

Upside-Down Kingdom (1): Who Is My Neighbor?

(Luke 10:25-37)

I. Introduction

- A. Sunday night I shared the put-down taught us in Sunday School (**Job 12:2**)
1. The teacher shared us one more great Bible insult, this from **Acts 17:5**
 - a. “*Lewd fellows of the baser sort.*” Perfect, no one knows what it means!
 - b. Best in the KJV. “*Wicked men from the market*” (NAS) hasn’t same ring!
 2. There is another great KJV expression in the same text I want to use
 - a. They said Paul and Silas, “*have turned the world upside down*” (**17:6**)
 - b. Gospel message changed people and challenged the world’s system
 3. *Is that gospel today?* Or have we domesticated it to fit within our world?
- B. Jesus is King of a radically different upside-down kingdom (**Matt 20:25-27**)
1. Kingdoms of the world are about power; they impose their will on others
 - a. Word’s version of the **Golden Rule**: *He who has the gold, makes rules*
 - b. Politicians want to serve world; there is something subversive in power
 - c. It’s not just that leaders are sometimes flawed—world’s system is flawed
 2. Kingdom of God is radically different; greatness is turned upside-down
 - a. In God’s kingdom, the first become the last; the leader becomes servant
 - b. That is way of the kingdom because it is the way of King (**Matt 25:28**)
 3. The kingdom of God is totally upside-down compared to kingdom of man
- C. Jesus had an upside-down way of teaching about this upside-down kingdom
1. He didn’t lecture on systematic theology or preach tightly-woven sermons
 - a. No, Jesus told stories based in everyday facts told in straightforward way
 - b. In a sense, these parables both revealed and concealed truth (**Luke 8:10**)
 2. Many parables begin with the expression, “*The kingdom of God is like...*”
 - a. The word “*kingdom*” refers to the domain or rule of God in our lives
 - 1) Kingdom can refer to church or heaven, but not in these parables
 - 2) “*Kingdom of God*” is what happens when God rules over us.
 - b. These parables will describe God’s rule being lived out in our lives.
 3. Sermon and small group series will focus on kingdom parables from Luke

II. Who Is My Neighbor: The Parable of Good Samaritan

- A. The best known of Jesus' parable was to smart aleck lawyer ([Luke 10:25](#))
1. Lawyer is an “*expert in the law*” (νομικός, “*pertaining to law*”). Scholar
 - a. He comes “*to test Jesus.*” Can mean **tempt** (*trick*) or **examine** (*pop quiz*);
 - b. Either he wants to trap Jesus in **bad answer** or see if he knows **right one**
 - c. So either way, the lawyer thinks that he **already knows** the right answer!
 2. Jesus answers his question with a question, “*What do you think...*” ([10:26](#))
 - a. Woody Allen asked rabbi, “*Why do rabbis answer question w/ question*”
 - b. Rabbi paused, “*So why shouldn't a rabbi answer a question w/ question?*”
 3. As it turns out, the scribe really **does** know the right answer ([Luke 10:27](#))
 - a. Same answer Jesus gives when asked greatest command ([Matt 22:37-39](#))
 - b. The lawyer answers his own question, so Jesus makes application ([10:28](#))
 - c. Answer makes the lawyer looks silly, so he tries to justify himself ([29](#))
- B. The parable of Good Samaritan answers this second question ([Lk 10:30-37](#))
1. **Story:** Man travels from Jerusalem to Jericho and is attacked by robbers
 - a. This is a well-traveled road, so it isn't long until “help” comes by
 - 1) The first two are religious leaders who “*pass by on other side*”
 - 2) Priest and Levite would have known [Lev 19:18](#)— the lawyer's text
 - b. They did not follow that text. There could have been REASONS
 - 1) Maybe they were afraid for their own safety—*could be a trick!*
 - 2) Maybe they were rushing to get to the Temple in time for church!
 - 3) Maybe they were afraid of being sued (*story was told to a lawyer!*)
 - c. The reason really isn't important— the point is that they didn't act
 2. Samaritan would have been the last person audience would expect as hero.
 - a. Samaritans were the mixed-breed left after the exile— seen as unclean
 - b. Samaritans only accepted first 5 books and did not follow traditions.
 - c. Besides, Samaritans and Jews were at war before Rome blew whistle!
 3. **Point:** Goodness is not based on ethnicity or religiosity, but following God
 - a. Showing compassion and love is not to be reserved only for those like us
 - b. When Jesus tells Jewish lawyer, “*Do likewise,*” it is “*Be like Samaritan!*”

III. Who Is My Neighbor: The Two-Fold Application

- A. The kingdom of God turns upside-down the world's concept of community.
 - 1. We often use "*community*" to define a rather narrow shared life experience.
 - a. Community may be the locality where you live— "*the neighborhood.*"
 - b. Community may refer to those who share a cultural or ethnic background
 - 1) We speak of (African-Irish-Italian-Chinese)-American community.
 - 2) I heard someone once refer to Native-American-Americans!
 - c. Community may be other shared life experience—*disabled community.*
 - 2. This use of word "*community*" ultimately serves to **highlight differences.**
 - a. Some are **inside** the community and therefore some are **outside** of it.
 - b. This version of community serves to be exclusive, not inclusive
 - c. Sometimes the geopolitical term that is used for this is "*Balkanization.*"
 - 1) Balkans states split from USSR, and they continued to fracture.
 - 2) Community can fracture into smaller and smaller special-interests.
 - 3. The more communities there are, the less community there really is!
- B. NT world was sharply divided into a Jewish, Samaritan and Gentile community
 - 1. Jews proved their righteousness by avoiding Gentile and Samaritans.
 - a. A Jewish prayer thanks God they weren't "*Gentile or Samaritan dog.*"
 - b. Remember how Peter begins his first sermon to a Gentile (**Acts 10:28**)
 - c. Social, ethnic, religious differences made all the difference in the world.
 - 2. But Jesus takes the idea of "*community*" and turns it upside-down.
 - a. Samaritan, not Priest and Levite, shared true community with injured Jew.
 - b. One man's compassion met another man's need; the result is community.
 - c. You could not get more ethnically diverse than these two men.
 - 1) Would they **speak** if met on street? Would they **be** on same street?
 - 2) But differences were swept away in Jesus' upside-down kingdom.
 - 3. Ultimately the gospel is about community forged on cross (**Eph 2:14-16**)
 - a. The gospel is about reconciliation—us and God and us and each other.
 - b. The closer we are brought to God, the closer we get to each other.
 - c. This parable calls to an upside-down community all people are neighbors.

- C. So who is my neighbor? What is the true community to which Jesus calls us?
1. For Christ-followers, it is a community that transcends external or temporal
 - a. Ultimately, the Samaritan did not see a Jew— he saw a man in need
 - b. He was a neighbor because he saw the Jew with compassion... and acted
 - c. There's an old episode of MASH that is a modern retelling of the parable
 - 1) Wounded North Korean is brought in; Frank Burns refuses to operate
 - 2) **Hawkeye**: *"I'll treat him for 2 reasons; he's sick and I'm a doctor!"*
 2. Who is my neighbor? Jesus points to a pretty big block here, doesn't he?
 - a. He calls us to recognize within every person the image of God.
 - b. That's not just a change in thinking— it changes how we treat people
 - 1) It means we don't people poorly because they are poor (**Jam 2:1-4**).
 - 2) It means we don't just associate with people like us (**Gal 2:12-13**).
 - c. God's upside-down kingdom completely changes how we view people.

IV. Conclusion

- A. I said earlier that there are two applications here—we've mentioned only one
1. Original question the lawyer asked, *"What must I do to inherit eternal life"*
 2. His second question is asked because *"he wanted to justify himself"*
 - a. Word "justify" is same as "justified freely by his grace" (**Rom 3:24**)
 - b. Same as "since we have been justified through faith" (**Rom 5:1**)
 3. Both questions that lead to this parable are questions of salvation!
- B. So then, does the Parable of Good Samaritan then relate to our salvation?
1. That **was** the 1st question! It **was also** the concern behind the 2nd question.
 - a. Parable isn't just about man's good works; it's about God's salvation
 - b. Samaritan does what the lawyer only quotes—loved neighbor as himself
 2. Salvation isn't found in **identity** (*lawyer*) but in **obedience** (Samaritan)
 - a. Yes, we are saved by grace through faith, but saved for good works
 - b. Kingdoms of earth are about boundaries and taking care of our own
 - c. The upside-down kingdom of God is about compassion and community
 3. This parable calls us to love out that upside-down view of kingdom of God