

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. ■