

“The Samaritan and the Clergymen”

Luke 10:25-37

Elaine and I have been watching the NHK morning drama called 「舞、上がれ」。The main character is a girl who is about to become a pilot, but then because of the market crash of 2008, she ends up deferring that in order to help at her father's bolt-making company. Her father faced with the potential failure of this company suddenly dies of a heart-attack. Mai and her mother take over the leadership of the company. Mai begins to try and get more business and work for the company, but she realizes that in order to promote her company, she needs to know more about the product they are making. So she has one of the company's long-time employees teach her how the bolts are made.

I feel like that is what we need with the gospel, not a study of bolts, but a study of the gospel. Therefore this series: A Better Way, Living in the Gospel is exactly what we need. We need to study and understand again what the gospel is, why it is the gospel (good news) and the value of the gospel in order to market it, or proclaim it.

There are things in this world and in our own hearts that hinder us from receiving God's grace. Many of them are good, useful, and even moral things, but they separate us from God, harm our relationships with others, and rob us of true joy. Throughout the Gospel of Luke, we can see pairs that show Gospel grace and Gospel hindrances. As we compare them, let's discover more about what the Gospel is and how to live a Gospel-centered life.

In today's Scripture, we have an expert in religious law who stood up to test Jesus. Verse 25, "And behold, a lawyer stood up to put him to the test, saying, 'Teacher what shall I do to inherit eternal life?'"

Great question, but there was a problem. This man thought he already knew the answer.

Jesus knew that this man already knew the answer. so he doesn't answer the question but asks this man to answer it himself (26). "What does the law of Moses say? How do you read it?" The expert in religious law answered in verse 27, "You shall 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 your neighbor as yourself."

Jesus said in verse 28, "You have answered correctly; do this, and you will live."

This lawyer, this clergyman had all the right answers. However, he was mistaken in what the law was given for.

Tim Keller says that the law was given so that we may have a relationship with God and with each other. We see that in the Ten Commandments. Exodus 20:3, "You shall have

no other gods before me." Put God first. Exodus 20:8, "Remember the Sabbath day, to keep it holy." Have a proper perspective of God and work. Exodus 20:12, "Honor your father and mother, . . ." 20:12, "Do not murder." 20:15, "Do not steal." The purpose of the law was for us to be God's people and to live together in peace.

So therefore, Jesus' reply to him was not: "You know the answer, so you'll be okay. Jesus' answer was: "You have answered correctly; do this, and you will live." Knowledge alone is not enough to gain eternal life. It must be applied to life.

Well then, the man asked a second question in verse 29, "But he, desiring to justify himself, said to Jesus, 'And who is my neighbor?'" This is another great question, but again his motive is to make himself look good. However, if he was honest, he would have to admit that there was no way he could love God that way and everyone around him. In Greek "neighbor" means "someone who is near", and in Hebrew it means "someone you have an association with." So this lawyer may have interpreted it to mean that if he loved fellow Jews, then he was okay. His tendency was to choose the neighbor he would love.

So, Jesus told a parable to correct this clergyman's understanding. Verse 30: "A man was going down from Jerusalem to Jericho, and he fell among robbers, who stripped him and beat him and departed, leaving him half dead."

In those days, that road was treacherously winding and was a favorite hideout of robbers and thieves.

Verse 31: "Now by chance a priest was going down that road, and when he saw him he passed by on the other side."

You would think that a priest would stop and help this man, but he didn't. Why not? Well, Jesus doesn't say that. He just says he passed by on the other side. In Jewish culture it was considered defiling to touch a dead body.

Verse 32: "So likewise a Levite, when he came to the place and saw him, passed by on the other side."

Verses 33-35, "But a Samaritan, as he journeyed, came to where he was, and when he saw him, he had compassion. He went to him and bound up his wounds, pouring on oil and wine. Then he set him on his own animal and brought him to an inn and took care of him. And the next day he took out two denarii and gave them to the innkeeper, saying, 'Take care of him, and whatever more you spend, I will repay you when I come back.'"

To read this is moving. That's because this is the gospel. The person who helped this man who was half-dead was a despised Samaritan. They were the ones who were considered half-breeds, a mixed race, those who had married into the Jewish tribe.

Why did the Samaritan have compassion and help this man? The reason is not given. But I can imagine that he himself had been helped in a similar way by someone.

In our Community Group Leader's meeting last Sunday, we had this discussion question. It comes out of Edward Welch's book, Caring for One Another, Lesson 5: "Be Personal and Pray." The question was: When have you been blessed by the personal responses of others? In other words, when has someone encouraged you by really listening to and hearing you?

A lot of answers were given. One answer was: "When I realized that I couldn't make it in my own strength, there was someone who came alongside and prayed for me. What encouraged me was that I was being prayed for."

Jesus said to the expert in the law in verse 36, "Which of these three, do you think, proved to be a neighbor to the man who fell among the robbers?" Verse 37, "He said, 'The one who showed him mercy.' And Jesus said to him, 'You go, and do likewise.'"

The gospel is the olive oil, the wine, the bandages, the donkey, the inn, the money. The man attacked by robbers did nothing to receive it. He just received it. This is the gospel. When we were utterly helpless, Jesus had compassion on us, loved us and went to the cross for us.

The apostle Paul says in Philippians 2:1,2, "So if there is any encouragement in Christ, any comfort from love, any participation in the Spirit, any affection and sympathy, complete my joy by being of the same mind, having the same love, being in full accord and of one mind."

In Jesus Christ, we have the gospel. We have encouragement, the comfort of his love, the same Holy Spirit, affection and compassion. In Jesus, we can change to love God and each other. The law does not have that power.

In Jesus, we have the gospel and community. But, with only the law, we cannot save ourselves. We cannot love God and others. Our relationships are broken and our joy is taken away. We are helpless.

I went back to Kansas over the New Year's holiday. We had my father's memorial service, and I also went back to my home town and gave an update in my home church. In that update I mentioned Yuya, and asked the church to pray. A lady in the front row burst into tears. The truth was that her husband (actually my cousin) had attempted suicide. Working on the farm, he had experienced deep loneliness and became depressed and eventually went out to a deserted field and took a whole bottle of sleeping pills. When he didn't come back home, people organized a search. From an airplane, a small Cessna, they found him, airlifted him to a large hospital, and were able to save his life. In his life story, which is on YouTube, he said, "What saved my life was Jesus and the Holy Spirit." I couldn't help myself.

My brothers and sisters, this was our condition. Lonely and helpless. Maybe this is how you feel today, right now. Let's be a community in the gospel, in Jesus. Don't walk by on the other side. Let's repent of not being the community we should be. Let us through the gospel be the community of God in this city.

Our relationship with God, with each other and also our true joy will be restored.

Let's pray. Loving Father, thank you for giving us your Son Jesus, and he has saved us from our helpless, sinful condition. Thank you for sending people into our lives who come alongside of us and encourage us. Thank you that you give us encouragement, the comfort of your love, the joy in your Holy Spirit and your affection and compassion. May we be the community of God in this city and to those around us, we pray in Jesus' name. Amen.

The Blessing

"Now to him who is able to do far more abundantly than all we ask or think, according to the power at work within us, to him be the glory in the church and in Christ Jesus throughout all generations, forever and ever. Amen." (Eph. 3:20,21)