

The Good Life

Luke 10:25-37
Karl Road Baptist Church
8/2/2015

Intro:

How can I find happiness is one of life's most persistent questions.
What is the secret to a rich, full, satisfying life?

Some ancient philosophers said that happiness is found in denying yourself pleasure.
Others said the answer is indulging in every kind of pleasure.

Some think they'll be happy by being married to that person instead of this person.
Or having that job instead of the job they have...
Or living in that house instead of the house they're in...
Or looking younger...or being thinner...
Or having an unlimited amount of money...
Or living in San Diego where the weather is perfect all the time

Some think they'll find happiness in having a religious experience.

But we all know the routine. After the momentary pleasure fades, we're no happier than we were before. Happiness is always just out of reach...like the proverbial carrot.
Which raises the question--is happiness possible?

One day a man asked Jesus this very question. There's irony in this story because Luke described him as an expert in the Scripture. But even though he knew the Hebrew Bible from cover to cover, he didn't grasp its core message.

So Jesus gave him an answer that he probably didn't expect.

Turn to Luke 10: 25-37—READ.

Pray

There are 2 Greek words for life.

Bios = physical life...biology comes from this word

Zoe = quality of life...the abundant, satisfying life that comes from God

The man asked What must I do to inherit **eternal life**...zoe..How can I experience an abundant life?

Jesus responded later in the passage, Do this and **you will live**..experience zoe.

Jesus used the same word zoe in John 10:10, *I have come that they may have life—zoe—and have it to the full.* NLT *My purpose is to give them a rich and satisfying life.*

Zoe is the opposite of *death*. Death in the Bible refers to physical death, but it also can refer to the lifestyle that is hollow, empty of meaning, and progressively destructive to the person and to others.

For instance...Proverbs 14:12 says *there is a way—a lifestyle—that seems right to a man, but in the end it leads to death*—it's hollow, meaningless and progressively destructive.

The way of death and the way of life are set side by side throughout the Bible.

The expert wanted to know, what must I do to experience the abundant life?

He was religious, but there was something missing—he knew the Scriptures inside out, but that knowledge alone wasn't enough. He was living (*bios*), but he wasn't truly alive (*zoe*).

Maybe this describes you this morning. You've been in the church for years, you study the Bible and know your verses...but there's something missing. Maybe you're asking how can I experience a richer, more satisfying life?

Jesus responded to this man's question with a question...What's written in the law? What's the essential message of the Bible?

The man quoted Deuteronomy 6:5, *Love the Lord your God with all your heart, soul, strength and mind. And love your neighbor as yourself.*

Jesus said that's right. *Do this and you will live.*

This Bible expert felt a twinge of conviction.

Maybe he was self-centered and lived for himself.

So he asked, *Who is my neighbor?*

How many neighbors do I have to have—what's the cut-off point?

We all wrestle with this. Our love has limits.

Jesus answered by telling a story about four men...

This is one of the most familiar stories in the Bible.

It's the story about a man who was on the road from Jerusalem down to Jericho.

It was a dangerous trip—robbers routinely attacked people on that road. It would be like many inner city streets after dark.

Sure enough...the man was attacked, robbed, stripped of his clothes, beaten and left for dead.

Along came a priest. He saw the man lying there, but he walked to the other side of the road and passed right by.

This isn't what the listeners expected. The priest offers sacrifices in the temple. Surely he understood grace ...surely he would show kindness to this fellow human.

Another traveler came upon this dying man. This time it's a Levite. Levites worked in the temple. They kept the place running. They assisted in the sacrifices...they were the worship leaders...they sang in the choirs. Surely someone who was this involved in religious work would stop and help this man.

But...just like the priest, the Levite walked by and left the man there to die.

Some time passes, and another traveler comes on the scene. This time it's a Samaritan. Blue-blood Jews had great contempt for Samaritans. Samaritans were Jews who had intermarried with pagans.

And Samaritans didn't worship God at the temple in Jerusalem—they set up their own holy place in Samaria. They had watered-down bloodlines and a watered-down faith.

A Samaritan came along. But when he saw the dying man..

Luke says he took pity on him. His heart went out to him/ he cared.

V. 34 says he went to him...note the contrast with the 2 other men who walked around him.

He soothed the man's open wounds with oil...poured wine on them to prevent infection... and bandaged him up.

It was going to take days for this man to recover, so the Samaritan put him on his own donkey—note the emphasis, *his own* donkey...

And took him to an inn where he continued to care for him.

The next day the Samaritan had to leave, so he gave the innkeeper enough \$ to cover any additional expenses. 2 silver coins would have paid for a room for up to 2 months.

The Samaritan showed extravagant love towards a man he had no connection with, except that they traveled on the same dangerous road.

This isn't how the story was supposed to go—this the wrong hero.

The Samaritan didn't have the right bloodline or the right theology...but he had the heart of a good neighbor.

The priest and Levite missed the point—the way to life isn't through religious observance or duty...it's through loving others.

The Samaritan bears a striking resemblance to Jesus. Jesus knew that the human race was in a desperate condition—beaten and bruised by a sinful, fallen world...no hope for recovery...left for dead.

So he came to us.

He took pity on us.

He was willing to pay whatever it took—no cost was too great.
...Including his life.

He carried us to a place of refuge, the church, to care for us until we are fully restored.
And he gave the church all the resources it would need to finish the job.

He loved us sacrificially.

Jesus is the Good Samaritan.
His generosity is *extravagant* and has *no limits*.

When he finished, Jesus answered the man's question by asking him a final question.
Which of these three do you think was a neighbor?

Note the distinction...

The man wanted to know who his neighbor *was*.

Jesus asked him who *is* the neighbor?

The man wanted to know what are the limits of love—who do I have to love, and who don't I have to love?

Jesus reframed the discussion. It's not *who* is your neighbor...it's *are* you a neighbor?

If you're acting like a neighbor there is no limit to the people you'll love.

Jesus asked which was a neighbor?

The man replied, "The one who had mercy on him."

Literally, "the one doing the mercy..."

Mercy isn't just a feeling...mercy is a doing.

Romans 12:9 says *Don't just pretend to love others. Really love them.*

How do I experience an abundant, satisfying life?

Jesus said...Go and do mercy.

The way of *life* is to be a neighbor...to give yourself to others.

The way of *death* is to live for yourself.

Jesus said in Matthew 10:39, *whoever finds (or holds onto) his life will lose it, and whoever loses his life for my sake will find it.*

In Luke 6:38 Jesus said, *Give and it will be given to you. A good measure, pressed down, shaken together and running over, will be poured into your lap. For with them measure you use it will be measured to you.*

The more we give, the more God pours onto our lives.

The more we *give*...the more we *live*.

A study was done on the super wealthy—billionaires and up. The study found that across the board, these very wealthy people were not happy...with one exception.

The ones who gave their wealth to worthwhile causes—they experienced happiness.

In those moments they experienced zoe.

There are several takeaways we can draw from this story...

1. Good neighbors don't just feel for hurting people, they **do something** for them.

They don't look past hurting people, they **initiate** love.

Jesus didn't say, Go and feel likewise. He said, Go and do likewise.

Biblical justice is very simple...if someone is in need of a resource that I have, Justice takes some of what I have and shares it.

2. Good neighbors are good neighbors to people **they don't know**—the checkout clerk...the person who delivers your mail...the janitor at your fitness club.

An extreme example was the spectators at the Boston bombing who saved the lives of total strangers who were literally bleeding to death.

3. Good neighbors don't always play it safe, sometimes they **take risks**. Sometimes they expose themselves to danger.

My wife's brother in law has a pastoral ministry to missionaries who are serving in some of the most dangerous places in the world. He sent us this email on Friday...

One of his assignments is to speak to missionary candidates on the theme of suffering. As part of his preparation, he interviewed 40 of his friends who are serving or who have served in places to which the candidates will hopefully be going. Every single one of those who wrote about their sufferings, said they would do it all again and they recommended missionary life to all who are called to it!

He said, *The Lord himself is sustaining every one of His servants and giving them a joy and an energy that enables them to continue in their calling.*

Good neighbors are willing to move out of their comfort zones and take risks.

4. Good neighbors don't get overwhelmed, **they are led**. Jesus said that he did only what he saw His Father doing...which meant that he didn't minister to everyone. He went to some places but not others. Good neighbors know who God assigns them to.

They don't get compassion fatigue because they only go where God wants them to go...and they draw on **God's resources**. Where God guides, God provides.

Samaritan already had a makeshift emergency kit; he had a donkey; some extra \$.
Most of all, Jesus fills us with inexhaustible love for the people he calls us to serve.

Conclusion:

Jesus wants to write this parable again today.
He wants us to be neighbors.
He wants His people to do mercy.
He wants us to do the unexpected thing.

He wants to surprise people who don't expect other people to care about them.
When we do, we experience life...the rich, full, satisfying, abundant life that Jesus promised.

This is zoe. This is the abundant life.

Jesus said, Go and do likewise.

One of the ways you can be a good neighbor is to tutor a young child in reading.

The ability to read is a gift that most of us received from our parents and other members of our family.

Many children in central Ohio haven't yet received this gift.

Between 25 and 50% of central Ohio second and third graders aren't reading at grade level.

Not ready to read when enter kindergarten...fall farther behind...

Your church has a proven track record in tutoring...and this fall you will be partnering with the Columbus Tutoring Initiative to bring a tutoring program to Valley Forge Elementary School...not far from here.

Volunteers like you will work with an assigned student over the school's lunch hour from October to April. You will teach your student simple strategies that will improve their reading skills.

Investment of 30-40 minutes...will make a huge difference in the life of a young child.

On average our students improve 1.2 grade levels in reading during the course of the year.

But we impact them in other ways, too.

Life happens to these children during the course of the year—
a father loses his job,

a mother becomes ill,
a grandparent dies,
there is domestic violence in some families
When something like this happens, the tutor is there for the child to talk to.
The motto of the CTI is *touch a life, be changed for life*.

Tutoring will change the tutors, too. Many of our tutors say that spending time with their student is a high point of their week.

They are doing Jesus' love...they are experiencing zoe—the abundant life.

This fall we will have programs in 24 schools and five school districts in central Ohio. More than 300 volunteers will be serving more than 300 students.

If you think that God might be calling you to serve in this ministry, your church has applications and I'll be in the foyer after the service.

VIDEO