

Gospel lesson

We continue reading about Jesus on His countryside ministry.



picture from MMMS collection

Luke 10:25-37

(NRSV)

²⁵Just then a lawyer stood up to test Jesus. "Teacher," he said, "what must I do to inherit eternal life?"

²⁶He said to him, "What is written in the law? What do you read there?"

²⁷He 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."

²⁸And he said to him, "You have given the right answer; do this, and you will live."

²⁹But wanting to justify himself, he asked Jesus, "And who is my neighbor?"

³⁰Jesus replied, "A man was going down from Jerusalem to Jericho, and fell into the hands of robbers, who stripped him, beat him, and went away, leaving him half dead.

³¹Now by chance a priest was going down that road; and when he saw him, he passed by on the other side.

³²So likewise a Levite, when he came to the place and saw him, passed by on the other side.

³³But a Samaritan while traveling came near him; and when he saw him, he was moved with pity.

³⁴He went to him and bandaged his wounds, having poured oil and wine on them. Then he put him on his own animal, brought him to an inn, and took care of him.

³⁵The 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.'

³⁶Which of these three, do you think, was a neighbor to the man who fell into the hands of the robbers?"

³⁷He said, "The one who showed him mercy." Jesus said to him, "Go and do likewise."

The Word of God for the people of God

<Children's time/Youthful expressions>

<set up drawing activity, pens/etc., some papers with dot matrix and some plain>

OK, I want you to draw each line as I tell you to.

<give simple path easy to do on dot matrix; compare results with and without dots to guide to master>

Did you follow the path more precisely using plain paper or the paper with dots? <Let them respond>

Does it help to have a gauge to measure against when aiming for a specific result? <Let them respond>

What about other things in life, does it help to have guidance on how to be polite, or how to dress for special events? <Let them respond>

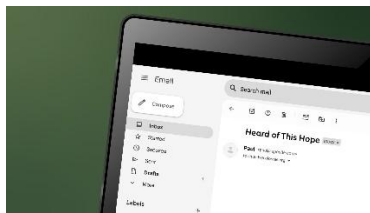
What does God give us guidance on? <Let them respond>

What happens when people follow Jesus's teaching?
What happens when they do not? <Let them respond>

When we stay focused on sharing God's love as Jesus did in all aspects of our lives, everything we do lines up with holy living in the Spirit. May you always look to God first with all that you are, and share Jesus's love abundantly with all people, that everyone sees the world as better because of you with them as an agent of the Holy Spirit.

<Hymn "Wounded World that Cries for Healing" TFWS #2177>

Message: Heard of this Hope



picture from

<https://www.umcdiscipleship.org/worship-planning/fifth-sunday-after-pentecost-year-c-lectionary-planning-notes/fifth-sunday-after-pentecost-year-c-graphics>

Please pray with me?

Gracious Lord who blesses us with so much love,
as we take time now to further consider today's
scriptures, please

- speak Your words through my mouth,

- open our ears to hear Your message, and
- abide in our hearts,

That we may bring your hope into our wounded world,
serving as agents for your Holy Spirit's healing.
Amen.

We transition to the second section of Paul's texting as we look at his letter to the Colossians, beginning with "Heard of this Hope":

"Sometimes, the Pauline epistles feel like we're picking up in the middle of a conversation or perhaps an email thread."



picture from MMMS collection

I sometimes wonder what exactly the Colossians were doing that Paul was so effusive in his greeting to them. When was the last time you told someone that you constantly thank God for them, because of how they live and bear fruit of the Spirit?

Do we live in such a way that others would want to thank God for us? Do we bring the hope we have in Jesus into their lives?

It certainly sounds like the Northern kingdom of Israel under King Jeroboam was not. The Chosen People of God were supposed to be a beacon guiding everyone to know the Lord, but when God checked their status, those worshipping in Bethel were found to be askew.



picture (cropped) from [https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:The Plumb Line and the City - Coventry Cathedral.jpg](https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:The_Plumb_Line_and_the_City_-_Coventry_Cathedral.jpg);
credit: Jim Linwood

Those listening to them were not being drawn nearer to God. We know that when people do not turn to God, they develop wicked and cruel tendencies. Then we get people like the psalmist, crying out to God for justice – and the Lord does take corrective action when we ask for it. Though we do not always appreciate how God answers our prayers, we can be assured that God acts for the best.

Sometimes this means that terrible things come to light, that the evil may be eradicated. Amos warned the Northern kingdom that they would be destroyed. I wonder about our country, with special interests esteemed over what Jesus taught – how long before God's justice is made known more directly here?

Amaziah rejected God's message and was condemned along with the kingdom. When the world pushes us to leave grace behind so that we may live in comfort while others do not, do we carry the message of Jesus to those oppressed or reject the message/messenger?

People get defensive and angry when God's way shows them to be unloving or lacking in grace. It can be painful to give up sinful comforts, like setting a broken bone can be painful but is necessary for healing. Getting aligned with the Lord usually requires extra effort, a change of lifestyle (like better health requires eating right/exercising more).

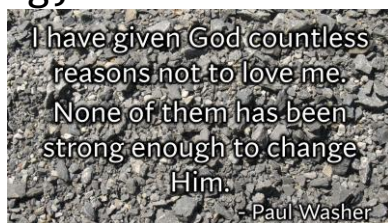


picture from <https://www.freebibleimages.org/photos/parable-good-samaritan/>;
Courtesy of Lumo Project Films
- www.lumoproject.com

Jesus sought to help people improve their spiritual health, their faith, all the time. Always, He directed their focus back to God. The lawyer in today's Gospel reading seemed to be on the verge of celebrating his own accomplishments instead of serving God. After all, he knew the law and gave the right answer to Jesus's question.

But when he pushed it, Jesus redirected him to showing the mercy of God. It was the one who helped who was the neighbor. We are all residents of the same planet; God has us all as neighbors to one another. Are we treating one another as God would have us act toward our neighbor?

The Lord knows we are sinful and make mistakes. But we have heard of this hope in Jesus, that even after everything, God loves us and invites us to better.



background picture from MMMS collection

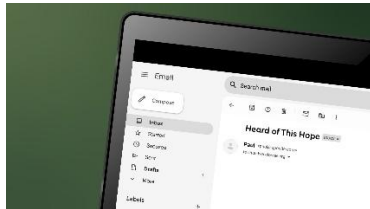
Paul Washer tweeted in 2013, "I have given God countless reasons not to love me. None of them has been strong enough to change Him."¹

I believe that God loves us enough to not leave us stuck in sin. We are constantly called to align with

¹ <https://x.com/paulwasher/status/362672102823833600>

the Holy Spirit and to help one another do similarly.

- † We start by assessing where we and the groups we support are out of whack.
- † Pray for wisdom to identify those cases and how we may fix them according to God's will.
- † Work on it daily, constantly – after all, the sin of the world is pushing on us constantly.
- † Focus on God our Creator, Jesus our Redeemer, and the Holy Spirit our Sustainer in all things, that we may stay on the right track.



picture from

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Christ died for us that we might live eternally in heaven. As His faithful followers, we have heard of this hope; of the better way to live now, bearing the fruit of the Spirit; and of our opportunity to let God's kingdom shine more fully on this earth through our obedience to Jesus's teaching. May your neighbors find every reason to praise God because of you.