my neighbor?" He wants to make that the neighbor he *MUST* love is the neighbor he *WANTS* to love.

My neighbor is not the shady salesman who overcharged me, is it? It is not the woman who gossips about me behind my back, is it? It isn't the drunkard down the street is it? It isn't the guy who stole my high school sweetheart, is it?

God says we should show mercy on those who hate us. He says we should go and be like the

good Samaritan. That's what we must do to inherit eternal life. Do this and you will live. So, if you want to be saved and go to heaven, go and do likewise.

My friends, Jesus answered this way to show **to you**, that **you** can do nothing to inherit eternal life. You will always fail to attain the required perfection. He gave this answer so that **you** would despair of your own works, and instead trust only in the works of Christ to save **you**.

Anybody who points to this text, or any other preaching of the Law, as the means of salvation, is wrong - dead wrong. Your attempts to live up to God's law will always come up shy of the mark. The Scripture has confined all under sin [Gal 3:22].

"You go, and do likewise." This Law seems simple enough. Perhaps if you tried really hard, you could be a "good Samaritan." Maybe you could show mercy to a traditional enemy. Possibly you would give of your own riches, to show compassion on someone who hates you. But who is like this good Samaritan? What does it really mean to show mercy like the Samaritan showed mercy?

My friends, Christ is the good Samaritan. And, the half dead man is a you! The lawyer says, "I will love my neighbor as myself, just tell me, who is my neighbor?"

Jesus answers, "Everybody is you're your neighbor. You do not get to pick and choose. You are to love all. You cannot love, for you are dying. You need someone to love you, show mercy to you, heal you, pay for your ongoing care, give you lodging, revive you to life."

Jesus says, "I am the one who fulfills the Law. I am the one who shows mercy and the compassion of God, and brings it to you. I am neighbor to you. I give to you the gifts of mercy, compassion, healing, and life. As I have died (and yet I live), you shall inherit eternal life. And as I live in you, you have eternal life and show mercy - not motivated by the Law, but made alive by My love, compassion, and mercy in you." [adapted from Just's commentary, pg. 454]

The idea of God finding you half dead, lying in a pool of your own blood on the side of the road was not new to the original hearers of this tale of Jesus, nor should it be to you. Jesus words are a reflection of the picture of our merciful God from the sixteenth chapter of Ezekiel. Consider these vivid words:

"No eye pitied you, to do any of these things for you, to have compassion on you; but you were thrown out into the open field. . . . And when I passed by you and saw you struggling in your own blood, I said to you in your blood, 'Live!' Yes, I said to you in your blood, 'Live!' I made you thrive like a plant in the field . . . I spread My wing over you and covered your nakedness. . . . Then I washed you in water; yes, I thoroughly washed off your blood, and I anointed you with oil. I clothed you in embroidered cloth and gave you sandals of badger skin; I clothed you with fine linen and covered you with silk." [Ezekiel 16:5-10]

Jesus Christ is the great "good Samaritan". You are the one on whom He has shown mercy. He found you writhing in the blood of your sin, physically alive, but spiritually dead. He bandaged your wounds, covering your sin with the clean, white linen of His righteousness. He washed you in water by His Word in holy Baptism, and there anointed you with the healing

oil of the Holy Spirit.

He pours out wine for you in His Holy Supper, to kill with His own antiseptic blood the cancerous infection of your sin.

Upon His departure to the right hand of His Father, He left you in the care of His chosen innkeeper - your pastor - as He brought you safely into the inn of His Church.

And He will come again, to take you to Himself and give to you the inheritance He has bequeathed to you in His blood of the New Testament.

Your inheritance is eternal life forevermore in the merciful, compassionate, blessed presence of God.

Can you now go and do likewise? Let's face it, who can show mercy as Christ shows mercy? Who can have compassion as Christ has compassion? No one but Christ, to be sure!

Can you then, by the keeping of the law, earn eternal life for yourself? "Certainly not! For if there had been a law given which could have given life, truly righteousness would have been by the law." [Gal 3:21]

But Christ lives in you! Therefore you DO show mercy just like Christ shows mercy. It is Christ in you, who shows mercy through you. You DO have compassion just like Christ has compassion, for it is Christ in you, having compassion through you. No, Christ does not do this so that you shall earn eternal life in the doing of compassion. But, this is done in you as the result of the eternal life of Christ living in you. Through the eternal life which you already have inherited through your Lord's death on the cross – you have compassion. What the Law demands as a command, the Gospel credits to you as a fact: you DO go and do likewise, for it is Christ Jesus your Lord who does it in you and through you.

"Blessed are the eyes that see what you see! For I tell you that many prophets and kings desired to see what you see, and did not see it, and to hear what you hear, and did not hear it." [v. 23-4] These are words of Jesus which immediately precede the encounter of the lawyer with Jesus, words which the lawyer heard.

This is the Gospel answer to the lawyer's question – which he was obviously missed. He asked, "What shall I DO?" Jesus had already said it, "You are blessed, because, by God's grace, you have seen the Christ. Your ears hear His Word."

Dear friends, it is this Christ and His Word which have made you blessed. Nothing you have done or said has blessed you with the inheritance, but Christ with His Gospel Word has blessed you with it, even with eternal life. Thanks be to God! In the name of Jesus. Amen.

The peace of God, which passes all understanding keep your hearts and minds in Christ Jesus. Amen.