

## Love's Lesson Along the Road

✠ **The Law says, "Do!" (vv.25-29)**

✠ **The Gospel says, "Done!" (vv.30-37)**

In the name of Jesus, whose love is all we need to live a life of love, dearly redeemed:

Details were sketchy. But in the news this week witnesses saw a woman in Minneapolis running from a car. She had duct tape over her mouth and was obviously terrified. A man chased her down, threw her back into the trunk of the car and drove off. A while later more witnesses saw the same woman trying to escape again. This time three men caught her. How could such a thing happen in broad daylight in a city with witnesses present? Why didn't a crowd instantly jump on the perpetrators? Isn't the one who stands by watching evil sharing in the guilt of those who do it? Are we in need of the Good Samaritan? Are we hurting to learn **Love's Lesson Along the Road? Love's Lesson – Part 1:**

✠ **The Law says, "Do!" (vv.25-29)**

The expert in the law who tests Jesus seems to know **Love's Lesson** at least in part. But something seems to be nagging at his soul. With all his knowledge of God's Word something still wasn't right. Yet behind his question is the tempting test that meant to discredit Jesus, to make Him look bad in front of the crowds. Jesus was probably sitting down as teachers did in those days. The expert in the law looms above – physically and in his own mind. Patronizing Jesus, he uses a title of deepest respect: ***"Teacher, what must I do to inherit eternal life?"***

Don't you love how Jesus can skip the peripheral issues and focus His students on the heart of the matter, even when those students are arrogant and self-righteous? Jesus could have pointed out the lack of logic in the man's question: "Don't you know an inheritance cannot be earned by the heirs? Your parents and grandparents earn it. Likewise, with eternal life, you 'inherit' it by simply receiving."

But that's not Jesus' way of teaching. He asks a couple questions to help the legal expert come to the right conclusion. ***"What is written in the Law?"*** Jesus asks. ***"How do you read it?"*** I can imagine the man feeling, "Maybe this rabbi from Nazareth is not so bad." After all, doesn't every educated person naturally like to show off what he knows. Whether you're talking tradesmen, lawyers or stock brokers, we all have our area of expertise that deserves the light of day! And this man's education comes through with flying colors. He correctly quotes the Jewish Law of Moses which is God's Word in Deuteronomy 6:5 and Leviticus 19:18. ***"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.'***

Good church people will like that answer. Good Lutherans may wonder about Jesus' response: ***"Do this and you will live."*** Is that true? Yes, that is the message of God's holy Law: ***"Do this and you will live."*** ***"Love the Lord your God with all your heart,"*** so that there is never a fleeting moment of discontent about your life, your marriage, your job, etc. ***"Love the Lord your God with all your...soul,"*** so that you're always eager to serve God by caring for your neighbor. ***"Love the Lord your God with all your...strength,"*** so that your energy, your time, your money and all your resources are spent on building God kingdom by spreading God's Word. ***"Love the Lord your God with all your...mind,"*** so that you never question His will for your life or His Word of what is right and what is wrong. When your heart and soul are all right there all the time, the Law of God promises eternal life.

So what if I got all that right, right motives, right thoughts, right actions, etc. But then one busy day leading up to Christmas I'm rushing out of Cub and barely miss a man struggling with his grocery cart at the curb. Twenty yards past I look back to see him staring at me in disappointment. Maybe my

expert mind wants to ask a question like this lawyer of Jewish religion: “Is that man my neighbor?” Maybe he’s an undocumented illegal. Maybe he just doesn’t like me, especially not now. Let’s be honest. Doesn’t a part of us also want to skip the command about perfect love for God and justify ourselves asking, “*Who is my neighbor?*” Are we in need of **Love’s Lesson Along the Road?** Part 2:

✚ **The Gospel says, “Done!” (vv.30-37)**

Church people won’t like this. Whether your duties are professional like ancient priests praying and preaching God’s Word to the people, or like temple-worker Levites serving on committees or holding high office in the church, Jesus does not paint us in a very good light. Sometimes we don’t even see people’s in need around us. But in Jesus’ parable, this priest and Levite do see the man left half dead by violent robbers. They consciously choose to keep on moving. Whether their motives are fear for their own safety or piously trying to get their work done for God, does not matter. Jesus makes a Samaritan, despised as a half-breed physically and spiritually by the Jews, the model of love.

This man won’t keep moving on. It seems he’s on a business trip, but the money makes no more difference than his own safety. First aid with the best medicine he had, transportation on his own donkey, personal care at the motel and a blank check for the owner to keep caring – what drove this man to such ends? The priest and the Levite knew God’s Law over them, but this man was not a Jew. And had certainly had no legal obligation to stop and befriend a Jew. Hatred and prejudice between their peoples would seem like reason enough to just keep moving on. What drives his selfless compassion?

The expert in the law does not know. He can answer Jesus’ question that the obvious neighbor was the man who had mercy, but his thinking has been backwards all along. He wants a legal definition of “neighbor,” but Jesus shows him the better question is, “To whom can I be a neighbor?” Literally Jesus told him in parting, “Go and you yourself keep doing the same.”

What happens when you try? Don’t you realize more and more how you fail every day to love God so passionately and to love your neighbor as yourself? And doesn’t God’s Law condemn us all even if just once our feelings fail and our actions lack that warm compassion? Do you see why the ancient Church has always seen Christ alone as the one, true and consistent Good Samaritan? Jesus not only risked His life; He gave His life. Jesus not only gave His life for friends and family, He poured out His lifeblood for enemies who still want to test and discredit Him in front of the crowds. He not only died for people who might not know better, He shed His holy precious blood for church people like you and me who do know better, yet fail day by day to live up to the clear, concise demands of God’s Law.

The whole message of the Bible is no more complicated than these two main teachings: God’s Law and God’s Gospel. Both can be summarized in a word: **The Law says, “Do!” The Gospel says, “Done!”** Jesus wants us and every expert in the law to look in the mirror and see our failures to “Do!” Then He wants us to run to the Gospel and hear this sweet good news: **“Done!”** Jesus is the LORD our righteousness who says to sinners all, “Son, daughter, be of good cheer, your sins are forgiven!”

And what do you want to do when you hear that? You want to love as you have been loved and forgive as you have been forgiven. You want to be like the woman of noble character Ruth to her mother-in-law Naomi and swear with life and limb: **“Where you go I will go, and where you stay I will stay. Your people will be my people and your God my God.”** (Ruth 1:16) You want to be like Boaz who without any legal obligation took pity on a foreigner like Ruth who was seeking help from the LORD God of Israel: **“I’ve been told all about what you have done for your mother-in-law since the death of your husband—how you left your father and mother and your homeland and came to live with a people you did not know before. May the LORD repay you for what you have done. May you be richly rewarded by the LORD, the God of Israel, under whose wings you have come to take refuge.”** (2:11f)

Thanks to Jesus, God’s Law is on our side. Now before the Law comes, faith has already done it. That’s **Love’s Lesson Along the Road.** We want to be like Jesus our Good Samaritan. Amen.