

Who is My Neighbor and What Does This Mean?

LWML Quarterly

(Edited & condensed by Cathleen Jones)



Opening Prayer:

*Dear Heavenly
Father, show us
who our neighbors*

*are. Help us to be sensitive to their needs.
Empower us to do all we can to reach out to
those in distress in the Name of our Lord Jesus
Christ. Amen.*

Read **Luke 10:25-37**

The tenth chapter of Luke relates the occasion when Jesus was having a conversation with one of the many legal eagles who had been trying to discredit Him. The inquisitor wanted to know what Jesus believed must be done to inherit eternal life. Jesus asked the man what he thought. The lawyer quoted two passages from Scripture that command believers to love God completely and love their neighbors as themselves (Deu 6:5 and Lev 19:18). Jesus confirmed that this was indeed correct, if the lawyer would be able to keep the commands.

Jesus told this parable to illustrate how God saves us. We compare to the beggar on the side of the road, beaten and helpless, unable to save (“to justify”) ourselves. When we look for salvation from friends, family, or other individuals whom we expect would be obligated to help us, we are disappointed. Salvation instead comes from the one source that is not obligated to help us at all – Jesus, who is motivated to save us solely based on His mercy and compassion for us.

At this spiritual level, Jesus is the Samaritan; the complete stranger is the non-believer. Before we even hope for help from Jesus, He comes to us through His Word and saves us. Jesus continues His mercy for us by bringing us into the church, where we receive continued healing and the assurance of our salvation through the hearing of the Word and the reception of the sacraments.

At the earthly level, Jesus defined the good neighbor as anyone who has mercy on another, even as God has had mercy on us. He taught that when others need help, whether emotional, physical or financial, it is our privilege to show the love God has had for us by addressing the needs of our neighbors that have come to our attention.

Let’s not forget that a neighbor doesn’t necessarily live next door to us, and doesn’t have to look like us, and doesn’t have to share our values or worldview. The Samaritan took care of a man who was a complete stranger to him, a man from a culture that despised his own culture and rejected his worship of God. All these things didn’t make any difference – the Samaritan still saved the wounded man.

Throughout Scripture, the Holy Spirit makes it clear that God is at work in us when we offer physical comfort to those in need. Our good deeds are the manifestation of our Father’s love at work within us, the result of the faith He has given us. We keep this in mind when we consider the result of our good deeds for our

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neighbors, which Jesus describes in **Matthew 25:35-40.**

- Who has the responsibility to care for our neighbors?
- What can we do to carry out a compassionate ministry to the suffering in our own communities, our country, and our world?

When the Samaritan left the injured man with the innkeeper, he made a down payment on the cost of his care and a commitment to take care of any other charges on his return. He did not hesitate to dig into his pocket.

In the Old Testament, God outlined an easy way to help the poor. Read **Leviticus 19:9-10.**

By leaving just a small portion of the field with grain or grapes, many mouths could be fed.

After Pentecost, the early church used another method to take care of the financial needs of its members. Read **Acts 2:44-45.** They would sell their possessions and share the money with those who had need. Isn't that what the Mission Thrift Store does with our donations?

- Are we called to give it all to God?
- Does that include helping the poor with some of our resources?

Closing Prayer: *O Lord, bring to our remembrance Your gracious generosity to us. You gave Your precious life for us while we*

were undeserving sinners. We pray that You would make us generous also. Help us to find time in our busy schedules to spend with those who need company, human connection, and consolation. Help us to find ways to meet the physical and financial needs of the poor. Help us to find money to support ministries that reach out to spread Your Gospel in the world around us. Lead us and help us to follow where You lead. In the Name of Jesus Christ, the Greatest Giver, Amen.

Bible References

Luke 10:25-37

The Parable of the Good Samaritan

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."

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

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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."

Matthew 25:35-40

35 For I was hungry and you gave me something to eat, I was thirsty and you gave me something to drink, I was a stranger and you invited me in, 36 I needed clothes and you clothed me, I was sick and you looked after me, I was in prison and you came to visit me.'

37 "Then the righteous will answer him, 'Lord, when did we see you hungry and feed you, or thirsty and give you something to drink? 38 When did we see you a stranger and invite you in, or needing clothes and clothe you? 39 When did we see you sick or in prison and go to visit you?'

40 "The King will reply, 'I tell you the truth, whatever you did for one of the least of these brothers of mine, you did for me.'

Leviticus 19:9-10

9 "When you reap the harvest of your land, do not reap to the very edges of your field or gather the gleanings of your harvest. 10 Do not go over your vineyard a second time or pick up the grapes that have fallen. Leave them for the poor and the alien. I am the LORD your God.

Acts 2:42-45

The Fellowship of the Believers

42 They devoted themselves to the apostles' teaching and to the fellowship, to the breaking of bread and to prayer. 43 Everyone was filled with awe, and many wonders and miraculous signs were done by the apostles. 44 All the believers were together and had everything in common. 45 Selling their possessions and goods, they gave to anyone as he had need.