

# Doing and Hearing (Luke 10:25-42)

Sunday school March 19, 2017

I want to call your attention to **READ Luke 10:25-37**. This parable, the parable of the Good Samaritan, might be my favorite parable in the entire gospel of Luke because, at various points in my life, I have been every person in this parable. Before I started following Christ, I was on occasion the thief, the one who inflicted damage. I've been the traveler beaten bloody and left for dead, spiritually speaking, on the side of the road. I've been the indifferent priest and Levite who saw the problem but didn't take any action. And a few times, to His glory, I have been the neighbor that helped someone in need.

Last week we studied the lead-up to this parable. We identified the key word in this parable as the word "do;" it appears in verse 25, verse 28, and at the very end in verse 37. The lead-up to this parable features two questions from the lawyer, neither of which are honest questions. In verse 25 he asks, "what shall I do to inherit eternal life?" and in verse 29 he asks, "And who is my neighbour?" The lawyer is not really interested in what Jesus says about inheriting eternal life or what Jesus says about who his neighbor is. He is interested in finding an accusation against Jesus and justifying himself. He wants to find some way to make what he is actually doing fit what the law says he should be doing. That led to my last point last time: if you try hard enough to find a way to justify or rationalize your actions you will find it. I need to stay close to His word to see things the way He sees them, not just doing whatever is right in my own eyes.

**Transition:** So with that lead-up let me **HAND OUT OUTLINES**. These outlines start at IIC. because we did A. and B. last time.

**IIC. Parable of Mercy** The first thing under this point...

**IIC1. Traveler and Thieves READ v. 30** Once again you need a little geographical information to make sense of this situation. The road from Jerusalem to Jericho is about 17 miles long and loses about 3000 feet of elevation. So when Jesus says "went down from Jerusalem to Jericho," He literally means **DOWN** from Jerusalem to Jericho. The road was very rocky and desolate, so it was common for thieves to attack travelers on that road. If you got attacked, chances are there would be nobody there to help you (other travelers or nearby villagers) because the road was so desolate. I've told you about my trip to California last summer and how my check engine light came on just as I was entering Nevada, the most desolate stretch of I-80. If you break down on I-80 in northeastern Nevada, it could be 20 or more miles to the nearest town. That's the situation here: if you get attacked on the road from Jerusalem to Jericho, you're in serious trouble: probably nobody is going to be there to help you.

The traveler is not identified. Jesus just says “a certain man,” so it could be anybody. It could be a friend, a family member, an enemy, a Jew, a Gentile, a Samaritan. He’s just a nameless, faceless man. The critical thing is: he’s somebody with a need. I mentioned last week that, in the Jewish culture of the day, they interpreted neighbors as referring only to fellow Jews. That’s one of the ways they tried to make their actions fit what the law says to do. So one of Jesus’ points is: your neighbor is whoever around you has a need.

This past Tuesday on my hiking trip I hiked to the top of Pinnacle Mountain in Arkansas. As the name implies, it is a bouldery pointy mountain. When you stand down at the base and look up the summit is only 600-700 feet up, but it looks very intimidating (its pointy and covered in boulders) and getting there is as hard as it looks. The last 1500 feet is basically a New England-style boulder scramble where you have to climb from rock to rock straight up through a boulder field. As I was coming down, I passed these two older couples probably in their 70’s struggling to get up. My first thought was: if I was that age, I don’t think I would be hiking this trail (it was hard enough for this 40-year old). But there was this younger couple helping them up from boulder to boulder. They may have been related; I don’t know. That’s being a neighbor: seeing someone with a need and meeting that need.

**Transition:** In this case, the beaten traveler is the one with the need, but the next two characters don’t provide any help. They are....

**IIC2. Priest and Levite READ v. 31-32** The priests and Levites were Jewish religious leaders and experts in the law, much like the lawyer who had asked the two dishonest questions. Of all the characters in this parable, the lawyer was most similar to these two. Because they were experts in the law, we would expect them to do the right thing, to help the traveler in need, but they don’t. Some people in trying to justify their inaction have suggested that the ceremonial cleanness provisions in the Jewish law prevented them from acting (they didn’t want to become unclean and therefore unable to perform their duties), but that’s not likely. These two people are also coming down, so they are traveling from Jerusalem to Jericho. Remember that, at this point in Jewish history, temple work was divided into two week “shifts” with a new team of priests and Levites rotating on every two weeks. I described that back in Luke 1:5, where it is mentioned that Zachariah, the father of John the Baptist, was of the course (or shift) of Abijah. Because they are traveling down, they had probably just finished their two week “shift” and were heading home, so ceremonial uncleanness probably wasn’t an issue.

So other than just indifference, Jesus doesn't tell us why the priest and Levite failed to do the right thing, and it really does not matter why. The bottom line is: they failed to do the right thing. The same thing really applies to me. If I fail to do the right thing, I fail to do the right thing, and I need to repent. It doesn't really matter why I failed except maybe in trying not to fail again. Also, their religious pedigree didn't matter. It doesn't matter that they were priests and Levites; they are criticized because they failed to do the right thing. The same thing goes with me too. It doesn't matter how well I have served Him or how good of a neighbor I have been to people around me in the past. What matters is being a neighbor to them and meeting their needs today. That's the application of the Priest and Levite to us.

**Transition:** The last person here, the one who comes through, is...

**IIC3. Samaritan READ v. 33-37** I first want you to notice the wording of verse 33. The previous two verses, verses 31 and 32, have almost identical wording. The priest/Levite came, saw, and passed by on the other side. In verse 33, the Samaritan came, saw, and you would expect it to say "passed by on the other side," but instead it says "had compassion on him." That's a literary technique; it emphasizes the compassion the Samaritan had on the traveler. It's also worth noting that this road from Jerusalem to Jericho was in Judea, not Samaria. I mentioned a few weeks ago when the Samaritan village refused to receive Jesus that the Samaritans refused to show hospitality to traveling Jews, and the Jews typically responded likewise. So this Samaritan was in hostile territory in Judea, but that didn't matter to him. He shows compassion on the beaten traveler anyway.

I mentioned at the outset that this is a parable about doing, so next I want you to notice all of the things the Samaritan did for the traveler: went to him, bound his wounds, set him on his own beast, brought him to an inn, took care of him (probably a general summary), he took out two pence, and gave them to the host. A pence was a day's wage for a laborer, and two pence would have been enough to lodge for up to two months in an inn. So the Samaritan shows his compassion by doing things to meet the needs of the traveler. The application for us is: saying we have compassion on people, for example lost people, is not enough. We need to be doing things to reach them. In the last verse, verse 37, he tells the lawyer to "Go, and do thou likewise," that is, be a neighbor to people in need. We never hear from the lawyer again, so we don't know if the lawyer actually did it. That leaves open the question: are we going to do it? Are we going to have compassion on people around us and have the compassion move us to do things for them? I hope and think the answer is yes.

**Transition:** The chapter closes with a very different instruction in a very different situation. That's...

**III. Hearing Jesus READ v. 38-42** The “certain village” of verse 38 is Bethany; John 12:1-3 tell us that’s where Mary and Martha lived along with Lazarus. Bethany is near Jerusalem, so Jesus and His disciples, who are from Galilee, are now the travelers a decent way from home, and they are relying on the hospitality of Martha. Martha seems ready, willing, and able to host this band of travelers. The focus of these few verses is on the contrast between Martha and Mary. Mary is sitting in a submissive position at Jesus’ feet, listening like a disciple would to what Jesus has to say. On the other hand, Martha is doing the expected job of a hostess, running around the house making sure all of their guests’ needs are met. She is “cumbered about much serving” as verse 40 says, trying to pay attention to everything and keep all of the juggling balls in the air. I sometimes feel that way down at university. I get caught up in all of the little minutae that comes up with other faculty and administration that I forget about why I’m really there: to minister to students both mathematically and spiritually. That’s kind of what happens to Martha here.

I want you to notice Martha’s request of Jesus in verse 40: “Lord, dost thou not care that my sister hath left me to serve alone? bid her therefore that she help me.” On one hand, she calls Him “Lord,” which is a higher form of address than “Master” that so many other people used, including the lawyer in the previous passage. Master just conveys respect, but Lord recognizes His authority. As God, He has the authority to command Mary to do things if He wants to, but He doesn’t do that here. Is it because, as Martha suggests, He doesn’t care about Martha? No. “Oh yes, He cares, I know He cares.” The problem is what she wants Him to do. Notice in her request the two “me’s:” “dost thou not care that my sister hath left ME to serve alone? bid her therefore that she help ME.” She asks Jesus to use His authority not to glorify God but to help her. We’ll talk more about praying next week when we study the Lord’s model prayer, and it’s OK to pray for yourself, but you probably don’t just want to do that. In our Ephesians study, we studied the way Paul prayed for the believers at Ephesus. He prayed for big, spiritual things: that they would know God better, that their spiritual understanding would be enlightened, that they would know God’s power. It’s OK to pray for yourself, but don’t just do that.

Martha is succeeding at meeting most of their needs. That’s why Jesus tells her in verse 41, “thou art careful and troubled about many things.” She met many of their needs...except one, the “one thing that is needful” as Jesus calls it in verse 42. That one needful thing is hearing God’s word. Martha is concerned with many things. Mary is concerned with one: Jesus. The reference I gave you is Psalm 27:4, which says, “One thing have I desired of the LORD, that will I seek after; that I may dwell in the house of the LORD all the days of my life, to behold the beauty of the LORD, and to enquire in his temple.” That’s the one needful thing Mary is providing: beholding the beauty of the Lord and His word. It’s important that we take the time, probably daily, to behold the beauty of the Lord and His word as well.

## **Conclusion**

As a final thought, these two passages, the parable of the good Samaritan and the instructions to Mary and Martha, remind us that there is a time for hearing God's word and a time for doing God's word. We need to make time for both hearing and doing. When we read our Bibles, we are hearing God's word. When we listen to a Sunday school lesson or sermon, if prepared and delivered properly, we are hearing God's word. When we give the gospel to a lost person, we are doing God's word. When we meet needs of people around us, we are doing God's word. We need both: hearing God's word and doing God's word.