

Luke 10-25-37

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[0 : 00] So, do turn to Luke 10. Luke 10. I'm in the middle of a three-week series,! About what motivates human beings.

It's a really fascinating paper. In that paper, he proposed that there were five fundamental human needs that motivate human behaviour. He described them as a hierarchy in which each progressive need must be fulfilled before a person can move on to fulfil the next need.

A bit like a pyramid. And his description of the five key needs went like this. Number one, physiological needs. Things like food and water and warmth and rest.

That's number one. Number two, safety needs. Every human being needs security and safety. Number three, belonging and love needs.

Intimacy, friends, family. And number four, esteem needs. Respect, feeling of accomplishment, recognition. And number five, self-actualisation needs.

[1 : 32] That is achieving one's full potential. Physiological needs. Safety. Belonging and love needs. Esteem needs. And self-actualisation needs.

And of course, we could argue, couldn't we, about the order in which Maslow's put them. Whether there should be an order at all. And lots of psychologists, I'm told, have kind of argued non-stop since about that.

But there's a reason why Maslow's hierarchy is still discussed today. Because actually, he's on to something. Most human beings feel at those kind of motivations in one form or another at some point.

And Maslow summarised a lot of human motivations very well. And so today, in tonight's passage, we come to number three on Maslow's scales.

Love and emotional needs. But I'm most interested in how he describes it as a basic human need. Humans need love. And as Maslow points out, the desire to be loved drives a lot of human behaviour.

[2 : 43] Now, you know that's true. And when it comes to love, I think that is the dominant way that people in the world think about it. Love is something that we all need.

Some would argue all you need is love. Love is something that we're trying to find and trying to hang on to. But I hope you realise that when Christians talk about love, we're starting at a quite different point, aren't we?

Christians often talk about love not so much as something to be found and clung on to, but something to give. In our society, love is so often framed as the thing that I want.

There's a need for me to be loved. But in the kingdom of God, love is framed as something I share. There is a need not so much for me to be loved as to love.

Now, I know that I've just really overstated the case. And I'm not suggesting for a moment that no one in the world is looking to give love and only to receive it. I know that's not true.

[3 : 48] But I do think I'm describing a real difference in the fundamental way people think in our world. and the way people in the kingdom of God think about love.

And I hope that difference will be recognisable to you. Last week, we spoke about the kingdom of God and work. This week, we're talking about the kingdom of God and the need for love. Love, not as psychologists might understand it, but love according to God.

And so let's get to our passage. Come on up, yes. Come on up. And I want us to look just at verses 25 to 37. And we're going to see the story of the not-so-good lawyer.

The great thing is about having an outline and putting that on the kind of PowerPoint is that you can get away with a bad outline. And so the passage that is in front of you, I want to call the story of the not-so-good lawyer.

My title is very different from the ESV's title. Can you see the ESV's title? And they call this section, like pretty much every Bible version that puts titles in, the parable of the Good Samaritan.

[5 : 00] And there is a parable within the passage. But I want to argue that primarily, verses 25 to 37, are a true story.

There's a Samaritan in the parable, in the story, but the main character of verses 25 to 37 is the lawyer. And the Samaritan in the parable, in the story, he might be good, but the lawyer in this true story, which this story is really about, he thinks he's really good, but in reality, not so much.

So I want to argue my title is better than the ESV's. It's a little bit less catchy, isn't it? But it is really about the true story of the not-so-good lawyer. And basically, what you find is in these verses, there's a discussion between the lawyer and Jesus.

It's a series of questions and answers. It's a dialogue. And that's how I want us to look at it. So in verse 25, you've got a question about the way to life. Verse 25 begins with a brief introduction to the lawyer.

He's an expert in the law. And of course, the law that he's an expert in is the religious laws of the Jews.

[6 : 20] The legal material that you've got in the Old Testament. And perhaps some extra bits as well. If you're trying to locate this guy, you're better off thinking about him as having an office in a theological college rather than the boardroom in the city or a city law firm.

And this expert in the Jewish law has a question for Jesus. But even that, it's not a question like a little inquisitive child asks a parent because they're curious to learn something.

It's more like a mischievous teenager asking the student teacher, trying to catch them out, trying to make them look stupid. And so Luke tells us in verse 25 what the lawyer's motive is.

Can you see that? Verse 25. He wants to test Jesus. He hasn't come to Jesus looking to learn from him. He was more interested in showing Jesus up.

And so this is the question he came up with. He said, Teacher, what must I do to inherit eternal life? And I suspect he already has an answer to that question in his own head.

[7 : 28] It would be hard to be an expert in the Jewish law and not to have thought lots about this already. But he wants to know what Jesus says.

He's particularly interested in whether Jesus will show himself to be out of step with the Jewish teachers. And so Jesus gives him an answer about life through love, doesn't he?

Verses 26 to 28. And of course, Jesus is not going to be trapped so easily. In verse 26, he responds to the lawyer's question with a question of his own. Verse 26. He said to him, What is written in the law?

How do you read it? What does the law say? That's what Jesus asks him. But I wonder whether there's a bit of attitude in Jesus' tone.

I wonder whether there's a little bit of, Well, you're the expert. You tell me. And of course, our lawyer man, well, he's got a tightly worded response in his back pocket already. He says, You can inherit eternal life through two kinds of love.

[8 : 35] Love for God with all your heart, soul, strength, and mind, and love for your neighbor. What was Jesus saying next? Well, we find out in verse 28. And Jesus said to him, You've answered correctly.

Do this and you will live. And interestingly, the word correctly there is the Greek word from which we get the word orthodox. Jesus responds by saying, It's an orthodox answer.

It's straight down the line. None of his Jewish lawyer buddies would have faulted his answer. You've proved your orthodoxy.

Of course, Jesus summarizes the law in a similar way in other places, doesn't he? But I think we do wonder, what does Jesus' words here really mean? He seems to agree with the lawyer that these two kinds of love, they are the way to eternal life.

Could that be right? I think the first thing we've got to say is that Jesus can see into this man's heart, can't he? And he knows he's not here to listen but to entrap him.

[9 : 44] And Jesus is refusing to be drawn into the lawyer's game. But it's also important to recognize that Jesus wouldn't say this if he thought it was false.

There is, of course, a sense in which this is true. That if a person were to love God with all their heart and with all their soul and all their strength and all their mind and if they were to love their neighbors as themselves, then they would be the perfect embodiment of God's law.

They would be without sin. They would have no need of forgiveness and they could be confident of inheriting eternal life on that basis. And so I think Jesus is affirming that here.

I don't think for a second that Jesus thought this man was able to do it. And nor any other man for that matter with one significant exception. But nevertheless, in the cut and thrust of this conversation, Jesus is happy at this point to sign off on the orthodoxy of the lawyer's answer.

And so the next question comes in verse 29 and it's a question about who to love. Perhaps Jesus knew that the lawyer, he wouldn't be able to leave it there. You could see into the man's heart.

[11:03] He would have known that he wasn't just interested in testing Jesus, he was also very keen to justify himself. So once again in verse 29, Luke reveals to us the lawyer's motives.

And of course, in this respect, Jesus hasn't given the lawyer any satisfaction at all. Perhaps what he was really after from Jesus was an affirmation that he stood to inherit eternal life.

You'll be okay. And while Jesus has conceded, hasn't he, the orthodoxy of the guy, Jesus hasn't even gone close to assuring him that he has eternal life.

So the lawyer won't drop it. Jesus isn't playing his game, so he's got another question. Verse 29, but he desiring to justify himself said to Jesus, well, who is my neighbor?

He wants to know, if I've got to do the neighbor love to inherit eternal life, who do you think that that includes? It's a question about who to love. It's a question about where the limits are, about how far one has to go in loving neighbors.

[12:11] And so Jesus gives him in verses 30 to 37 an answer on how to love. And if Jesus' previous answer was predictable, I think we've got to admit that Jesus' next answer is completely unexpected.

in response about the lawyer's question about who to love, Jesus tells a story as he often did. It's a story that's become one of the most well-known stories in the history of the world.

I don't think that's an exaggeration. And of course, you know it well, so I'm not going to retell it to you. But this is a story about what love looks like. All three passers-by see the injured man.

That's clear in the text. The priest and the Levite, they are the one in possession of the law. We just hear the lawyer discussing with Jesus and we might therefore have expected them to stop and love their neighbor.

But they didn't. But of course, Jesus shocks his audience, doesn't he, by telling them that the one who saw the injured man and actually had pity, compassion on him was a Samaritan.

[13:17] And as you know, the Jews and the Samaritans didn't get on. So Jesus' hearers would not have expected a Samaritan passer-by to help a needy Jew.

But in Jesus' story, he's the only one that does. And by telling the story in the way that Jesus does, he is making a comment about the foolish racial divide that there is between the Samaritans and the Jews of his day.

He points out that failing to help a dying man because of the country he comes from or because of who his grandparents were is a failure to love. Jesus is waving Samaritan lives matter in the face of the Jews.

And we can't avoid the fact that this is a story about racism. Perhaps it is one of the Bible's most potent messages on this theme. But it is much, much more than that.

It is much, much more than that because it is a story about love. The priest and the Levite, they failed to love. The Samaritan loved. He had compassion.

[14:27] He showed mercy. And with this story, Jesus shows that the love which pleases God is a love that extends to the unlikely one. And when the lawyer asks Jesus, who is my neighbor, this is Jesus' answer.

It's anyone who crosses your path and needs your help. It's anyone who crosses your path and needs your help.

Let me pause there. We live in an age, don't we, where we are bombarded by needs, where we know more about the needs on the other side of the world than often we do on the other side of the street.

And we cannot meet those needs, all of them. And I do think it's a really helpful point that Jesus gives you. it's anyone who crosses your path and needs your help, regardless of their race, regardless of your religious convictions, regardless of how you might feel about them.

Jesus does answer the lawyer's question, but he also suggests by his answer that there's a better question to ask. The lawyer asks the question about who to love, and Jesus answers with a story

about how to love.

[15:39] And you love by showing compassion to the unlikely one. And you love by going out of your way to show mercy, and that's what the Samaritan did. He went above and beyond what anyone could have expected him to do.

He didn't just stop and help the guy move on. He didn't just take the man to where you could get further help. He paid for the man to be cared for, and he promised to come back again and pay if more was needed.

The Samaritan's love was not just for an unlikely person, it was staggeringly generous. And that's Jesus' point too, isn't it? The Samaritan does not just do the minimum.

He loves his neighbor generously, with a large heart. And then having finished the story, Jesus underlines the fact that this is a story more about how to love than who to love.

So listen to his question in verse 36. Which of these three do you think proved to be a neighbor to the man who fell among the robbers?

[16:47] The lawyer pompously asked, who is my neighbor? And Jesus responds by suggesting that he should think less about who his neighbor is, and more about how to be a neighbor.

And Jesus sends him on his way with the exhortation, do as the Samaritan did. And once again, isn't it wonderful, Jesus is masterful, he turns the tables on someone who came to trap him.

The cocky lawyer goes home with his tail between his legs because the one he came to test ends up testing him. And so who am I?

That's where I kind of want us to get to tonight and spend the rest of our time in application. Jesus' words, they do test us, don't they? I find that again and again as I come to the Gospels, even this evening.

And as Jesus speaks, we find him searching our hearts, and Jesus' words search us tonight. And so I want to return to the question that we finished with last week. Do you remember? Who does Jesus say that I am?

[17:58] And what do the words of Jesus reveal about my identity as one of his followers? In the kingdom of Jesus, who am I? And once again this evening, I think this passage gives us two important answers.

Who am I? I am someone who needs to love. As a disciple of Jesus Christ, I am someone who needs to love.

Now that's the usual application of this passage. Who am I? I'm a neighbor. I'm a neighbor to anyone who God brings across my path. And I'm a neighbor to them.

And I need to show them compassion, to have mercy, to love. And most importantly, I love others out of my overflow of my love for God. God.

I'm a loving neighbor because I first loved God with all my heart and soul and strength and mind.

Who am I? I am more than just an orthodox question answerer.

[19:05] I'm not just someone who has the right answer, who can rattle off what it means to be a Christian. Who am I? I am someone who is looking for the limits of my responsibility to love.

Who am I? I'm someone who loves the unlikely one. I'm someone who goes out of my way to show that love. I love without regard to race, or religious conviction, or gender, or social position.

I love without allowing how I feel about someone to determine whether I care for them or not. And that's not easy, is it? What does that mean?

It means this. It means I will love the person who doesn't love me. It means the person who makes no secret of the fact that they don't like me very much.

I love that person who's hard to love. I love that person who's socially awkward. I love that person who's hard to finish a conversation with.

[20:18] It was a bad smell. It means I love the parent who's been a great disappointment to me. I love the child who doesn't treat me well.

I love the friend who keeps letting me down. I love the person in authority that I find very difficult to respect. I love the colleague and the acquaintance who no one else loves.

I love the person with the unenviable job who everyone else seems to ignore. I love the stranger in need on the side of the road. And I love them all because I love the God who made me and them in his image.

I love the unlikely one. But I'll also go out of my way to love. I'll love generously. And so I'll not just flick the bag of change.

I'll buy him breakfast instead. I might run late for a meeting with someone because I came across somebody who was really in need of help. I might choose not to spend my evening the way that I was really looking forward to because I've got a friend who needs me.

[21 : 46] I might stay in a conversation way longer than I'd like to because the person I'm with still wants to talk. And my giving to the needy and to the work of the gospel might be more than I feel I can afford.

I might invite someone over for a meal or to come on holiday with me even though I don't find them the most relaxing person to be around.

I might text someone tonight or call someone tomorrow who's going through a tough time. And not just this week but next week and the week after and the week after that.

I might make a list of people that I used to bump into at church but I'm not seeing so much now. And slowly get in touch with each one of them just to check in how they are. And I might pray for someone who isn't a believer not just every now and then but regularly for years and decades because I long to see them turn to Christ.

I love beyond the minimum because I love God beyond the minimum. And because I want to love him with all my heart and soul and mind and strength.

[23 : 07] I'll go out of my way to love. And that's what Jesus says about me here. If I'm a disciple of his then I'm a lover. I'm a lover of God and I'm a lover of those he brings across my path.

I'm a neighbor. So I love by showing compassion to the unlikely one. And I love by going out of my way to show mercy. I love with wisdom and I will love with thoughtfulness.

I haven't got limitless time and I haven't got limitless resources. And so it means each day I will prayerfully work out who to love and how to love them conscious of what they need and conscious of what God has enabled me to give.

But each day when I get out of bed I remember that I'm someone who needs to love. Recently I was talking with one of the staff at the rugby club and they were reflecting on something that had happened in their life and the support they'd received at a previous rugby club not yours.

And they spoke so warmly of the support that the staff had showed. They said to me this. They said this would never happen anywhere else.

[24 : 24] And as I heard that that made me feel really sad. Do you catch her line? This would never happen anywhere else. And I really hope that was a case of kind of her emotions leaving her to overstate it.

I really hope it's not the case that she's never received selfless care like that anywhere else in her life. I really hope that she doesn't think that the kind of compassion, that kind of humble love can only be found in a rugby club, heaven forbid.

Because what Jesus is talking about in Matthew 10 is everyday life of all who love God. love God. Because Jesus' story in Matthew 10 is not a story of something exceptional.

It's the story of an approach as a disciple of Jesus to everyday life, to every relationship they're in. Where else would you expect to see selfless love like that lady experienced at the rugby club?

Try coming to church sometime for a start. Or perhaps just follow any Christian around for a day and you'll see that kind of love. Hopefully you'd see it at every turn, in every interaction, in every conversation, in every relationship, because this is at the heart of what it means to be a disciple.

[25 : 49] To love others as we love God, to be a neighbour, loving even the unlikely one, going out of our way to love. That is the everyday life in Jesus' kingdom. Sincere compassion, tender care, generous mercy.

Who am I? I'm someone who needs to love. But lastly, I'm someone in need of love. Because what I've just talked about, which I know can feel guilt-inducing, is not the only thing Jesus tells us in this passage about who we are.

Because, remember, this isn't primarily the passage of the parable of the Good Samaritan. It's the story of the not-so-good lawyer. And so this passage is not just about being like the Samaritan, it's also about making sure we're not like the lawyer.

And the Samaritan may be someone whose conduct leads Jesus to say, go and do likewise. But you get the distinct impression that Jesus doesn't think this lawyer is someone to emulate. and yet lots of people do.

I'm not saying there's lots of people trying to undermine Jesus, though there are some. I'm not saying that people's demeanor before Jesus is kind of arrogant like this man's is, although there are

some.

[27 : 09] But what I'm saying is there are lots of people that I meet, like this lawyer, who are looking to justify themselves. There are lots of people in this world who think they know what God expects of them, and they feel pretty confident that they're going to at least get a pass mark.

There are lots of people these days who reckon that they will enter eternal life on the basis of what they've done. They've tried hard to be good people, never hurt a fly. They've taken note of the Good Samaritan, they've tried to emulate him.

And all their little sins and all their little faults, well, they're not very newsworthy. And I would just suggest that what I'm describing is pretty much the majority view in our country. Perhaps it describes some of you listening tonight, but I need to tell you that is a tragic mistake.

It's a really big mistake. Because for one thing, most people who say that they keep the commandments and live well like this lawyer, fail to admit that they really don't love God.

Certainly not with all their heart and mind and soul and strength. And as it turns out, that is the first commandment. And if he isn't everything to you, you've fallen at the first hurdle. But even if you thought you were having a really good crack at both loving your neighbor and loving God, you'll never do it perfectly.

[28 : 33] And if you can't, then like this lawyer, you'll never be able to justify yourself. Do you remember what Jesus said in verse 21 of Luke 10? Look at verse 21. In that same hour, Jesus rejoiced in the Holy Spirit and said, I thank you, Father, Lord of heaven and earth, that you've hidden these things from the wise and understanding and revealed them to little children.

Yes, Father, for such was your gracious will. And so we're meant to read this next section in the light of verse 21. What was the lawyer's problem? He thought he was wise and learned.

He thought his wisdom and learning could justify him before God. But it's not how it works. God hides his truth from people like that and instead he reveals them to little children. Eternal life depends on God's initiative and not ours.

It depends not on my brilliant living but on the brilliant grace of God in my life. And people don't need to justify themselves. In fact, they can't. They need God to reach down and save them.

And the guy thought he could make his own way to heaven. But the central message of the Bible is that no one does and no one can. You cannot justify yourself but there is someone who can justify you.

[29 : 42] You can't stitch up eternal life for yourself. But there is somebody who can give it to you. And it turns out that what the lawyer needed was the very person he was talking to.

And it turns out that we need him too. We need his truth to show us how far short we've fallen short of loving God with all we are and how far short we've fallen of loving our neighbors.

Particularly the unlikely ones. And going out of our way to love. And then after we need Jesus telling us the truth about ourselves we need him to do something about our failure.

We need him to justify us because we can't justify ourselves. And we need to do exactly what he would do not long after.

He spoke these words. We need him on that hill outside Jerusalem looking a lot like the traveler on the side of the road in Jesus' story. We need him stripped of his clothes beaten with people scornfully passing him by.

[30 : 52] We need him not half dead but fully dead. We need his sacrifice for failed lovers. His death for us. We need him to love us. love. And of course whilst I said at the start today about the difference between the way the world speaks of the need for love and the way we do that's not the whole story is it?

Because before we stick on our chest and declare that we don't need love in the way that Maslow's hierarchy describes it before we lift our heads and assure the world we're not the people who need love but rather we're the people who give love before we end up sounding a lot like that lawyer Jesus told this story to undermine we better acknowledge that Maslow's got something right.

We do need to be loved. You need to be loved. And in fact without being loved we are nothing. And without God loving us we'd never be able to love him or our neighbours.

And John would write we love because he first loved us. I'm not going to stand up here today as I finish this sermon and tell you that Jesus is a good Samaritan.

I don't think he is. I'm not sold on that interpretation. I think it's primarily a parable on how we're to love. Because it's a parable about how to love it's a parable that reflects back to us some pretty

important things about how God loves and how Jesus loves.

[32 : 19] So when verse 33 says that Samaritan saw the man on the side of the road and had pity on him Luke uses a significant word, the word compassion. It's the word in Luke 15 to describe the compassion of the father who welcomed back the prodigal son.

Back in Luke 7 it's the word compassion that Jesus felt for a widow and her dead son before he raised the boy back to life. And right back in chapter 1 it's the word Luke used to explain the kind of tender mercy God has for the world he sent Jesus to save.

And so when we see the compassion of the Samaritan we are meant to be given a glimpse of the world saving, life restoring, sinner welcoming, compassion of God. And when we see the mercy of the Samaritan we're meant to see a picture of the mercy of Jesus.

And when we see the Samaritan loving we're offered a reflection of the love that we ourselves need more than anything else in the world. And so we land again tonight where we landed last week with humility.

Because as much as anything else this is what it means to be a disciple of Jesus. It means humility before God and before his son our saviour the Lord Jesus Christ. Who am I?

[33 : 37] Who does Jesus say I am? He says I'm to be like the Samaritan a neighbour yes. I'm someone who needs to love. But he also says I must not be like the self-justifying lawyer.

Rather I am and always will be someone in need of love. Saving, justifying, compassionate, merciful love. Remember chapter 10 and verse 21?

I thank you Father Lord of heaven and earth that you have hidden these things from the wise and understanding and revealed them to little children. Yes Father for such was your gracious will.