

1. Introduction

Good morning! It is a joy to meet together to worship our Lord. During the last few weeks, we have looked at **Luke 10:2-3** several times, **“The harvest is plentiful, but the workers are few. Ask the Lord of the harvest, therefore, to send out workers into his harvest field. Go! I am sending you out like lambs among wolves.”** As we have considered this verse and others related to it, I have challenged us to take steps of faith.

- (1) Pray for workers to be sent to the harvest field of Osaka.
- (2) Find a ministry partner and pray together asking, *“What could we do together to share the Good News of Jesus?”*
- (3) Listen to the Lord and obey.
- (4) And, this is new this morning: report how it went using the, “My Voice,” card. If you share how things are going, then our Friday prayer group will be able to pray in thanksgiving or intercession as needed. I would like to continue to bring these challenges before us from now until Christmas, since the Christmas season provides many good opportunities for outreach. Also, if you want help finding a partner, please let me know on a, “My Voice,” card and I will try to match up those who need partners.

There are many ways to share the Good News of Jesus: street evangelism, sending letters or cards, visiting people in need, sharing a testimony over coffee, or bringing friends to church. Well-chosen, Christmas gifts can also be a powerful witness. Some may even be led to start a new small group or other ministry. Whatever the Lord may lead you to do, do it and let us know how it went. Jesus sent the disciples out two by two, and that is our inspiration for this ministry effort.

In today’s Scripture passages we will learn some important things to keep in mind as we minister in the Name of Jesus. Let’s begin by reading Luke 10:25-28.



2. Scripture Luke 10:25-28 (NIV)

[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?" [26] "What is written in the Law?" he replied. "How do you read it?" [27] He answered: " '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, 'Love your neighbor as yourself.'" [28] "You have answered correctly," Jesus replied. "Do this and you will live."

3. Teaching

Love is the first and foremost rule of faith. Love God with all of your heart, soul, strength, and mind. And, love your neighbor as yourself. In other words, be wholly devoted to God and committed to care for your neighbor just as you care for yourself. Love is a verb and that implies action. If we have food to eat, then we should make sure that our neighbor is not hungry. If we have clothing to wear, then we should make sure that our neighbor does not go naked. In whatever ways we care for our own needs, we should care for our neighbor’s needs as well. And, as we go, we want to keep our focus on the Lord our God and on His Kingdom. Make your relationship with God your first priority. Seek first the Kingdom of God, and you will learn to love God and your neighbor.

Some people may be surprised to learn that this teaching originally comes from the Old Testament. **Deuteronomy 6:4-5**, **“Hear, O Israel: The Lord our God, the Lord is one. Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your strength.”** And, **Leviticus 19:18**, **“Do not seek revenge or bear a grudge against one of your people, but love your neighbor as yourself. I am the Lord.”** From the beginning of the Bible to the end, love is central.

In Luke 10:25, an expert in the Law of Moses stood up to test Jesus. We don't know why he did this. Perhaps he planned to embarrass Jesus in front of the crowd. Or, perhaps he was considering following Jesus. We don't know for sure what his motivation was, but he asks Jesus (Luke 10:25b), **“Teacher, what must I do to inherit eternal life?”** Jesus answered the question with another question. **Luke 10:26, “What is written in the Law? How do you read it?”**

If you are a teacher, then you have probably done this sometimes. Instead of telling your students the answer, you encourage them to figure it out on their own. In this case, the man gave his answer and Jesus agreed. Love for God and neighbor is more important than all the rest of the Law of Moses. If you have love, then you have what you need to inherit eternal life.

Notice the choice of words. The man knows that he cannot earn eternal life. No one can earn salvation by their own efforts. No matter how hard you work, it is not enough. Eternal life is something received from God, not something we earn. Like an inheritance left to a son or daughter, eternal life is to be received with humility and gratitude as a gift from Father God. And if we give thanks to God and love Him, then we will be drawn to Jesus, God the Son. Let's continue with Luke 10:29-37.

4. Scripture Luke 10:29-37 (NIV)

[29] But he wanted to justify himself, so he asked Jesus, "And who is my neighbor?" [30] In reply Jesus said: "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. [31] A priest happened to be going down the same road, and when he saw the man, he passed by on the other side. [32] So too, a Levite, when he came to the place and saw him, passed by on the other side. [33] But a Samaritan, as he traveled, came where the man was; and when he saw him, he took pity on him. [34] He went to him and bandaged his wounds, pouring on oil and wine. Then he put the man on his own donkey, took him to an inn and took care of him. [35] 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.' [36] "Which of these three do you think was a neighbor to the man who fell into the hands of robbers?" [37] The expert in the law replied, "The one who had mercy on him." Jesus told him, "Go and do likewise."

5. Teaching

The expert in the law probably should have quit after his first question. Instead, **Luke 10:29** tells us, **“But he wanted to justify himself, so he asked Jesus, “And who is my neighbor?”**” Why do we always want to justify ourselves? If we love God and love our neighbor, then we should not be focused on ourselves. The desire to justify oneself comes from pride, not from love. Love does not seek to define limits. But we all do it. In a hundred different ways, we ask, **“And who is my neighbor?”**

This photo shows a portion of the old Roman road from Jerusalem to Jericho. The road was very well known in that time. In the parable, a man was going down the mountain from Jerusalem toward Jericho, perhaps about a six-hour walk. Since the man was leaving Jerusalem, it is possible that he had just come from worshipping at the temple and was on his way home. But a band of robbers attacks the man and they steal his belongings, even his clothes. They beat him and leave him along the roadside to die.



A priest and a Levite come down the same road and see the man. But they do nothing to help him. How sad it is when those who are supposed to be serving God refuse to help a stranger in need. They also were probably on their way home after worshipping at the temple. But they did not stop to help. They did not want to get involved. **Luke 10:33-34, “But a Samaritan, as he traveled, came where the man was; and when he saw him, he took pity on him. He went to him and bandaged his wounds, pouring on oil and wine. Then he put the man on his own donkey, took him to an inn and took care of him.”**

The Samaritans were a mixed people, part Jewish and part gentile. Because of this, the Jews despised Samaritans. But the person who stopped to help the wounded man was not a highly respected priest or

Levite. The man who stopped to help was a Samaritan, a despised foreigner. But God doesn't care about race, background, or social standing, God cares about the heart. And this Samaritan man had a heart full of love, even love for strangers.

1 John 4:19-21 teaches us about love for God, **"We love because he first loved us. If anyone says, 'I love God,' yet hates his brother, he is a liar. For anyone who does not love his brother, whom he has seen, cannot love God, whom he has not seen. And he has given us this command: Whoever loves God must also love his brother."**

Love for God and neighbor is central to the life of faith. And you cannot love God without loving your neighbor also, because your neighbor is created in the image of God. This painting, *"The Good Samaritan,"* by Vincent van Gogh shows the scene of the Samaritan helping the wounded man. The priest and the Levite can be seen in the background, continuing down the road. But the Samaritan has stopped to take care of the wounded stranger. The Samaritan uses his time, strength, and money to help others.



The Samaritan is a good example to us. But Jesus Himself is the very best example of love. Jesus came from heaven to earth to share in our struggles and finally, Jesus gave His life on the cross for our sins. We were dead in our sins, left along the roadside, but Jesus comes to us and lifts us up, bandages our wounds, and cares for us, restoring us to relationship with God and to health. We love because He first loved us.

Let's go back to **Luke 10:36-37**. Jesus asks the man, **"Which of these three do you think was a neighbor to the man who fell into the hands of robbers?"** The expert in the law replied, **"The one who had mercy on him."** Jesus told him, **"Go and do likewise."** Who is our neighbor? Our neighbor is the man, woman, or child who needs our help. The person in need is our neighbor. And Jesus urges us to help, even as the Samaritan man helped the wounded stranger in the parable. Loving our neighbor is not always convenient. It often means setting aside our own plans to use our strength, our time, or our money to help others. It is not easy, but it is blessed. Let's move on to the final verses of Luke 10, verses 38-42.

6. Scripture Luke 10:38-42 (NIV)

[38] As Jesus and his disciples were on their way, he came to a village where a woman named Martha opened her home to him. [39] She had a sister called Mary, who sat at the Lord's feet listening to what he said. [40] But Martha was distracted by all the preparations that had to be made. She came to him and asked, "Lord, don't you care that my sister has left me to do the work by myself? Tell her to help me!" [41] "Martha, Martha," the Lord answered, "you are worried and upset about many things, [42] but only one thing is needed. Mary has chosen what is better, and it will not be taken away from her."

7. Teaching

Vincenzo Campi painted the scene like this. Martha is in the foreground; Jesus, Mary, and the disciples can be seen in the background. Jesus and the disciples have arrived at the home of Martha and Mary, the sisters of Lazarus. Take a close look at the painting. Who do you relate to the most? Martha? Or Mary?



Martha is laboring to prepare a big feast for the crowd of hungry men that have come to her home. There is no telephone, she can't call to have pizza delivered; and she has no one to help her. She was probably tired and frustrated, overwhelmed by the work. Finally she can't stand it anymore and she goes to Jesus. **Luke 40b-42**, **"Lord, don't you care that my sister has left me to do the work by myself? Tell her to help me!"** "Martha, Martha," the Lord answered, **"you are worried and upset about many things, but only one thing is needed. Mary has chosen what is better, and it will not be taken away from her."**

Martha's desire was to serve the Lord and to serve her neighbors, the disciples. But somehow in her

efforts to serve she had become worried and upset. Could it be that her problem was that she was trying to serve others without having first taken time to sit before the Lord and learn from Him? Martha reminds us that our service to the Lord must come out of times of prayer and refreshing sitting at His feet. We need to receive from the Lord before we can minister in love with joy.

Let's take a closer look at Luke 10:42, "**but only one thing is needed. Mary has chosen what is better, and it will not be taken away from her.**" Mary made the better choice, sitting at the feet of Jesus. But what does Jesus mean when He says, "**only one thing is needed?**" We could say that the one thing needed was to sit at Jesus' feet. But that would leave Jesus and the disciples hungry. A big feast was not really required, but eventually a little food is needed. Martha's problem is not that she is cooking; it is that she is worried and upset, because she is focused on the work and not on the Lord. I think Martha is serving out of duty or obligation, thinking of what must be done. But, if instead of focusing on duty, we focus on pleasing our Lord, then we can work without becoming worried and upset. What keeps us focused on the Lord? It is love. The one necessary thing is love.

8. Conclusion

The necessity of love is what ties the three sections of Scripture we read together today into a whole. To inherit eternal life, Jesus and the expert in the law agreed, "**only one thing is needed,**" and that is love. To help the wounded man, the Samaritan first had to love him. And Mary was sitting at Jesus' feet because she loved Him. If we want to work effectively for the Kingdom of God without becoming worried and upset, then we need to love Jesus and focus on pleasing Him. It is good to work hard to serve God and our neighbor. But first, we need to sit at the feet of Jesus and learn the ways of love. Love is what we need. Because, as 1 Corinthians 13:8a tells us, "**Love never fails.**" Let's pray.



9. Closing Prayer