

## **Roads of Passion**

### **#4 - The Road to Jericho**

#### **Luke 10:25-37**

**INTRODUCTION:** If you have ever watched the President of the United States deliver the State of the Union Address in recent years, you know that at some point in his speech he will point to the balcony and introduce an ordinary citizen as a real hero in this country. That custom began when President Ronald Reagan introduced a man named Lenny Skutnik.

Lenny Skutnik was a federal worker walking down the street minding his own business, when Air Florida Flight 90 crashed into the Potomac River. The flight had just taken off from Washington bound for Florida. It had developed ice on its wings, and it brought the plane down as it tried to clear Washington's 14th Street bridge.

In the next moment several passengers were thrown into the icy river. A helicopter soon came by dropping ropes, but it could only save one person at a time. There was one lady in the water who was struggling to grab the ladder. But she was so cold and so frozen she could not lift her arms out of the water, and it looked like she was going to drown.

Everyone else on that bridge was shouting encouragement to her. Lenny Skutnik broke through the police barricade, jumped into the river, risking his own life, and pulled that lady to shore, who otherwise would have surely drowned. The President of the United States called him a hero. Do you know what Jesus would have called him? - A good neighbor.

There's something about the story of Lenny Skutnik that is both inspiring and convicting. It's like there's a law of love—a regard for the wellbeing of others which, if we could all live by it, would make this world a better place.

Of all the stories Jesus told, along with the prodigal son, perhaps the most famous is the story of the Good Samaritan. This is a story that is directly related to the Lenny Skutnicks of this world.

Today is the fourth sermon in our series, Roads of Passion. We've looked at the Jerusalem Road, the Road to Emmaus, and the Damascus Road. Today we'll look at the Road to Jericho. Turn to Luke 10, beginning with verse 25.

The story begins with a "certain lawyer" coming to Jesus and asking him a question. A lawyer in Jesus' day was not only someone who was an expert in legal affairs but was also an expert in the law of God.

***"And behold, a certain lawyer stood up and tested Him, saying, 'Teacher, what shall I do to inherit eternal life?' (v.25)      Let's PRAY***

Now everyone ought to be asking that question: 'What shall I do to inherit eternal life?' because I believe that is life's greatest question. It was a personal question. It is an issue that involves everyone, not just this lawyer. **What about you?** Has the issue of where you will spend eternity been answered and settled in your heart?

Just so you know, normally **when you inherit something, it's not because you do something; it's because you are someone.** There are some misconceptions about the grace of God. Do you have to earn your eternal life? There are a lot of people who think along those lines. If I'm good enough, if I try hard enough, then maybe I'm in.

*[Story of Good Samaritan and Biker gang?]*

Jesus does not answer his question; instead, he asked a question. **"What is written in the Law?" he replied. "How do you read it?"** (v.26, NIV)

There is a reason Jesus did not give this man a direct answer to his question. This man was not really seeking information. We read here he was simply trying to test or trap Jesus. You will find in the Bible that when anyone came to Jesus with an honest question, He always gave them an honest answer. But when they came with a dishonest question, He would always turn the tables by asking them a question. Because you don't test Jesus, He tests you.

This lawyer replies to Jesus' question with a perfect answer: ***"So, he answered and said, 'You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, with all your soul, with all your strength, and with all your mind,' and 'your neighbor as your***

***yourself.'*** And He said to him, ***'You have answered rightly; do this and you will live.'***" (vv. 27-28)

I'm sure there was a smug satisfied smile on his face, knowing he had given the right answer. But even though Jesus affirmed his answer He follows up with another question: ***'And He said to him, 'You have answered rightly; do this and you will live.'*** ***But he, wanting to justify himself, said to Jesus, 'And who is my neighbor?'"*** (v.28-29)

Now you might think, Jesus is saying this is the way you get to heaven. But what Jesus is really saying is; "If you can meet that standard, you don't need grace; you just must be perfect. "Do this and live."

So, Jesus has enticed the man to commit himself to pure self-righteousness as a form of getting to heaven. All he must do is be perfect, and he's in.

Rather than looking outside of himself for righteousness, he does what a lot of people do, He tries to lower God's standards so he can meet them. He was looking for a loophole. He was trying to separate people into two categories - neighbors and non-neighbors.

Luke comments that the man hearing these words wants to justify himself. Just so you know, justification is that act by which God justifies us; meaning God declares us to be just based on what Christ has done in paying for our sins on the cross. On that basis God justifies the ungodly.

The opposite of justification would be no justification, or self-justification.

**Illustration:** On another occasion, in Luke 18, Jesus depicts two people going up to the temple to pray. The Pharisee stands and prays, "God, I thank you that I am not like other people—robbers, evildoers, adulterers—even this tax collector over there. I fast twice a week and give a tenth of all I get." [He's speaking in the language of self-justification.]

"But the tax collector stood at a distance. He would not even look up to heaven but beat his breast and said, 'God, have mercy on me, a sinner.'"

And then Jesus says, "I tell you that this man, rather than the other, went home justified before God." The man who was self-justified is condemned, and the man who begins, "God, be merciful to me a sinner," is justified by God.

Jesus goes on to tell the lawyer a story: "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. A priest happened to be going down the same road, and when he saw the man, he passed by on the other side. So too, a Levite, when he came to the place and saw him, passed by on the other side.'***

The Jericho Road is a 17 mile very narrow dangerous winding road that is bordered by steep cliffs on one side, and barren hills on the other side. Even to this day, if it has rained quite a bit the road is impassable. As a matter of fact, the road was so dangerous that in those days it was called ***'the way of blood.'***

But it was dangerous for another reason. Bible scholars estimate that there were at least 12,000 thieves in that Judean wilderness surrounding Jerusalem. These gangs and thugs roamed the countryside like packs of wild dogs beating and robbing them.

**STORY:** An elderly mountain farmer had been involved in an accident between his mule-drawn wagon and a car driven by another man. Now, the farmer was suing the driver, claiming personal injuries because of the accident. When the farmer was on the stand, the attorney for the driver of the car "Tell me sir, isn't it true that after the accident, you said that you never felt better in your life?"

"Well," the farmer began, "that morning I got up, hitched up my mule to the wagon, and put my hound dog in the seat beside me, and I started on down the road..." The lawyer interrupted, "Please, just give me a simple yes or no answer to the question"

At this point the judge stepped in and directed the lawyer to let the farmer have his way in answering the question. "Well," the farmer continued, "that morning I got up, hitched up my mule to the wagon, put my hound dog in the seat beside me and I started on down the road... and I just got over the rise of the road when

this big car barreled into my rear end. My mule was knocked to one side of the road, my dog to the other and I was pinned under the seat.

When the policeman came along, seen my mule had its leg broke, pulled out his pistol and shot him dead. He went over to my dog, seen it was hurt real bad, and shot it in the head."

"Then, he came over to me and asked, 'Well, how are you feeling?' and shore nuff, I said I never felt better in my whole life.'

So, you have this picture of a man going down from Jerusalem to Jericho, which is downhill, seventeen miles of rugged terrain. He is robbed, beaten, stripped. He's naked and unconscious by the side of the road.

You need to remember that people wore different things, spoke with different dialects and languages depending on what part of the country they came from, and what kind of activity they were involved in. But this man is unconscious, so he can't speak, and he's naked, so you can't see what his status in society is. He's just an unknown, beaten, broken, and bruised man, lying unconscious by the side of the road.

So as a result, when the priest comes by, he probably would have responded a little differently if the man had still been wearing his priestly garb. Or if he had been filthy rich then there might be some benefit involved in helping him. But he's just a broken, bleeding human being. He might not actually be alive or live long enough to pay him back. And besides that, the thugs might still be around to beat him up. So, the priest thinks, "Maybe what I ought to do is get out of here as fast as I can." So, this priest, and then a Levite, after him, both pass by on the other side.

Given the fact that these were religious men, it is not completely clear why they did what they did. Jesus does not tell us. Maybe they were too horrified by the sight of the man. He's not moving so he might be dead, which would make the priest and Levite unclean if they touched him. Perhaps they felt helpless doing what was needed. Maybe they were hurried over what they felt were more important matters.

***'But a Samaritan, as he traveled, came where the man was; and when he saw him, he took pity on him. 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. 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 expenses you may have.'***

It's the despised Samaritan who stops. He pours in oil and wine. They were often mingled together for medicinal purposes in those days. He puts him on his donkey. So that means he himself is walking now instead of riding. And then he arrives at an inn—which wasn't the Comfort Inn. The man pays for a week or two. But at this stage he doesn't know how long it's going to take for this man to recover, and he's got to get on his way. So, he says to the innkeeper, "If there are extra charges on the bill, I'll pay it." Now that's not just generous, it's also potentially saving this man from slavery.

The story Jesus told reveals 3 philosophies people have in life: displayed by the thieves, the priest and Levite, and by the Good Samaritan.

### **1. Thieves' attitude: LUST "What's yours is mine, and I'll take it if I can!"**

This attitude comes from **Covetousness** which leads to greed; and/or **Jealousy** and/or **Laziness** – Someone has said "too many people are itching for things they're not willing to scratch for!" And laziness leads to indifference.

The robber who takes money that does not belong to him is a thief. But you can be a thief in more ways than one. Let me give you a definition of a thief you may have never heard of before. God has given us both things and people. God has given us things to use, and God has given us people to love. And when you begin to love things and use people, you're robbing people of love.

If you are by nature a taker; that is, you take things that don't belong to you; or, you are a keeper; you don't share things that God has blessed you with; in other words, you are either a taker or a keeper, and not a giver.

Malachi 3:8 says, **“Will a mere mortal rob God? Yet you rob me. “But you ask, ‘How are we robbing you?’ “In tithes and offerings.”** [NIV] People weren’t taking from God but withholding from Him. God called it robbery.

**STORY:** I read about a little boy who opened the refrigerator and found the last piece of his mother's delicious chocolate cake. The only problem was it had his little brother's name on it. Well, he took it out, took off his brother's name, and began eating the cake as fast as he could. Just as the last tasty morsel went into his mouth, his mother walked into the kitchen and said, 'I cannot believe you would eat that whole piece of cake without thinking one time about your little brother.' He said, 'Oh, I was thinking about him the whole time I was eating. I kept worrying he would come in before I could finish it.'

You see, there's an attitude that says, 'I do what I want to do no matter how it affects other people,' and they look at others and say, 'What is yours is mine - I will take it.' They are controlled by lust of the eyes, lust of the flesh.

**2. Religious leaders’ attitude: LEGALISM “What’s mine is mine, and I’ll keep it if I can!”**

One tombstone inscription says: *“here lies a miser who lived for himself, and cared for nothing but gathering wealth, now where he is or how does he fare, nobody knows, and nobody cares!”*

Now the people that you thought would have stopped to help this man would have been the priest and the Levite, because they were religious. As a matter of fact, since they came from Jerusalem, it’s possible they had just left the temple. But their problem was they did not want to get involved.

You can be a thief in one or two ways. A thief can take something that does not belong to him or keep something that belongs to someone else. **Prov. 3:27 says, ‘Do not withhold good from those to whom it is due, when it is in the power of your hand to do so.’** (The Msg.)

**James 4:17 says, ‘If you know the right thing to do and don't do it, that for you is evil.’**(The Msg.)

They could have done something. They could have told the authorities there was a man that needed help. They could have gone and got a doctor. We even could say today they could have called 911. But they didn't do anything.

You might be like that little girl who was in a Sunday School class and the teacher was teaching about the Good Samaritan. He said, 'Now if you saw a person lying in a ditch, beaten up, lying in his own blood, his teeth knocked out and his scalp hanging from his head, what would you do?' A little girl spoke up and said, 'I think I would throw up.'

**STORY:** Dr. Joe Harding tells a story about a man who injured his thumb on the job. His foreman sent him to a clinic. He stepped into a room with only a desk and two chairs. In the back of the room were two doors, one marked "Illness" and the other "Injury." He went through the door marked "Injury" and found himself in a second room with only a desk and two chairs. At the back were two doors, one marked "Internal" and the other marked "External." Walking through the "External" door, he found himself in another room with one desk and two chairs. Again, there were two doors, marked "Therapy" and "Treatment." Through this fourth door was the same thing, two doors marked "Major" and "Minor." He walked through the door marked "Minor" and found himself back on the street. He returned to his job, and his foreman asked him if they were able to help. He responded, *'I'm not sure, but it was the best-organized clinic he had ever seen.'*

You see the problem with both the priest and the Levite is not what they did. They didn't beat the man up. They didn't rob him. The problem was what they did not do. Can I tell you the quickest way you can shut a church down; just do nothing.

*"Once upon a time, there were four people; their names were Everybody, Somebody, Nobody, and Anybody. Whenever there was an important job to be done, Everybody was sure that Somebody would do it. Anybody could have done it, but Nobody did it. So, consequently, Everybody blamed Somebody when Nobody did what Anybody could have done in the first place."*

Now these are the people who don't say **"I do what I want to do."** These are the people who say, **"I will only do what I must do."**

***Thieves' mindset: what's yours is mine...***

***Religious leaders: what's mine is mine...***

### **3. Good Samaritan's attitude: LOVE "What's mine is yours, and I'll give it to you if you need it!"**

A Good Samaritan can be defined as, **"one ready and generous in helping those in distress."**

**"But a certain Samaritan, as he journeyed, came where he was. And when he saw him, he had compassion on him."** (v.33) When Jesus brought the Samaritan into the story you could have heard people gasping.

The Samaritans were Jews who after Israel had been defeated by the Babylonians, stayed behind and intermarried with the Assyrians who were an abomination in the sight of the Jews. They even built their own temple on Mt. Gerizim and refused to worship in Jerusalem.

If you really wanted to insult a person 2,000 years ago, all you had to do would be to call him a Samaritan. That's why the Pharisee said to Jesus in John 8:48, **"Do we not say rightly that you are a Samaritan and have a demon?"**

Every morning in his daily prayer a Pharisee would go to the temple and out loud thank God he had not been born a woman, a Gentile, or a Samaritan. Yet, Jesus makes the Samaritan the hero of the story.

Now the reason He does this is to teach a lesson that the crowd that day, and maybe the crowd this day, never thought Jesus would teach. I am convinced not everybody understands the real meaning of this story.

Jesus told this story to illustrate to the lawyer and to all who were listening that he had asked the wrong question. The question should not be **'Who is my neighbor?'** The real question is: **"Am I a good neighbor?"**

I mean you put yourself in this story. Who would you have been that day - the thief, the priest, the Levite, or the Good Samaritan?

You see, everyone is your neighbor, not just the person next door. A neighbor is 'someone in need.' Every time you see a person in need you immediately become a neighbor; you become a minister with a ministry.

The last three words of verse 33 tells us what set this Samaritan apart - **he had compassion.** You see **what made this Samaritan so special was not the color of his skin, but the compassion in his heart.** No law could make the priest or the Levite stop, but love made the Samaritan stop.

Notice what the Samaritan did for this man: **"...and went to him and bandaged his wounds, pouring on oil and wine; and he set him on his own animal, brought him to an inn, and took care of him. On the next day, when he departed, he took out two denarii, gave them to the innkeeper, and said to him, 'Take care of him; and whatever more you spend, when I come again, I will repay you.'"** (vv. 34-35)

Then Jesus really hit a nerve when He said, **"So which of these three do you think was neighbor to him who fell among the thieves?"** (v.36) I'm sure the answer almost gagged the lawyer. **"And he said, 'He who showed mercy on him.' Then Jesus said to him, 'Go and do likewise.'"** (v.37)

**CONCLUSION:** It is when we experience God's love for us that we can respond with our love for Him, AND FOR OTHERS. Our ability to love God stems from our first receiving His love for us. The Bible says, "We love Him because He first loved us."

Apostle John said, **"In this is love, not that we loved God, but that He loved us and sent His Son to be the propitiation for our sins."**

When we love him with all our soul, all our mind, and all our heart, then we will begin to love him with all our strength. And that's where the story comes in. To love God with all our strength, as Jesus explained to this young man, means that you will love your neighbor as much as you love yourself.

**When you reduce compassion to its primal essence, what you have is LOVE.**

Sometimes we think we can measure the love we have for God by the feeling we have as we pray or sing in church. But Jesus says, "I want you to show your love by getting off your evangelical donkey and help the man in the ditch."

**God is with you, God is for you, God is in you, and God desires to work through you.**

1. Loving your neighbor requires paying attention to those around you
2. Loving your neighbor requires passionate affection
3. Loving your neighbor requires passionate action

**The price Christians pay is this: You'll always spend more than you make.** Love always leaves us in the red.

Living in the red spiritually means; we give more than others give back to us, we serve more than we have been served, we love more than we have been loved, we care for others more than we have been cared for...it means we are spending ourselves for Christ like there is no limit on our spending. And it's ok because we get an unlimited supply from Jesus.

In Luke chapter 6:32-35, Jesus said, ***'If you love those who love you, what credit is that to you? For even sinners love those who love them. And if you do good to those who do good to you, what credit is that to you? For even sinners do the same. And if you lend to those from whom you hope to receive back, what credit is that to you? For even sinners lend to sinners to receive as much back. But love your enemies, do good, and lend, hoping for nothing in return; and your reward will be great, and you will be sons of the Most High.'***

**When a person is whole, he or she does not see love as a limited resource; he or she sees love as limitless. We were created by God to be givers of love.**

The parable of "**The Good Samaritan**", challenges us to a higher standard of love. Higher in that the definition of "neighbor" is more inclusive. Higher in that the definition of "compassion" is greater.

#### **THE COST OF PASSIONATE COMPASSION...**

- 1. A willingness to cross social barriers**
- 2. A willingness to take risks**
- 3. A willingness to set aside your schedule**
- 4. A willingness to make sacrifices**

**Your neighbor may be unknown.**

**Your neighbor may be unfriendly.  
Your neighbor may be unlovely.  
Your neighbor may be unthankful.**

The critical questions for us as Christians are:

**Will I be a person of passion and compassion?**

**Will I be ruled by a sense of love or by a sense of limits?**

So let me ask you a question. Are you a good neighbor? I'm not asking if you work for State Farm Insurance, but rather do you see yourself as a minister with a ministry?

Jesus is not telling a moralistic tale here. He is telling us about the heart of God and his own mission. Jesus is the Eternal Good Samaritan. He stopped to attend to the needs of a bleeding world that snubbed their noses at him. God could have rightfully set a limit on how much he would do for us. But Jesus showed us that the law of love is larger than the law of limits.

God did an amazing thing: He crossed the vast gulf between eternity and time. He crossed the vast road between holiness and humanity. He did not stand at the edge of the ditch, horrified, helpless, hurried, or hard-hearted. He jumped down onto the ditch and offered us love without limits. The Jericho Road Jesus describes in the parable is the way of the Cross.

The ditch from Jerusalem to Jericho is a long one, and there are a lot of people in it. Can you see the spouse, the child, the friend, the relative, the coworker, or the stranger in pain? Can you hear their groans? pain is so horrible that we've often learned to close our ears to it. We feel so helpless sometimes that we can't imagine how we could ever act. We are in such a hurry, and our hearts have grown so hard. It's natural for us to simply "pass by on the other side." But the love God has placed in our hearts overcomes limits.