



**Pastor John Underhill**

## **Review**

(Lights out, lighthouse giving the only light in sanctuary)

If you were a sailor, lost on the sea, in peril of hitting the rocks and losing your life, the light from that lighthouse would be one of the most welcome sights imaginable! Listen to the Word of God:

**Theme & memory Verse:** *Let your light shine before men in such a way that they may see your good works and glorify your Father who is in heaven. Matthew 5:16*

This world we live in is a mess. People are headed for the rocks of alcoholism, the rocks of drug addiction, the rocks of despair, the rocks of immorality, the rocks of greed. We, as Christ's representatives, win a hearing for the Gospel as we tangibly demonstrate His love by our good works. Jesus' intention is that your light, my light be just as **visible**, just as **helpful**, just as **penetrating** as the light from that lighthouse.

**According to Matthew 5:16, our good works should:**

- 1) be visible
- 2) meet an obvious need
- 3) direct people's attention to God

I'm going to read Matthew 5:43-48. I want you to look for how our heavenly Father does His good works, and how His example should guide us.

*"You have heard that the law of Moses says, 'Love your neighbor' and hate your enemy. [44] But I say, love your enemies! Pray for those who persecute you! [45] In that way, you will be acting as true children of your Father in heaven. For he gives his sunlight to both the evil and the good, and he sends rain on the just and on the unjust, too. [46] If you love only those who love you, what good is that? Even corrupt tax collectors do that much. [47] If you are kind only to your friends, how are you different from anyone else? Even pagans do that. [48] But you are to be perfect, even as your Father in heaven is perfect. Matthew 5:43-48 (NLT)*

**According to Matthew 5:43-48, our good works should:**

- 4) be indiscriminate
- 5) not be done with strings attached or expectation of repayment

## **Introduction**

I'm going to read you a well-known passage of scripture. Because it is so well-known, we run the risk of slipping into "automatic pilot" and not allowing this passage to grip us

like it gripped Jesus' first hearers. I'm going to read the entire passage, but we're just going to look at the setting of this parable this morning. Luke 10:25-37

*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 fell into the hands of 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, took him to an inn and took care of him. [35] The next day he took out two silver coins 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." Luke 10:25-37 (NIV)*

## **I. The setting (25-29)**

This story is unique to Luke. We need to understand that Jesus was an uneducated, poor teacher from the sticks (Nazareth). He's dealing with the theological elite, the educated, the wealthy, the powerful.

### **A. The lawyer's question, 25**

*On one occasion an expert in the law stood up to test Jesus. "Teacher," he asked, "what must I do to inherit eternal life?"*

That the lawyer 'stood up' implies that Jesus was teaching.

"*Put Jesus to the test.*" means he wasn't looking for information but wanting to see what sort of answer Jesus would give. He has the opportunity to show Jesus up with his well-thought out response. He may be intending to trap Jesus in a theological riddle.

The form of the question "What shall I do to inherit eternal life" betrays that the lawyer thought he could get to heaven by doing good works.

## **B. The lawyer's response, 26-27**

[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.'"

Notice—Jesus doesn't answer his question, but asks him another question.

"How do you read it?" Phylacteries—had four passages of Hebrew scripture written. **Deut 6:5, Lev 19:18** were two of them. Jesus may have motioned to the man's phylactery and expected him to know the proper answer.

A man should love God with all he is and all he possesses.

Implication: a natural outgrowth of our love for God should be a love for people who are made in God's image. Lucy VanPelt: I love humanity, it's just people that I can't stand.

There's one Greek word for neighbor that means "someone who lives close by." this isn't that word. "Neighbor" is more than just someone who happens to live close to you.

## **C. The lawyer's second question, 28-29**

[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?"

1. The lawyer could be fishing for an **excuse** for his behavior. He's saying to Jesus, "I don't obey because I don't understand. If you help me understand, I'd be happy to obey." But I think there's something more going on here...
2. The lawyer is saying, "**How tightly can I draw the boundaries?**" The context of the O.T. passage, Leviticus 19:18, is the nation of Israel. Jews in Jesus' day believed that **a neighbor was another Jew**, someone like them. **Gentiles didn't qualify** as neighbors. **Samaritan's didn't qualify** as neighbors. In fact, for some Jews (strict Pharisees), not even all Jews qualified as neighbors.

You know how some cell phone plans have a "**Family and friends**" list? That's what this man was asking about. How many people does he have to include on his "**Friends and neighbors**" list? He knows that every name he puts on his list, there's going to be an **obligation** to love them and serve them. Every name he puts on his list means an implied **obligation** to them—when there's a need, when they're in trouble, I'm committing myself to be there with help. I'm committing myself to do what I can. That could be difficult,

could be demanding; taxing on my limited resources. I think that sometimes we view people similarly—Friendship with this person means

- \$50.00 to help with retreat expenses
- Lunch once a week-indefinitely
- Helping with a \$150 - \$300 car repair bill
- 3 hours a week for 3 months while he works through his depression
- A weekly phone call for 20-30 minutes

The lawyer is asking Jesus, “How wide do I have to draw this circle? How many people do I have to include on my “Friends and neighbors” list? I’m not sure how much this will cost, and how much I’m willing to pay. How selective can I be?”

3. **Neighbor Nudge:** What are some of the boundaries we use in determining who qualifies as a neighbor? Who we’d be willing to help in a pinch?
  - If people live more than \_\_\_\_\_ miles away, they don’t qualify as neighbors
  - If people speak a different language, they don’t qualify as neighbors.
  - If people have a different skin color than I do, they don’t qualify as neighbors
  - If people worship a different god than I do, they don’t qualify as neighbors
  - If people take public transportation, they don’t qualify as neighbors
  - If people have mental or emotional problems, they don’t qualify as neighbors
  - If my time is already taken up with family obligations, I’m exempted from being a neighbor
  - If my time is already taken up with religious duties, I’m exempted from being a neighbor
  - If my resources are already being used for other charitable causes, I’m exempted from being a neighbor

## **Conclusion:**

This week, I want you to wrestle with this question—who is my neighbor? Who is on your list? Who should be on your list? Where have you drawn the boundaries? Where should you draw the boundaries?

I want you to pray each morning, “Lord, help me see who my neighbors are. Give me the courage, grace and wisdom to use my resources to meet their needs. Today, let my light shine brightly so that others may see my good works and glorify you, my Father in heaven.”