

The Heart of a Neighbor

Scripture Reading — Luke 10:25-37

"Which of these ... do you think was a neighbor ... ?" . . . "The one who had mercy on him." Luke 10:36-37 —

The man who spoke up to test Jesus was an expert in religious law, but he didn't truly understand that love is at the heart of the law. In his head the expert knew the summary of the law to love God with your whole being and love your neighbor as yourself. But his actions didn't show what he knew.

"Keep the law, and you will live," Jesus said, in effect. This unsettled the man, so he gave a typical legalistic response: "And who is my neighbor?"

In reply Jesus told the parable of the good Samaritan, in which three travelers find a man who has been robbed, beaten, and left for dead by the roadside. The first two were religious leaders. They saw the half-dead man but crossed to the other side and continued on their way. The third man was a Samaritan, whom most Jews in those days would have despised. He stopped, bandaged the wounded man, put him on his own donkey, and took care of him.

"Which of these three do you think was a neighbor?" asked Jesus. The lawyer replied: "The one who had mercy on him."

The point is this: rather than asking "Who is my neighbor?" we need to ask, "Am I a neighbor to people around me who need help?" When we act like a neighbor to others, they become our neighbors.

Prayer

Lord, every day I pass by opportunities to lift someone else's load. Create in me a true heart-of-a-neighbor so that I may become a blessing to others. In your name, Amen.

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