

Love for Neighbors

Key Verses: *“Which now of these three, thinkest thou, was neighbour unto him that fell among the thieves? And he said, He that shewed mercy on him. Then said Jesus unto him, Go, and do thou likewise.”*
—*Luke 10:36,37*

Selected Scripture:
Luke 10:25-37

THE EVIL DISPOSITION

toward Jesus on the part of the Jewish teachers was often manifest in the questions they asked him in public. Their evident purpose was to entrap him in his words and hinder his influence among the people. It was for this purpose that they mingled with the multitudes who witnessed his miracles and attended his preaching. However, Jesus was more than a match for their cunning craftiness to the point of thwarting their evil purposes.

In today's lesson, a Jewish lawyer asked Jesus, tempting him, “Master, what shall I do to inherit eternal life?” (Luke 10:25) The lawyer may have expected Jesus to say, “You must believe that I am the Son of God, the promised Messiah.” While this would have been true, the people were not yet prepared to understand and receive it. For example, such an answer might have caused the multitudes to say that Jesus was exalting himself to a position of near equality with God, in violation of the Mosaic Law. Jesus knew that the people needed continued and repeated evidences to convince them of his true position as God's representative. Thus the Master wisely gave them what he knew they needed, and with skill avoided the sinister purposes on the part of his enemies.

Showing great wisdom, Jesus referred the questioner

to the Law, saying, “What is written in the law? how readeſt thou?” The lawyer properly reſponded that man ſhould love God with all his heart, ſoul, ſtrength and mind, and his neighbor as himſelf. Jeſus ſaid he had answered correctly, and inſtructed him, “this do, and thou ſhalt live.”—vſs. 26-28

The thoughts of the crowd were likely puzzled by Jeſus’ ſtatement. Though many Jews had endeavored to merit life through the keeping of the Law, not one had ever yet ſucceeded. They perhaps interpreted the Lord’s words to mean that they muſt keep the Law perfectly in order to receive life. They knew, of course, that they could not fully keep the Law, and therefore may have concluded that they had no realistic hope of inheriting eternal life.

The lawyer, on the other hand, deſired to juſtify himſelf and replied to Jeſus, “And who is my neighbour?” (vs. 29) He evidently was hoping that the word “neighbor” had a reſtricted meaning which would allow for the exerciſe of a good deal of ſelfiſhneſs, which had no doubt been a common practice in his life.

Jeſus took advantage of the ſituation to give the well-known parable of the good ſamaritan. (vſs. 30-37) In the parable, neither a paſſing prieſt nor a Levite came to the aid of a man who had been robbed, beaten, and left for dead. Only a lowly Samaritan, hated by moſt Jews, came to the aid of the injured man. Although probably aſhamed, the lawyer answered in reſponſe to the parable that it was only the Samaritan who was truly a neighbor to the man who had fallen among thieves. In the words of our Key Verſes, Jeſus then told the lawyer, “Go, and do thou likewiſe.”

The leſſon of the Samaritan is not that eternal life can be attained ſimply on account of an isolated act of neighborly love. Rather, ſuch a ſpirit of ſympathy and love toward all our fellow men, developed over the course of a lifetime, will demonſtrate to God that his divine love is ruling in our hearts and minds, and to the greateſt extent poſſible, in our actions. ■