

Recap of 5/29/16 (Luke 10:25-37):

1. The parable of the Good Samaritan is commonly thought to lay out “our responsibility to care for others whether friend or stranger” (Unger), its subject being “human kindness” (Halley).

2. But Jesus uses the parable for another purpose, to answer the question posed to Him by the lawyer (Scribe): “What must I do to inherit eternal life?” Through the parable He teaches a greater truth, the inability of the law to produce eternal life and the necessity of faith.

3. The form of the lawyer’s question, in the words of A.T. Robertson, Greek scholar, “shows a wrong idea as to how to get [eternal life].” Literally the question could be translated: “By doing what, shall I inherit eternal life?” The emphasis being on doing, the assumption being that man must do something to inherit eternal life. Robertson continues: “No one ever did or ever can ‘do’ what the law lays down towards God and man always. To slip once is to fail. So Jesus put the problem squarely up to the lawyer who wanted to know by doing what. Of course, if he kept the law perfectly always, he would inherit eternal life.” Which no human can do, and which necessitated God sending His Son Jesus.

4. The dilemma facing the lawyer was made starker by Jesus’ using the Samaritan as the hero of the story. The Jews hated the Samaritans and vice versa. Gentiles and Samaritans were excluded by the Jews from being considered neighbors. Jesus was showing the man that apart from trust in God and His enablement this cannot be done. Trying to keep the law as a means of salvation is impossible. We need a Savior, we need Jesus. This is the primary message of the parable. It also teaches that “...the law of love is not limited by rank or station or race or creed.” (Erdman)

5. As to the question of how to help those in need:

-where there is no possibility of verifying the need, we should provide something other than money (food, etc.)

-Halley offers this caution: “However, we must remember that Jesus does not mean that we should give encouragement to able-bodied lazy men. Laziness is one of the greatest of sins. The Bible nowhere excuses it. ‘If any man will not work neither let Him eat.’ (2 Thess. 3:10).”

-“In general, the best way to help a poor person is to provide capital in the form of training, education, a job, or material needed to work productively (as well as personal encouragement that builds hope.” (Compact Guide)