

FOR ME TO LIVE IS CHRIST – DAILY RELATIONSHIPS

Cross of Glory Evangelical Lutheran Church

Be an Inside Out Christian

Luke 10:25-37

²⁵ On one occasion an expert in the law stood up to test Jesus. "Teacher," he asked, "what must I do to inherit eternal life?" ²⁶ "What is written in the Law?" he replied. "How do you read it?" ²⁷ 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.'" ²⁸ "You have answered correctly," Jesus replied. "Do this and you will live." ²⁹ But he wanted to justify himself, so he asked Jesus, "And who is my neighbor?" ³⁰ 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. ³¹ A priest happened to be going down the same road, and when he saw the man, he passed by on the other side. ³² So too, a Levite, when he came to the place and saw him, passed by on the other side. ³³ But a Samaritan, as he traveled, came where the man was; and when he saw him, he took pity on him. ³⁴ 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. ³⁵ 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 expense you may have.'" ³⁶ "Which of these three do you think was a neighbor to the man who fell into the hands of robbers?" ³⁷ The expert in the law replied, "The one who had mercy on him." Jesus told him, "Go and do likewise."

Last week we looked at how we are able to live out our Christian calling in the area of our daily tasks. We can't stop there, however. Life is about more than just what you do throughout the day. In fact, if you focus completely on the work you need to get done, you might actually miss the bigger point: life is really about the people around you. Think of it: how many people do you see each day of your life? There are the ones you see in your house first thing in the morning. There are the ones you see as you walk up and down your street. There are the ones you see at your place of employment. There are the ones you see at church when you come to worship or Bible study. There are the ones you see while shopping for groceries. Your relationship with each of these people is different, but your calling from God toward them is actually the same. This morning, we are going to look at how God calls us to handle all the relationships in our life by using the phrase: be an inside out Christian.

Our investigation begins with a question asked of Jesus by an expert in the law. It was a question that was on the mind of many religious scholars at the time of Jesus. This lawyer wanted to know just what it meant to be a follower of Jesus. What exactly were the expectations? Ultimately, he wanted to "*justify himself*." He wanted to be able to leave Jesus thinking that he was doing enough. He wanted to think that he was an inside out true believer. But Jesus' answer made him realize that this was not the case.

The story of the Good Samaritan cut right to the heart of the lawyer's hypocrisy. Jesus immediately made it clear that what he expected of his followers was more than outward show or lip service. This call to service could easily be illustrated by how different men reacted to a person in need. The priest and the Levite in the story quickly showed that they felt they had no calling to help out this man in his trouble. Both of these men were active in serving the Lord. They performed their duties at the temple. The priest offered sacrifices and prayers. The Levite helped out in an auxiliary role. But at the end of the day, there was something missing. When they had the opportunity to serve the Lord by showing

compassion to the man lying on the side of the road, they walked right by. You can imagine them arriving back at their homes in Jericho and their friends and family being so impressed by the fact that they spend so much time in Jerusalem, serving the Lord. But deep, down inside they had to know that they were a failure when it came to being an inside out believer.

Their actions stand in stark contrast to those of the Samaritan. It is easy to see why Jesus used a Samaritan as an example in his story. These were the people that were so often looked down upon. They were seen as a lesser race because they were a result of intermarriage between the Israelites, who were left behind during the time of the exile, and the foreigners with whom they lived. Well-respected Jews would not even be caught speaking with one of these lowly half-breeds. And yet the actions of this Samaritan put the priest and the Levite to shame. Each detail Jesus gives impresses us even more. Not only did the Samaritan have pity on the man lying on the side of the road, he went the extra mile in making sure he was taken care of. He gave his time, his ability and, perhaps most amazingly, his money to help out this complete stranger. This man showed what it meant to be a neighbor in the way the Lord expects of his people.

As you look at this story, you are forced to ask yourself—what kind of a neighbor am I? I'm not just talking about how well you look at for the people living next door to you. What kind of a neighbor are you to all the people you come into contact with day after day? Sadly, all too often, I believe we play the part of the priest or the Levite. We may be good neighbors to some—the ones we like. We value some relationships to the point that we might go out of our way to help a person. But we act hypocritically when it comes to helping and serving others.

We do this in the times when no one else is looking—the times when helping someone out means sacrificing. How willing would you be to take a day out of your vacation to help out someone in the way the Samaritan did? How easy would it be for you to open up your pocketbook to give to someone in need, expecting nothing in return? I can think of more than one time in my life when I thought to myself, "I should probably stop and see if that person needs help." And then I give myself numerous excuses to justify my passing by. And I'm not only speaking of stopping to help someone who is stranded on the side of the road. There are numerous opportunities that arise for each of us to go the extra mile the way that Samaritan did. That is exactly what God asks of us: seeking opportunities to help, not expecting anything in return, stepping outside of your comfort zone to help someone you normally wouldn't associate with. And how many times have we failed at doing just that? We come to the same conclusion that that expert of the law must have come to: I haven't lived up to God's expectations in loving my neighbor. I can't justify my actions. I am a sinner.

And that is where our Gospel reading for the day ends. The expert in the law was left with a call to repentance. He had not lived up to God's standard in his life. He could see that clearly by the way his actions compared to those of the Good Samaritan. But where did he go from there? Did he begin to follow Jesus and learn more from him about the way to find eternal life? Did he persist in his rejection of the gospel and harden his heart? We don't know. The Bible doesn't tell the end of that man's story. And that is not the main point of the story. The point of this story is for us to examine our own hearts and see that we have fallen short of God's holy law. This recognition is the key to understanding exactly what it means to be an inside out Christian. We realize that it is not something we can do on our own. We know that the perfect love God demands cannot be found in our sin-corrupted hearts.

It must be found elsewhere. It must be found in the love of our Savior Jesus Christ. Think of how Jesus exemplified the kind of love that God demands in his Word. Jesus always showed compassion on those who were in need of help. He never shied away from sacrificing his time or effort to heal and to serve. In the end, he sacrificed his own life. And for whom? For sinners, like you and me. And here is the

best part of the story: because of Jesus' life and death, we do not need to justify ourselves and be concerned about whether we have done enough to earn eternal life. It has been earned for us. The perfect life of Jesus is credited to our account. We have forgiveness of sins. We have peace inside.

That is where being an inside out Christian begins. It means seeing the beauty of what we have inside. We have a sinful heart that has been washed clean by Jesus' blood. This body that used to be a home for only our sinful nature is now a temple where God's Holy Spirit dwells. You have God's Spirit inside you. Your sinful nature wants you to forget that. Your sinful nature wants you only to see the corruption inside you. That is why you need to daily remind yourself of the spirit God has placed in you—the new creation. It is a spirit which you strengthen as you seek God in his Word, as you come to the altar and receive his forgiveness in the Holy Meal. The more that spirit inside you is refreshed, renewed and strengthened by God's grace, the more changes you will begin to see on the outside, as well.

That's what being an inside out Christian is all about. Living on the outside the faith that God has placed on the inside. Paul saw this happening in the congregation at Colosse. In his letter to Colossians, Paul wrote, *"We have heard of your faith in Christ Jesus and of the love you have for all the saints-- the faith and love that spring from the hope that is stored up for you in heaven and that you have already heard about in the word of truth, the gospel that has come to you."* That is how it works. The gospel comes to you. It plants hope in your heart. It shows itself in acts of faith and love. These are not actions that you do because you want others to look at you and praise you for being such a good person. These are actions you do because you are filled with a spirit of thanksgiving and the spirit wants to find a way to express itself.

Because of what God has done for you, you can look at a section of Scripture like today's Gospel in a whole new light. The story of the Good Samaritan not only points out our sins in the area of showing compassion, but it also speaks to our new selves and shows us an excellent way to express our gratitude for Christ's forgiveness. In the days and weeks to come, look for opportunities to show compassion to the needy, to go the extra mile for a friend or family member, to do some helpful with no expectation of repayment. These are all excellent ways for your faith to shine as you enjoy living the life of an inside out Christian. **Amen.**

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