

Luke 10 vv. 25-29

Before the Babylonian captivity the Jews served idols time and time again. How many times we read in the Old Testament that the Israelites departed from the Lord, that they made idolatrous altars, that they kneeled before images of wood or stone. It was like this as far back as the Judges, and it remained so until Nebuchadnezzar carried them away captive to distant Babel.

There in that heathen land they lived for seventy years, distant far from their beloved fatherland. Yet the Lord so ordered all things that the Jews were able to return.

The ruined temple was rebuilt; Jerusalem, though destroyed, was again restored. God was very merciful to a sinful and guilty people.

It is remarkable that after that time the Jews no longer became guilty of idolatry. On the contrary, they began to study the laws of Moses very carefully. They tried to live exactly as God had commanded in those laws. Some of the Jews studied those laws year after year and these men were called "Scribes" or "Lawyers".

These Lawyers thought that they could earn heaven themselves. They had only to live respectably, and then, according to them, God was bound to give them salvation. They attempted to merit eternal life through their own works.

One day one of these lawyers comes to Jesus and asks: "Master, what shall I do to inherit eternal life?" He means, "What must I do that when I die, I may go to heaven?"

It was the intention of this lawyer to catch Jesus out. He hoped that the Lord Jesus would be unable to answer this question.

He is grossly mistaken however, for the Lord at once asks him: "What is written in the law? How readest thou?" It is as though Jesus says: "You think you are able to save yourself by your own works, do you not? Well then, just say what is written in the law."

Yes, that is something the lawyer knows very well. Hear what he replies: "Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy strength, and with all thy mind; and thy neighbour as thyself."

That was a good answer, and indeed the Lord Jesus says: "Thou hast answered right." And then from the lips of the Saviour come the solemn words: "This

do, and thou shalt live." It is as though the Lord says: "Try then to live as God requires of you. Holy! Perfect! Without sin!"

Through sin, we can no longer live completely to the honour of God. Yet God still requires of us that we should live holy lives, without the least sin.

Adam, before the fall, could live to the honour of God, holy and perfect.

"Well now," the Lord means, "live as Adam once did in the garden of Eden."

The lawyer had not expected an answer like this. To live without sin? ... At the bottom of his heart he realised that he could not possibly do so. But he would not admit this and so he asked: "And who is my neighbour?"

To this question the Lord Jesus answers by means of a parable. Listen! ...

Luke 10 vv.30-35.

The road from Jerusalem to Jericho runs downhill, for Jerusalem is on the mountains and Jericho lies in the plains of Jordan.

This road was very dangerous, for it was made unsafe by robbers and murderers. Travellers were set upon and robbed by these thieves, and if they resisted they were killed. The robbers could conceal themselves in the mountain caves so that none could find them.

"A certain man," the Lord begins, "went down from Jerusalem to Jericho." The road is lonely and forsaken.

Suddenly some robbers appear from the undergrowth and fall upon the lonely traveller. They almost kill him, causing him painful wounds from which the blood flows, and after taking ^{from} him his money and goods, they throw him down at the side of the road.

There the poor man lies. He can travel no further. The blood from his wounds stains the ground. It will not be long before he dies. If no help comes, he is lost. He lies there groaning in agony.

Suddenly he hears footsteps approaching. Who can that be? ...

It is a priest! ... He has been serving in the temple and is now returning homewards towards Jericho.

The pale cheeks of the wounded man recover a little of their colour. How wonderful! The priest is bound to help him. Of course! That is the duty of a priest of the Lord. ~~XXXX~~ Shall not a servant of God be merciful to one in trouble? ...

But ... just look! The priest gets still closer, and then, what happens? All at once he sees the ~~man~~ poor man lying there, but he walks quickly by on the other side of the road. He sees him, but he has no desire to help the wounded man. No indeed, it is much too dangerous around here. He makes a quick get away. He acts just as though he sees nothing, as though he does not realise what has taken place.

How cruel! How unkind! ... Is that loving one's neighbour. ... Fie, priest shame on you!

A look of great disappointment comes over the face of the badly wounded man. And this is not to be wondered at.

But ... listen! Once more footsteps are heard approaching. The wounded man looks up expectantly. Oh, it is a Levite. Oh, he will doubtless help him. The Levite too is on his way home to Jericho. With hopeful eyes the robbed man sees him approach.

The Levite sees him lying there, comes a few steps nearer, has a good look and then ... passes by on the other side. The Levite also leaves the poor man where he is and hastens on his way.

A look of despair comes to the face of the wounded man. If a priest and a Levite will not help him, then who will? ... Is that loving one's neighbour. Fie Levite, shame on you! You are just as cruel and unkind as the priest. You too think only of your own safety.

There the poor man lies still. He is tormented by thirst, his wounds are burning and inflamed. With every movement he loses blood from his wounds. He stretches out exhausted, waiting for death. But, for the third time he hears a sound. It is coming closer!

Who can this be? ... He looks ... and what then? ... He shrinks back with shock. It is a Samaritan coming! No, he can expect no help from this man, for the Samaritans are enemies of him and his people. Oh, if he sees him, he may even give him some more blows. Perhaps he even hoped that the Samaritan would not notice him.

But then ... oh, what now ... the Samaritan stops his beast and dismounts. He walks over to the robbed man, who probably wondered what to expect now.

The Samaritan kneels down beside him, There is a friendly look in his

eyes, his heart is filled with compassion. There lies a HUMAN BEING in need of help. Who it is has nothing to do with the matter.

The Samaritan looks at the gaping wound with dismay.

Then he gets up, hastens to his waiting beast and comes quickly back. He has bandages and dressings.

Carefully he pours some oil and wine into the bleeding wounds. Oil helps to soften and relieve the terrible pain. The wine serves to cleanse the wounds. Then he binds them firmly. Cautiously he pours a few drops of wine into the dry, feverish mouth. He ~~xxx~~ refreshes him.

When the Samaritan has completed this work, he carefully lifts the wounded man and carries him in his arms to the beast. He places him upon its back, supports him so that he will not fall off, and sets forth on the road. He walks alongside, and thus he trudges on with difficulty.

At last he comes to an inn. The Samaritan brings the half dead Jew into the inn and there looks after him.

The next morning the Samaritan must depart. His work calls him. But he does not forsake the unfortunate man. No, he calls the inn-keeper and says: "Take care of him, give him all that he needs."

Then he brings out his purse and gives the host some money, saying: "Whatsoever thou spendest more, when I come again, I will repay thee."

He departs from the inn, leaving the robbed and wounded man behind. But he has left him in the good hands of the host.

Well now, that is neighbourly love. The Jew had not expected such treatment.

Luke 10 vv. 36 and 37.

The Lord Jesus is silent for a moment and gives the lawyer a penetrating look.

"Which now of these three, thinkest thou, was neighbour unto him that fell among thieves?" the Lord asks him.

The lawyer had asked: "Who is my neighbour?" By this parable Jesus had made that quite clear to him. Now he can answer his own question. He must draw his own conclusion.

The lawyer hesitates. What must he say? ... Come, that is surely not very difficult. The Samaritan of course!

Yes, the lawyer knows that only too well, but he does not want to say it. He cannot, will not use the word "Samaritan" in this connection. That is why he hesitates, and then says at last: "He that shewed mercy on him."

So now you see, he has answered Jesus' question without using that hated word "Samaritan".

Calmly Jesus commands him: "Go, and do thou likewise."

Inwardly the lawyer feels that Jesus is right. How far he lived from such ways. A Samaritan, his neighbour? ... Perish the thought! Never! He had never even considered such a thing. No, the other lawyers, the Pharisees, they were his neighbours. Even the ordinary people were despised by him. And now to think of a Samaritan as his ~~xx~~ neighbour? ...

In this parable there was a solemn lesson for that lawyer.

He had asked complacently what he must do to inherit eternal life. He had thought that Jesus would be unable to answer him. He had hoped to make it difficult for Jesus. But it was not Jesus, but himself who was put to shame, for he came far short.

The Lord Jesus gave him for a moment to feel quite clearly where his duty lay, what God required of him. But this requirement was too much for his sinful, proud, haughty heart. His heart was in no condition to live to God's honour. Jesus discovered to him in measure how wicked he was.

Oh, that lawyer had to learn to pray for mercy. He had to learn that he was lost. He had to learn that he could never earn salvation. Then there would be made room in his heart for the Lord Jesus, the Saviour. Then he would learn that Jesus, not he himself, would work salvation. Then he would learn to know himself as a sinner.

But that is only learned through the teaching of the Holy Ghost!

"Who is my neighbour?"

That is a question for you too, boys and girls. ... Your neighbour? ... Oh, that is easy to answer, isn't it? ... Your brothers and sisters and your friends. Of course!

But ... what about that naughty, mean boy then, who is always teasing and annoying you, who is always getting you into trouble? ... And that girl, perhaps, who pulls your hair or scratches sometimes ... are they your neighbours too? ...

If you see such a one in difficulty, and needing help, do you go and help them? ... Help them? ... Not a bit of it!

No, then you would rather laugh at them. Then you call out: "It serves you right!" Now, be honest, is that not true? Does it not sometimes happen? Revenge is sweet, you may say. How often you are pleased when your enemy is in difficulty or trouble. You wish them harm with all your heart.

"Who is my neighbour?"

Well, that enemy of yours is your neighbour!

May the Lord take from your hearts that vindictiveness and may you learn through grace what that means: "LOVE your enemies, bless them that curse you, and pray for them which despitefully use you."
