

Chris Murphy
February 16th, 2025
Scripture: Luke 10: 25-37
Sermon Title: Jesus Our Love

Prayer...

Introduction:

Today I am finishing our sermon series on images of Jesus. Although, in some ways every sermon I preach ultimately centers on Jesus, so this in some ways is the never-ending sermon series. This morning, I want to talk about Jesus our Love. Of course, there are many passages of Scripture that fit with this theme, but I found myself especially drawn to look once again at the powerful and convicting Good Samaritan Story from the Gospel of Luke.

In the Good Samaritan Story, I am struck by the interaction with the expert in the law. Jesus challenges the lawyer to answer his own question. The question is what I must do to inherit eternal life? The correct answer given is “You shall 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 your neighbor as yourself.”

Let us pause here for a moment. I wonder if we need to be reminded that the answer to the question, what must one do to receive eternal life, might also be understood today as what are the two most important commandments to follow? What if what we need to remember above everything is this: We are called to love God with everything we have and we are to love our neighbors as ourselves. These two things, plus the idea that God is love may be the most important truths in all of Scripture.

Now what makes this Scripture so powerful today is also that Jesus does not just remind the lawyer of the two great commandments, but he provides a story to go along with them. When the lawyer asks who my neighbor is, Jesus share a story about the Good Samaritan.

Now normally when I remind us about this story, I highlight the tension that existed between Samaritans and Jewish people. In the

days of Jesus, they pretty much hated each other and by telling a story that lifts up a Samaritan and speaks poorly about Jewish religious leaders who walk by the wounded man, who likely is also Jewish, Jesus is reminding the lawyer to see Samaritans as his neighbors, not just people who like him who are Jewish. It is a radical story that we often reflect on in the church which reminds us to love our neighbor who is different from us either in relation to ethnicity, religion, political view, or sexual orientation. This is a story that should make you feel a bit uncomfortable because it challenges us to love across our differences with other people. For that reason alone, the Good Samaritan story is incredible powerful and prophetic, but today I want to highlight something different. I think in this story we also might see that the Good Samaritan embodies the love Jesus has for us.

If I were to use this passage as a story to reflect on during a prayer retreat, I would probably ask a few questions for people to ponder about the story. Here are some examples of questions I might ask?

Have you ever felt like the wounded person on the road?

In what way does the Samaritan embody the compassion of Jesus for us?

What does it look like for us to receive compassion from Jesus?

How might we choose to live like the Samaritan and less like the religious leaders who walk by the wounded man?

If I were to answer the first two questions for myself , I might journal some ideas like these ones.

For the first couple questions about relating to feeling wounded and receiving compassion from Jesus, I would say yes, sometimes I do feel like the wounded person on the road. Sometimes the experience of life makes me feel vulnerable. I don't know if I have felt

as vulnerable as the person on the road in this story, but I do feel wounded sometimes and it is a great comfort to me that Jesus comes to me like the Good Samaritan. He is full of compassion for me. He loves me. He sees my pain and chooses to stop and care for me. It is in my pain that I am able to meet the loving Jesus. Only when I reveal my wounds to Christ can I experience true healing. Thank you, Jesus, for loving me and offering me grace especially when I am at my weakest moments. This is true love. I find myself pondering when I was at my lowest and Jesus showed up. I remember when Jesus met me during times when my health felt vulnerable. I remember when Jesus helped me during times of grief related to the loss of loved ones or broken relationships. I remember when I was worried about my future or when I was going through uncertain times related to work or when I moved to new communities. In retrospect it was actually in some of the hardest times in my life that Jesus proved his love for me.

The last question I invite you to reflect on is how we might choose to be like Jesus. How might we be like the Good Samaritan who embodies Jesus' compassion for the vulnerable? How might we therefore also choose not to be like the religious leaders who walk by on the other side?

My own reflection on that question begins with realizing that it is very hard for me to not walk by people in need. It is easier to avoid the houseless person on the street. It is easier to ignore the immigrant and refugee. It is easier to keep driving rather than visit a friend in the hospital or call someone in need.

Jesus invites us first to receive love and grace in our woundedness and then to step it up and show compassion to others in need. As we learn to have a love relationship with Jesus over time it becomes more natural to befriend the houseless, to care for the immigrant and refugee, to remember to welcome everyone, to welcome the person with a different sexual orientation or gender identity, to

welcome people who come from different religious or non-religious backgrounds, to welcome people who we might even disagree with about politics. Jesus is calling us to a profound expression of love for God, self, and neighbor. The standards of Jesus are quite high and only possible through the grace of Jesus offered to us.

We just celebrated Valentine's Day. I know this holiday is usually connected to romantic love, which is a wonderful form of love, but I am reminded that Valentine's Day may also remind us how much God loves us and that God calls us to love the Lord our God with all of heart, soul, mind, and strength and to love our neighbors as ourselves. Love is the answer. Love wins. Love is why we are here and our purpose in life is simply to grow in love.

Last Sunday our friend Corban Harwood reminded me that Valentine's Day is inspired by the story of Saint Valentine. Here is some information about Saint Valentine I got from LearnReligions.com.

“Saint Valentine was a Catholic priest who had also worked as a doctor. He lived in Italy during the third century AD and served as a priest in Rome.

Historians don't know much about Valentine's early life. They pick up Valentine's story after he began working as a priest. Valentine became famous for marrying couples who were in love but couldn't get legally married in Rome during the reign of Emperor Claudius II, who outlawed weddings. Claudius wanted to recruit lots of men to be soldiers in his army and thought that marriage would be an obstacle to recruiting new soldiers. He also wanted to prevent his existing soldiers from getting married because he thought that marriage would distract them from their work.

When Emperor Claudius discovered that Valentine was performing weddings, he sent Valentine to jail. Valentine used his time in jail to continue to reach out to people with the love that he said Jesus Christ gave him for others.

He befriended his jailer, Asterious, who became so impressed with Valentine's wisdom that he asked Valentine to help his daughter, Julia, with her lessons. Julia was blind and needed someone to read material for her to learn it. Valentine became friends with Julia through his work with her when she came to visit him in jail.

Emperor Claudius also came to like Valentine. He offered to pardon Valentine and set him free if Valentine would renounce his Christian faith and agree to worship the Roman gods. Not only did Valentine refuse to leave his faith, he also encouraged Emperor Claudius to place his trust in Christ. Valentine's faithful choices cost him his life. Emperor Claudius was so enraged at Valentine's response that he sentenced Valentine to die.

Story of The First Valentine

Before he was killed, Valentine wrote a last note to encourage Julia to stay close to Jesus and to thank her for being his friend. He signed the note: "From your Valentine." That note inspired people to begin

writing their own loving messages to people on Valentine's Feast Day, February 14th, which is celebrated on the same day on which Valentine was martyred.

Valentine was beaten, stoned, and beheaded on February 14, 270.

People who remembered his loving service to many young couples began celebrating his life, and he came to be regarded as a saint through whom God had worked to help people in miraculous ways.

By 496, Pope Gelasius designated February 14th as Valentine's official feast day.

The most famous miracle attributed to Saint Valentine involved the farewell note that he sent to Julia. Believers say that God miraculously cured Julia of her blindness so that she could personally read Valentine's note, rather than just have someone else read it to her.

Throughout the years since Valentine died, people have prayed for him to intercede for them before God about their romantic lives.

Numerous couples have reported experiencing miraculous improvements in their relationships with boyfriends, girlfriends, and spouses after praying for help from Saint Valentine.

So, there is some interesting information about Saint Valentine. I

hope his story inspires us to love God and neighbor. Like Saint

Valentine, we can spend our lives promoting love and encouraging

one and all to remain devoted to a love relationship with Jesus that

compels us to show love to others. Remembering Jesus' love for all

creation, let us pray together...

Luke 10:25-37

The Parable of the Good Samaritan

25 An expert in the law stood up to test Jesus.[a] “Teacher,” he said, “what must I do to inherit eternal life?” 26 He said to him, “What is written in the law? What do you read there?” 27 He answered, “You shall 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 your neighbor as yourself.” 28 And he said to him, “You have given the right answer; do this, and you will live.”

29 But wanting to vindicate himself, he asked Jesus, “And who is my neighbor?” 30 Jesus replied, “A man was going down from Jerusalem to Jericho and fell into the hands of robbers, who stripped him, beat him, and took off, leaving him half dead. 31 Now by chance a priest was going down that road, and when he saw him he passed by on the other side. 32 So likewise a Levite, when he came to the place and saw him, passed by on the other side. 33 But a Samaritan while

traveling came upon him, and when he saw him he was moved with compassion. 34 He went to him and bandaged his wounds, treating them with oil and wine. Then he put him on his own animal, brought him to an inn, and took care of him. 35 The next day he took out two denarii, gave them to the innkeeper, and said, 'Take care of him, and when I come back I will repay you whatever more you spend.' 36 Which of these three, do you think, was a neighbor to the man who fell into the hands of the robbers?" 37 He said, "The one who showed him mercy." Jesus said to him, "Go and do likewise."