

Every week when we gather for worship

We sing, we pray, we read Scripture, we say the Apostles Creed

Celebrate a baptism, share communion

At the most basic level, why do we do all these things?

We sing and we pray and we read Scripture

Because we believe that the things that we're reading/singing

Happen to be true

Because we believe that the truest truth out there is revealed in person of JX

And so on Sundays, but also on Mondays, Tues, Wed, Thurs, Fri, Sats

We want to do things that help us to learn *about* Jesus

And we want to do those things that inspire/equip us as we follow Jesus

Growing up, one of those things God used to supercharge my love 4 Jesus

Was camp and retreats—got my call to ministry at camp

There's something about carving out even a small window of time to focus ^

That can give us energy/clarity/a sense of renewal/connection w/God

Coming up in a few weeks, we have one of these carved out windows of time

For an experience called the IF: Gathering- Feb 3rd & 4th **[IF Slide]**

It'll take place in our Venue building & it's open for women of all ages

The event is really about getting down to the basics

What does it look like to follow Jesus?

We have a design team of women in our church who have been working hard

The event includes live worship, simulcasted teaching (joining 100s of sites)

Time for prayer, shared meals;

Last year we had women who were 18 & 80 – open for all

Feb. 3 & 4; Cost is \$25; Register at asburytulsa.org

Even though this is a women's event, I want to make a special appeal to men

I want to encourage you to find a way to remove obstacles

For the women in your life to participate

Many of us will spend all day Sunday watching Super Bowl

Spend Friday/Saturday helping your wife/mom/sister/grandma follow Jesus

You will not regret empowering the woman in your life to invest in walk w/X

Open your Bibles Luke 10

We continue in our series for the month of January called “You Are Loved”
January 1 is the day many of us dream up ways we can grow/improve
And on Jan. 1 this year--
Before we’ve had chance to achieve anything great
Or much of an opportunity to fail in new & spectacular way
We opened Scriptures & found this affirmation: God loves us.
And the life of Jesus proves in God’s eyes, we’re someone worth dying for.

That affirmation is a great start to a new year.

Warts and all, we are loved.

And coming to grips with the reality that God loves us changes things in us.

The Apostle John said that perfect love drives out fear.

Letting the reality of the love of God sink down deep within us

Reorganizes our priorities, alters our worldview, changes how we see others

When the love of God takes root in the core of our being

The affect of that goes out in concentric circles

When we accept that God loves us, we can love ourselves

As we love ourselves, we’re compelled to love each other (in our circle)

As we grow, we begin to love our neighbor (what we’re talking about today)

And the logical conclusion of the love of God taking root in our heart

Is we’re even called to love our enemies (our topic next week)

The end result—what God’s really after—is that we would be individuals

And that we would be a church

That is shaped by and filled with and transformed completely by love

Becoming like God, because God is love.

The Apostle Paul said “The love of Christ compels us b/c we believe 1 died for all.”

Because Jesus died for all, that proves God’s love for all

And if we intend to follow in the way of Jesus

That means we have to—with God’s help—love all people, too.

We must be concerned with the needs and well-being of all people

Not just ourselves and not just the people who are like us

“The love of Christ compels us b/c we believe that one died for all.”

In Luke 10, we find Jesus en route to Jerusalem

With a singular purpose

He's on his way to PROVE the love of God for the world by dying on cross

And on the way, he runs into an expert of the law, a scholar

Who wants to examine & discover if Jesus really knows his stuff.

Luke 10:25-29 (Pew Bible, p. 1612)

On one occasion, an expert in the law stood up to test Jesus. "Teacher," he asked, "What must I do to inherit eternal life?" "What is written in the Law?" he replied. "How do you read it?" 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." "You have answered correctly," Jesus replied. "Do this and you will live." But he wanted to justify himself, so he asked Jesus, "And who is my neighbor?"

We know from the text that this man didn't approach Jesus w/pure motives

He came to Jesus assuming he had the moral and biblical high ground

Thinking he could poke some hole in Jesus' theology

And consequently put him in his rightful place (& make himself look good)

He asks Jesus the question of how to inherit eternal life.

As you may remember from our study of John 3

Eternal life here is not about hopping from cloud to cloud in heaven

Eternal life is better translated "the life of the age to come."

In other words, the man is asking, "How do I participate in God's future?"

"How do I make sure I'm on the winning team when all is said and done?"

Jesus responds by pointing him back to the Scriptures, to the OT commands

And the man, expert in the law as he is, gives the correct answer

This is the answer that Jesus himself would have given.

How do you live in God's way? How do you share in the life of the age to come?

Simple: Love God, love your neighbor.

The expert in the law passed the test with full marks.

Jesus tells him: Yep, that's the right answer. 10 points to you.

If you do those 2 things—love God, love your neighbor—you'll live.

But the legal expert, in his vanity, didn't quite like Jesus' tone
He didn't appreciate the suggestion that he wasn't already obeying
God's command to love God and love others perfectly.
"Who does he think he is?" "Where does he get the nerve to challenge me?"
"I've been teaching this stuff since before you were born, Jesus!"

And then v.29 says: "... want[ing] to justify himself, he asked Jesus...
"And who is my neighbor?"

Now, before hear Jesus' response, 3 quick comments about what we've just read:

First, this expert in the Law has no idea who he's dealing with:
The One who himself is the consummation of the Law
And the fulfillment of the words of the Prophets
Is standing before him in flesh and blood.
Yeah, don't try to lecture Jesus about the Law. You're outclassed, sir.

In fairness to him, we do the same thing at times.
We want to argue with God about how he ordered the world.
We read things in Scripture that bother us, that offend modern sensibilities
And we may feel inclined to put up a fight and argue
But remember that we're arguing with the Author of Life.
It's kinda like arguing w/Steve Jobs on how to work an iPhone
Or giving Westbrook tips or Martha Stewart how to decorate a centerpiece

Do we know more than God? Have we surpassed God's wisdom in our life?
This expert on the law didn't realize who he was dealing with.
And we would do well to remember ourselves.

Second, this man possessed a quality that all throughout Scripture
Is described as a surefire God-repellent: Pride.
Pride compelled him to go to Jesus to test him, so he could look smart.
Pride compelled him to ask the follow-up Q *bc he wanted to justify himself*

Pride, known by many names & behaviors: Arrogance/cockiness/stubbornness
Being unteachable, untrainable, uncoachable, a know-it-all = Xian Kryptonite

Want to weaken your walk with Christ?

Want to alienate yourself from the community?

Want to ingest a toxic cocktail of poisons into your heart?

Then bottoms-up for pride and arrogance.

James 4:6- “God opposes the proud, but gives grace to the humble.”

Do you want God to oppose you? Double down on pride.

But let me tell you a secret: When God’s your opponent, you lose every time.

Do you want grace? Embrace humility.

Third, this man made a tragic mistake:

Thinking that giving the right answers = being right w/God

So, la ti da, Jon Odom.

Who cares if you can preach a sermon or teach a Sunday school lesson?

Who cares how much Scripture you know?

Who cares if you could pass a standardized test on Christian theology?

Is that enough? Is that what God’s really after?

James 2:19- You believe that there is one God. Good! Even the demons believe that—and shudder.

Knowledge is not enough. Being right is not enough.

The man gave the textbook answer to Jesus’ question. He was right.

But God isn’t after people who only *know* what’s right.

He’s after people who are compelled by love to *do* what’s right.

And in response to man’s question, Jesus tells a story to illustrate this point.

He says a man was walking from Jerusalem to Jericho

It’s a long, winding road in and out of rolling hills in the Judean wilderness

As he goes on his way, he’s attacked by a group of bandits & left for dead

Luckily, a priest was coming down the same road and saw the man

Since he was a busy man, he crossed to the other side of the road

And kept on his way

Next, a Levite, a keeper of the temple, came down the road
Seeing the man, he too went on the other side and kept on his way

Finally, a Samaritan came down the same road
And when he saw the man, he took pity on him
He went to him, bandaged his wounds, put him on his own donkey
Took him to an inn, paid for expenses & pledged to reimburse for any others

Now, here's the thing about Samaritans.
There's *never* a good Samaritan—at least in the mind of 1st century Jews
Samaritans were a despised group of people
Who believed all the wrong things and who were ethnically offensive
They were impure, unliked, untouchable and generally the worst.

If I were to retell Jesus' parable in the modern day
The Samaritan would be person who offends you in their very being
And the person we'd label Samaritan reveals our prejudices
Who's that person or who is that group of people that so angers you?
Who's the first that comes to mind? In Jesus' story, THAT's our hero.

The hero is not the one who KNOWS God's Law & knows the right answer
No, the hero is the one who DOES God's Law, who LIVES God's law
Who is compelled by mercy and love to OBEY God's law
To love his neighbor.

The story illustrates that talk is cheap, superficial belief is cheap.
It's what you do that counts.
It's what we do that PROVES what we actually believe.

After telling the story, Jesus asks the legal expert:
"So, who was the neighbor to the man who was attacked?"
The legal expert replies, "The one who showed mercy."
And Jesus tells him, "Go and do likewise."

Jesus reframes the question from WHO IS MY NEIGHBOR
To HOW CAN I BE A NEIGHBOR?

To be a neighbor is to not only see the needs of others
But to be so moved by compassion that we do something to help.

Did you know that in the city of Tulsa, those who live in zip code 74126
Have a life expectancy that is 10.6 years LESS
Than those who live in zip code 74137?

There are such different social/economic/educational dynamics at play
That 10 miles of separation means 10 fewer years of life
For those who live on the North Side.

Our new mayor, GT Bynum, has made eradicating the gap
A touchstone of his new administration. That's good neighboring.
It's seeing a need—is he the first to see it? Certainly not.
It's seeing a need & moved by love, choosing to DO something about it.

The hallmark of Xian practice is loving God *demonstrated by* loving like neighbors.
When we encounter another in need, we act in their best interest
And concern ourselves with their well-being
Which, as you know, can be messy and complicated and gut-wrenching
But in doing so, we are fulfilling the intended ends of God's Law in our lives

The Apostle John said:

1 John 4:20- "If we do not love our brother whom we have seen, how can we love God whom we have not seen?" [PAUSE]

This has certainly been a history-making week in our country
As Donald Trump has become our 45th president
As Scripture instructs us, we should all pray for our president & his admin

As w/every transition of power, some are celebrating b/c they have ^ hopes
Others worry bc of things President Trump has said about women/minorities

While it would be easy for us to get swept up in all emotion & rhetoric of week
I want to encourage us to consider:
What is the Xian response to this moment?

Because we believe that Jesus is Lord [hear me]

Because we believe that Jesus is Lord, the true ruler over all the earth
We neither GLOAT over the victory of any candidate
Nor do we allow ourselves to despair.

It doesn't matter if Donald Trump or Hillary Clinton or Caesar Augustus
Is currently sitting in the place of positional political power.
We neither gloat nor despair.

Because we believe that Jesus is Lord, we do what we as Christians
Have been commanded by our true ruler and master and teacher to do
We strive to love God with all of our heart and soul and mind and strength
And we do all we can to love like neighbors
To concern ourselves with the well-being of the least, the last, lost

We strive to love because we have been loved.

We strive to show mercy because we have been shown mercy
Scripture tells us that we were like the man attacked by robbers in J's story
Hopeless, helpless, left for dead.

Paul said in Ephesians 2:

"As for you, you were dead in your transgressions and sins, in which you
used to live when you followed the ways of this world... But because of his
great love for us, God, who is rich in mercy, made us alive with Christ even
when we were dead in transgressions—it is by grace you have been saved."

In Jesus, God has loved us back to life.

And to love others like he has loved us, to love like neighbors
We need transformed hearts—something we can't manufacture on our own.

So this morning, as we pray, let's ask the Lord Jesus

To empower us to love others like he loves us.

To rearrange our priorities, our affections, our loyalties to be like his.

If you've never trusted in Jesus as Lord of your life, today can be the day of
salvation for you. Let's pray.