



There was a scholar of the law who stood up to test Jesus and said, "Teacher, what must I do to inherit eternal life?" Jesus said to him, "What is written in the law? How do you read it?" He said in reply, "You shall love the Lord, your God, with all your heart, with all your being, with all your strength, and with all your mind, and your neighbor as yourself." He replied to him, "You have answered correctly; do this and you will live." But because he wished to justify himself, he said to Jesus, "And who is my neighbor?" Jesus replied, "A man fell victim to robbers as he went down from Jerusalem to Jericho. They stripped and beat him and went off leaving him half-dead. A priest happened to be going down that road, but when he saw him, he passed by on the opposite side. Likewise, a Levite came to the place, and when he saw him, he passed by on the opposite side. But a Samaritan traveler who came upon him was moved with compassion at the sight. He approached the victim, poured oil and wine over his wounds and bandaged them. Then he lifted him up on his own animal, took him to an inn and cared for him. The next day he took out two silver coins and gave them to the innkeeper with the instruction, 'Take care of him. If you spend more than what I have given you, I shall repay you on my way back.' Which of these three, in your opinion, was neighbor to the robbers' victim?" He answered, "The one who treated him with mercy." Jesus said to him, "Go and do likewise."

Introductory Prayer: Lord Jesus, you are the master of the universe, and yet you wish to listen to me and guide me. You know all things past, present and future and yet you respect my freedom to choose you. Holy Trinity, you are completely happy and fulfilled on your own, and yet you have generously brought us into existence. You are our fulfillment. Thank you for the gift of yourself. I offer the littleness of myself in return, knowing you are pleased with what I have to give.

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Petition: Lord, help me to be like the Good Samaritan.

1. Love Our Neighbor Above Ourselves: The people listening to Jesus would all admit that they should love God above all things. Maybe many didn't practice it well, but they at least pretended to love him outwardly by living his commandments. Love of neighbor was another matter. The Jewish Law of the Talion put a limit on vengeful action: "An eye for an eye and a tooth for a tooth." But Jesus wants to take things to a whole new level – the level of brotherly love. He wants us to live a love for others inspired by the love he showed for us on the cross. We were his enemies, addicted to sin. He owed us nothing, yet he died for our sake. In times past, it was common to abuse the poor and the handicapped as people cursed by God on account of some sin. Now, Jesus proposes to love all, regardless of their condition. Do I strive to love this way?

2. It's Not Enough to Love Those Close to Me: Probably most of us, like those listening to Jesus, accept that we need to love and serve God, and obey the commandments. But when it comes to loving others, we fail. Sometimes it seems that I have a difficult time loving even those who are closest to me. Those I see on a daily basis are often the ones that have to bear the worst in me. They suffer the most from my impatience, anger and lack of self-control. Why does this happen? Is it because the love I have for my family and closest friends is a selfish love? Is it because I am looking for what they can do for me instead of what I could be doing for them? Love's response should always be that I haven't done enough, that I can never do enough – because real love has no limits.

3. Love Your Enemies: Jesus also asks us to love our enemies. In the parable, the victim receives help from someone he, as a Jew, would have considered to be inferior and an enemy – a Samaritan. Although their lands were adjoining, historical circumstances caused them to carry grudges against each other and avoid each other as much as possible. Yet it is a Samaritan whom Jesus makes the hero of the parable. In seeing the man's distress, and stopping to help and care for him, Jesus makes him the image of himself. St. Augustine says that the Samaritan represents Jesus and the victim represents humanity. When we couldn't help ourselves, when we were estranged from God's friendship because of our sins, God in his love stopped to help us. This is the love Jesus wants us to practice – the same love he practiced on the cross. "Go and do likewise," he tells us.

Conversation with Christ: Lord, I am sorry for accepting your love for me on the cross while failing to love others in the same way. Don't let me get discouraged by my little daily setbacks as I try to love more, but encourage me to be more like you, to be a Good Samaritan to all I meet.

Resolution: I will remove the limits I have placed on loving someone close to me – my spouse, children, parents, brothers and sisters, close friends, co-workers – and be

patient and understanding at moments when I don't feel like loving.

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