

How To Love Your Neighbor

Part 1: Who is My Neighbor?

Luke 10:25-37

Summary: The first step in loving our neighbor is enjoying God. When we practice that, we're better able to seeing others through his eyes.

Main Ideas:

1. If we really enjoy God it infuses everything in our life.
2. Rules, not enjoyment, seem to be the focus of most religion.
3. When you love someone you enjoy them.
4. Jesus doesn't give us lists to check off... he gives us an example to emulate.
5. Religious actions and knowledge do not automatically lead to love for God and others.
6. Being willing to truly see others changes our hearts toward others.
7. If we really want to enjoy God we have to learn to see what he enjoys... our neighbors.
8. Our neighbor is anyone God puts in our path to whom we can offer love.
9. We CAN invite our neighbors to discover, enjoy, and share the life Jesus offers...together

Invitation:

Pray, "God, show me the neighbor(s) you have put in my path."

And write down any specific name(s) that comes to mind

Discussion Questions:

1. How did you see God show up this summer and/or what did you enjoy most?
2. What do you think "enjoying God" would look like in your daily life?
3. Read Matthew 9:9-13. How would you describe the difference between loving and enjoying others and following religious rules?
4. How does the idea of "being on the lookout" for neighbors God puts in our path resonate with you, and how can you apply it to your life?
5. How can your group pray with you this week?

Transcript:

ME: Thanks for sabbatical.

- Prayers
- Volunteers who made it possible
- Those that consistently showed up

I was able to step back, look at big picture, and discovered some things... for example...

Tell story...

Trip... Liz and kids went a few days earlier. Dad not able to drive... so had to drive myself

I treat cars like most people treat relationships... if it seems to be working just leave it alone

Not even sure I was going to make it.

Dad texted, was working... could relax (I had back-up)

Got to armpit of drive...

- Nothing but Country and KLove... silence was the better choice.

Me- "God what do you want me to do?"

- What should I be doing to fix myself/family/church?

God- "Enjoy me."

- What really? No. too simple.
- "That's how you and I have always interacted."
- "That's what you've always loved telling people."
- "And Hey dummy, it's already Crosscreek's mission... D/E/S"

Started thinking about it... started getting excited.

- B/c it's so simple but it really changes everything

If we really enjoy God it infuses everything in our life.

If we develop an enjoyment of God...

- Then we enjoy life... it becomes a daily relationship/adventure of finding things we enjoy about God
 - Even when things aren't fun/when hard/painful we can still find joy.
 - Even allows suffering to be seen in a new light
- Allows us to enjoy others
 - Changes how we see everyone around us.
 - If we begin to see people as he does... not as interruptions or problems to solve but opportunities for us to practice/enjoy God's love flowing through us.

Enjoying God is, for foreseeable future, going to be center of my life/ministry

WE: It's something I really want to figure out, and I'm guessing you'd like to figure it out, and your neighbors want to figure it out.

We are all trying to figure out how to enjoy life

Could just start off by teaching a series on How to Enjoy God expect us all just to get it and move on to other stuff...

But it's too big, too overarching to just do a series

- And more importantly it's too good/important to keep to ourselves.
- We need to invite others on this journey with us
- Invite our neighbors to D/E/S the life Jesus offers together

Bc sadly, not church person you already know this, enjoying God doesn't seem to be the focus of many churches, xians, spiritual people.

- So much so that as I was talking it almost sounded wrong!

B/c... Rules, not enjoyment, seem to be the focus of most religion.

- Follow the right rules, do enough good to balance out our bad.
- Send out good to universe so the universe will send good to you
- Never sure if we are tipping the scales or not

Which only creates fear, guilt, pretentious arrogance, hypocrisy

Not new... big part of religion 2000 yrs ago in Jesus' time and place.

GOD: Ancient historian Luke (friend of Paul) describes this atmosphere for us

- Around 70 AD... Set out to write an historical account of Jesus' life
 - Went back to as many eyewitness stories as he could
- Book of Luke Part 1 of 2 volume set (Luke/Acts)

Luke records Jesus telling a now famous story explaining when we enjoy God, and stop worrying about earning anything... it changes everything...

Luke 10:25-28

See how the question is phrased...

- What must I DO to inherit eternal life?
- How can I EARN it... what are the right rules, rituals?
- What must I do to make God happy so I can enjoy life now and forever?

Jesus- Do scriptures really tell you you have to DO something?

Man- Well no. They say, "LOVE God and neighbor."

Jesus- Exactly. It's not about earning, it never has been... it's about your heart.

When asked the same question in other accounts of his life Jesus says that the greatest command is to love God and the second is like it... on the same level of importance... love your neighbor as yourself.

But how do we love?

One of the first things is learning to enjoy them... When you love someone you enjoy them.

- Friends, dating, kids.
- When we love God we learn to enjoy him and that enjoyment will lead to enjoying those he loves

And then the good deeds, the actions of love, come out of that heart of love/enjoyment

- Our actions are proof of our hearts

But the man, like most of us, still wanted a clear answer...

- “Who are the right people I’m supposed to love/enjoy this way... give me the checklist...”

V. 29 He was trying to put a limit on it.

- “Like, just next door... or 2 doors down, 3, 4, just my block, my village, who?”

Jesus doesn’t give us lists to check off... he gives us an example to emulate.

V. 30 Jericho Road 17 mi.

Dangerous, lots of caves for bandits to hide

V. 31-32 A priest! A Levite! This man is saved!

If anyone knew God, knew what it was to love and be God’s people... it would be these guys.

Priests job was to serve people, offer sacrifices and prayers.

Levites served in temple too... singing, guarding temple

- One of these guys is going to be a neighbor to his fellow Jew.

Nope. Both pretend not to see the man.

- Actually cross to the other side to get as far away from the injured man as possible.

“Loved God” professionally!

- Had the job and title... but not the heart.
- Offered sacrifices on behalf of people
- Sang the psalms about God, even was prepared to make a stand and fight for God

Religious actions and knowledge do not automatically lead to love for God and others.

Jesus’ Audience: “No surprise. Those guys suck. Part of the religious establishment. They treat us the same way...”

They’re probably expecting Jesus to stick it to the religious elite and have a simple Jewish man come by and take care of his brother Jew...

But if they had taken the time to read the title of the story they’d know what happens next...

V. 33-35 Not what audience expected... He is a Samaritan... A “bad guy!”

Jews/Samaritans Hated each other... racial/historical enemies.

Now think about it... This is God’s example of what it means to love him... by loving others.

Jesus doesn't describe the Samaritan's...

- Religious discipline,
- How often he prayed

- What verses he had painted on his walls at home
- What synagogue he belonged to
- How he knew just who to include and who to exclude
- How he voted
- What he ate or drank
- What family he came from...

Jesus says the Samaritan was a good neighbor b/c he SAW the man... and HAD COMPASSION

- He experienced loving/enjoying God in such a way that he saw people through God's eyes.
- And this love/enjoyment overflowed into loving his neighbor.
- Which was proof that he really did enjoy/love God.

This is the key... Being willing to truly see others changes our hearts toward others.

Samaritan wasn't trying to follow a rule book.

- His heart was tuned to loving God and enjoying him in his life that...
- He chose to see a fellow human... not a hated enemy/sinner
- But as an image bearer of God... worthy of his attention/care

And had compassion on him...

Maybe thought: "This could be me/my kid. How would I want to be treated here?"

Wasn't so busy/preoccupied/stressed/in his own world that he missed the need.

The priest and Levite focused on religious duties without truly enjoying God.

- They missed the opportunity to love their neighbor.

But the Samaritan, an outsider, demonstrates what it means to love God by loving others.

- His actions show us that when we enjoy God, we naturally extend that joy to those around us, even those we least expect.

Remember: Jesus told this story b/c the religious leader wanted a list of how to make God happy

- Instead of a list Jesus gave the man an example to emulate.
- An example of a heart that was tuned to love and enjoy God and others.

And Jesus leaves the religious leader and us with a challenge...

V. 36-37 Jesus ends with... "which one loved his neighbor? Go and do the same."

And here's the point... The story isn't just about being nice and helping others...

We all have people God has put in our path who need to hear that God loves/enjoys them and that they can love/enjoy him too.

But too often we miss them...

- We're too busy/focused on our little world
- We haven't learned to enjoy God
 - and out of that enjoyment shape our lives around his heart...

If we really want to enjoy God we have to learn to see what he enjoys... our neighbors.

YOU: Which makes us ask the question the religious leader asked... Who is our neighbor?

Trying to answer can actually be overwhelming...

- "Everyone we see?"... well technically.

So we just go up to people in the grocery store and tell them Jesus loves you?

- Go knock on all the doors in our neighborhood?
- No, that's impossible, exhausting...

It's so much better, more exciting, more freeing, and empowering than that...

- Our neighbor is anyone God puts in our path to whom we can offer love.

Jesus didn't give a list... he gave an example for us to emulate...

See, All of this is possible b/c we were in God's path.

He saw us. Saw our need. Saw our brokenness... and didn't ignore us or pass by on the other side of the road...

He came into our mess. Entered into our humanity and our story...

- Came to earth as Jesus to love, serve, enjoy, and save us.

Lived a life of love showing us who God really is...

And then died to free us from brokenness/sin/death.

And rose again to give us true life now and forever.

And we are invited to join him in seeing, loving, enjoying, serving, and saving the neighbors he puts in our path.

Our life becomes a reenactment of his life and love...

So this week... Start with this... Pray, "God, show me the neighbor(s) you have put in my path."

- Be on the lookout.
- Start paying attention

And write down any specific name(s) that comes to mind

That's it for now... you don't have to do anything yet.

- Start by allowing God to tune your heart to actually SEE others.
- Remember: Being willing to truly see others changes our hearts toward others.
- And when our hearts are changed our actions follow.

WE: Not-JF: Safe. Don't have worry about any of this.. If it sounds terrible/to much... no prob.

BUT... Question... which of the three had a life of purpose?

- Which of the 3 people do you think enjoyed their life the most?
- Which one could look back and be proud of the path they chose?
- Which one is living out the life we all truly want to live?

It's a life you are invited to experience too.

JF- This story isn't an impossible ideal we should nod and agree with, but know it's still out of reach.

This is an example of what Jesus expects a typical/common/normal JF to live like everyday.

This is who YOU CAN be through Jesus.

This is the life you were saved to live

This community/Crosscreek exists to Invite our neighbors to D/E/S together.

- To Invite as many people as possible to enjoy God
- So together let's look for neighbors that God puts in our path and join him in showing them his love.

We CAN invite our neighbors to discover, enjoy, and share the life Jesus offers...together