

The Good Samaritan – Luke 10

In **John chapter 19**, Jesus has been crucified. And just before He died, as the sun stopped shining and just before the curtain in the temple split in two and just before the earthquake and the tombs busting open in the cemetery, Jesus said His last words: *“It is finished.”* The word He used was “tetellestai.” That word means to be paid in full. Why did Jesus use that word? Did He mean His life was over and finished? Did He mean the torture and agony of this crucifixion was over? No. That’s not what that word means. “Tetellestai” means to be paid in full and that’s how Jesus meant it. He was saying that the price had been paid for your sins and mine to be forgiven and to allow us to be able to have eternal life in Heaven with Him. His life was the price the Father said was due for our sins so we could go to Heaven and all we have to do is truly believe it.

Now, I am amazed at how many people add to the definition of “tetellestai.” They add to the definition when they say that we get to Heaven by the death of Jesus plus baptism. Or we get to Heaven through the death of Jesus plus the Lord’s Supper...or through His death and good works or His death plus giving money to the church or His death plus anything. If that’s what Jesus meant He would have said “tetellestai” plus baptism or “tetellestai” plus communion or whatever. But Jesus just said “tetellestai.” Period. It is finished. It is paid in full and do you know how insulting it is to say that the death of Jesus was ALMOST enough?

I know I’ve used this illustration before but last week Ben jokingly said something about me wanting a new bass boat. Well, yes, I do and the one I have picked out is only about \$100,000 fully loaded. Now, I don’t know what the church has budgeted for my new bass boat but I want to pay my part. So, if y’all will just pay \$99,999.75 I have a nice new shiny quarter that I will give. Then we can all say that we all pitched in and together we bought a new bass boat. Right? Do you see how ridiculous that is? And it’s the same way when we say, *“Now, Jesus, along with your death on the cross, I will pay the price of getting baptized and we can say that together we paid the price so I could spend eternity in Heaven with you.”* That’s not “tetellestai.” That’s an insult.

Well, if you will turn to **Luke chapter 10**, we will see one of the most famous parables that Jesus told and He told it in response to being asked how to get to Heaven. The thing about this response is that Jesus knew the man’s heart and the man wasn’t really serious about hearing the answer that Jesus gave. He was testing Him. Some of your versions will say that the man was a lawyer. But he wasn’t a lawyer like we think of lawyers. He was an expert in the Mosaic Law. He spent his days studying and debating Genesis, Exodus, Leviticus, Numbers, and Deuteronomy, what is called the Pentateuch or the Torah or the first five books of the Bible. He was an expert on these scriptures and he wanted to know how Jesus would respond. So, let’s look at it in **Luke 10, verses 25-37**.

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 was attacked by robbers. They stripped him of 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, brought him to an inn and took care of him. ³⁵ The next day he took out two denarii 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.”*

This is a fascinating passage. It’s fascinating because it’s not the response you would expect Jesus to give when asked how to get to Heaven. It’s a fascinating parable that He tells for several reasons. And it’s fascinating because Jesus tells him the truth and yet never really tells him how to be saved. Let’s look at it closer. Notice how the man phrases his question. What do I have to DO to be saved or get to Heaven? That’s what he’s asking. What do I have to do? And he asks it that way because that just makes sense to a human, especially a smart human. We understand that nothing is given for free. We have to work at anything we get. There’s no free lunch, right? I respect a person who understands that but the problem with that is that the biggest, most valuable and amazing gift in all the world really is free and you don’t have to DO anything. And when you try to DO something, it’s an insult to the giver of the gift.

Jesus knows this man is an expert in the Law and so Jesus answers his question with a question. He simply asks the man what he believes. You are the expert. You tell me. And like a good lawyer, the man nails it by quoting from the passages he is so familiar with. When he says, *“Love the Lord your God with all you heart, soul, strength and mind”* he is quoting from **Deuteronomy 6**. And when he adds on, *“Love your neighbor as yourself”* that’s from **Leviticus 19**. And Jesus gives the guy credit for saying exactly what the Old Testament, the Old Covenant, that old pre-grace Law says to do.

But here’s where I wish we could see the video replay of this interaction because after telling the man he is right, I think Jesus probably winked at him when He said the next sentence. I don’t know that but I bet He at least had a twinkle in His eye and a smirk on His face when He said, *“Do this and you will live.”* Sure, buddy, now...go do the impossible. Because that’s what the Law was. The Law included the Ten Commandments and if it stopped right there, it’s impossible. But there were hundreds of other laws that were given as well and the only reason God gave Moses and the others those laws was to show them how far away from Heaven they really were. There was no salvation in the Law. It was meant to show you that you needed grace because nobody could follow the Law completely.

That’s why the Pharisees and some of the other teachers and lawyers and scribes were so hung up on looking good. They thought if you kept the Law outwardly, you could earn eternal life. So, they made sure everybody saw them tithe and they made sure everybody knew when they were fasting and they wanted everybody to see when they did something good and wanted everybody to hear them pray. But Jesus told them, *“when you pray, don’t be like the hypocrites. For they love to pray standing in the synagogues and on the corners of the streets, that they may be seen by men. Assuredly, I say to you, they have their reward.”* (Matt. 6)

So, this lawyer, this expert in the Law realizes that what Jesus has told him to do could very well be impossible. And so, he tries to make it possible by getting Jesus to explain who his neighbor is. It says he wants to justify himself. He wants to make sure that he is right. And oh, my mama’s words echo in my head every time I read that. She told me more than once, *“Todd Blair, you can justify anything.”* And wasn’t she right? I would try to make it look like what I had been caught doing wasn’t all that bad or maybe even the right thing to do and if given enough time to talk, I could make a pretty good case.

But Jesus tells the man a story to illustrate what He was talking about when He told the man, *“Do this and you will live.”* And it’s a great story. It’s a motivating story that shows us all what we should do and how we should live our lives even though...that’s really not the point of the story. Is it? Go back to what the man first asked Jesus. What must I do to inherit eternal life? He is asking, whether he means it truthfully or not, how to be saved. And when the man quotes the Law, Jesus says, *“Sure. You can get there by following the Law...all of it...every word...all your*

life...forever.” But that’s impossible. Have you read the Ten Commandments lately? The Ten Commandments, like I said earlier, are just a small part of the Law of Moses but let’s give them a quick look, okay. Found in **Exodus 20** and **Deuteronomy 5**, here they are really quick.

You shall have no other gods before Me. (Okay I’m out and I’m pretty sure you are too. Anything you put before God becomes your god so we could stop right there.)

You shall make no idols. (See #1) You shall not take the name of the Lord your God in vain. (Have you ever said, “OMG or something similar? I will say it again. If you are not talking to Him or about Him, do not say His name.)

Keep the Sabbath day holy.

Honor your father and your mother.

You shall not murder.

You shall not commit adultery.

You shall not steal.

You shall not bear false witness against your neighbor.

You shall not covet.

That should be plenty for any of us. I’m pretty sure, according to some of the definitions of Jesus, that I have broken every single one multiple times. If following the Law is going to get me to Heaven then...I’m hopeless. But if you really want to have some fun, go back to like Leviticus and start trying to obey the laws about what you eat and what you wear and you won’t get very far before you say, *“Wow. I think I need God to show me a whole lot of grace if I’m ever going to be able to get to Heaven.”*

You all know the story of the good Samaritan and how it was shocking to the man that Jesus made the good guy in the story to be a Samaritan. Y’all know that the priest and the Levite were the dirtbags in this deal and y’all know how it ends. I’m not even going to talk about it. See, this way, whenever you hear somebody talk about the Good Samaritan story you will remember that the Good Samaritan story isn’t about the good Samaritan at all. Jesus didn’t tell this story so that we would be nicer to our neighbors or even see everybody as our neighbors. Jesus told this story to say that it is impossible to love God with all your heart, soul and mind all the time and to love people like yourself all the time. See in **verse 37** what Jesus says. It’s basically the same as what He told him in **verse 28**. *“Sure, son, go and do the impossible. Go follow all the laws and all the rules and be perfect.”* I told you earlier that I thought this passage was fascinating because Jesus never does really tell the guy how to get to Heaven. We don’t get to Heaven by being good to our neighbors. Yes, that’s what Christians do. That’s what Heaven-bound people do. They are good to their neighbors but that does not get you to Heaven. You get to Heaven by saying, *“Oh, God, please help me. Please show me grace and mercy. Please forgive me.”*

When you die and stand before God, He is not going to ask how many people you helped. He’s not going to ask how much you gave to the church or what foods you gave to the food pantry. He won’t even ask what inmates you wrote to off Carolyn’s List. All of that is important and all of that is what Christians do but none of that matters a hill of beans when it comes to giving you eternal life in Heaven.

My dear family, the only answer you can give when God asks you why He should let you into Heaven is because of what Jesus did on the cross. And because of what He did, you believe that He is God and He is the only way and you believed it so much that it changed your life and made you more like Him. It changed your vocabulary. It changed your attitude. It changed how you loved and who you loved and why you loved. It made you love the unlovable and forgive the unforgivable. But it’s not about what you did here on earth. It’s about what Jesus did. You just believed it. That’s the only answer that gets you into Heaven. Can you truthfully say that today? What your parents did doesn’t matter. What churches you have gone to is wasting your breath. All the good things you’ve done? Those are like filthy rags when it comes to justifying yourself. Let Jesus justify you by His work on the cross. Believe it. Accept it. And let it change you. Do it right now as the music plays.