

Loving our Community

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When I was a kid, there was a time when a good portion of the lawn-mowing duties at our house was passed down from my father to me. It feels like that happened when I was around four years old. I went back looking for pictures to prove it, and that was probably a little too early. Realistically, it was probably more around 10 years old.

I took over the lawn-mowing duties at the house, and like my father before me, I have now passed the same tradition down to my kids, and they absolutely love it.

Yeah, they don't really love it. That was a little joke.

There's one lawn-mowing tradition that I have not passed down yet, and that's this. When I was around 12 years old or so, I was finishing mowing the lawn, and my dad looked at me and said, "Keep going."

I said, "It's all done."

He goes, "Go on next door, and I need you to mow Mr. Les's yard as well."

Honestly, you'd think disappointment would be the reaction, but it wasn't. In my mind, I was thinking, "Jackpot. My dad doesn't pay me anything for this. Surely Mr. Les is going to pay me a lot more than my dad."

So I finished the yard. I did as good a job as I could do at 12 years old, right? I did it well. I cleaned it up. The sidewalks were clean. I really did do a good job.

But I put everything away in the garage, went inside, and said, "Hey, Dad, how much did Mr. Les pay me to mow his yard today?"

My dad looked at me and said, "Nothing."

I said, "Wait, what do you mean, nothing?"

He's like, "Listen, Mr. Les didn't even ask us to mow his yard today. It was just the right thing to do."

I was like, "Child labor is not the right thing to do, Dad."

My dad didn't see it that way. He was teaching me a lesson, right? He taught me this my whole life, starting when I was a kid: Open your eyes. Just look for the people around you who might need a little help, and then jump in and help them. Jump in and do it.

I was 12, and I didn't appreciate the lesson. So he taught me the same lesson the following week when he sent me back out to mow Mr. Les's yard again, and then the following week to do it again. He taught me that lesson for years. I mowed Mr. Les's yard every single week until he moved away.

The older I got, and especially looking back on it now, it absolutely makes sense. My parents were giving me a hands-on lesson with the opportunity to live out the Word of God. God's Word is very clear and calls us to love our neighbors as ourselves.

Loving Our Community

We see it in Luke chapter 10. If you've got a Bible, go ahead and turn with me to Luke chapter 10. As you do, I'm going to say this later, so you'll get it again. Let me just remind you up front that our neighbor is not simply the person who lives next door to us, right? Our neighbors are the people God places in our lives, and we're going to see that.

If you're taking notes this morning, remember that we're in a series called Priorities, where we're looking at the focus priorities we have as a church family. Last week, I looked at our first focus priority in here. I talked about it for 30 to 35 minutes or so, so I really hope you remember what focus priority number one is. I said there was going to be a test. I hope you studied for it.

I just want you to shout back to me, when I point at you, the first focus priority of our church family. If you were in the membership class last hour and you don't know this now, you've got to go back the next time we do it. All right, the first focus priority of our church family is making disciples.

Thank you for saying that. Okay, good, good, good. I was going to be really sad if nobody got that after last week.

It's making disciples. The second focus priority of our church is what we're going to be looking at this morning. This is bonus because I did not cover that material last week, but do you know it? It's loving our community.

If you're taking notes today, that's our title, right? Loving our community is the second focus priority of our church family. We know that Jesus has called us to do that as believers, and we're going to pick that up in Luke chapter 10 this morning.

Starting in verse 25, it says:

And behold, a lawyer stood up to put him to the test, saying, "Teacher, what shall I do to inherit eternal life?"

— Luke 10:25

It's a great question. A lot of people had that question back then, and a lot of people have that question today. Here, though, the question from the lawyer was not genuine. Verse 25 tells us that he is putting Jesus to the test. He is not seeking godly wisdom on how to live his life.

The way he phrases the question is unique. He's asking for a single deed or single calculation that would guarantee him, or a person, eternal life. We often think of heaven when we read the phrase "eternal life."

That's what this lawyer is asking about. "Forever life with God" would be a more literal translation here. But again, this isn't a real question. This is a test that he has for Jesus.

I want you to look at the response in verse 26:

He said to him, "What is written in the Law? How do you read it?"

— Luke 10:26

What Jesus does to the lawyer, who's supposed to know God's law, is turn all the attention right back to God's law to answer this massive question - nowhere else.

It's a reminder for us, as we begin to dig into this, that we're going to have seasons of life when we've got big questions. These are seasons of life when we're wondering, "What do I do next? What's the focus? What's the priority of our life? What do I do in this relationship? What do I do with my kids here? What do I do with my finances over there?"

Jesus reminds us at the beginning of this that, for those questions in life, God's Word is the place. The Scriptures are how those questions are answered. Not a self-help book. Not the popular wisdom of our culture today. He points right back to God's law here.

The lawyer answered in verse 27. He said, "Well, if you want me to look back at the law, Jesus, I'll answer it."

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.

— Luke 10:27

Jesus says to the lawyer:

You have answered correctly; do this, and you will live.

— Luke 10:28

We need to understand the lawyer's response. It came right here from Scripture. When he talks about loving the Lord your God with all your heart, he's quoting Deuteronomy chapter 6, verses 4 and 5:

You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your might.

— Deuteronomy 6:5

When he talks about your neighbor as yourself, he's quoting Leviticus 19:18:

You shall love your neighbor as yourself.

— Leviticus 19:18

Look at how Jesus answers the lawyer. He says, "You got it right. That's the right answer."

The lawyer took the Shema, which is the central confession of faith for the Jewish people in Deuteronomy 6, and joined it with a command from the holiness code of Leviticus chapter 19. Listen, the lawyer was good. He

knew what the Scriptures said. He knew what he had been studying and reading.

Jesus affirmed him. He said, "Hey, listen, that's the correct content of your answer."

When you hear people today saying, "The commands of Jesus can be summed up with one phrase: Love God and love people," this is where that's coming from. The "love God, love people" phrase comes from here and also from Matthew chapter 22. Jesus is asked, "What's the most important command? What do we make sure we do?"

He says to love the Lord your God with all your heart, soul, and strength, and to love your neighbor as yourself. Jesus says all the Law and the Prophets - all of Scripture - hinge on those two commands: loving God and loving people.

Knowledge Must Lead to Obedience

The lawyer gave a great answer, but Jesus doesn't just say, "Okay, great answer. Gold star. You passed the test. Good job."

Look at the end of verse 28. Jesus says, "Do this." Actually do this, and you will live.

I want you to remember this phrase this morning: Knowledge does not guarantee obedience. Just because we know something doesn't mean we're going to do something. Jesus is making it clear that God has called us to live out His commands.

Back to when I was a kid for a minute. What if 12-year-old Steven was told, "Keep on mowing. Mow the next-door neighbor's yard as well"? What if I knew that, and instead of doing it, I just packed the lawn mower into the garage, put the stuff away, and went inside?

How do you think that conversation with my dad would go? My dad would look at me and say, "You're done early, right? You already got Mr. Les's yard mowed."

I'd have to say, "Well, no, I didn't. However, I do remember that you told me to mow it. I understand that's what you wanted me to do. I understand that's what you told me to do. Can I at least get partial credit for knowing what you asked me to do, even though I didn't actually do it?"

If you know my dad, do you think I would have gotten partial credit for that answer? I would have gotten a whole whooping for that answer.

But here's the sad truth: There are moments when we walk around like that, or when we walk around like this lawyer. There are moments when we know what God's called us to do.

Just think about the different areas of our lives. There are moments when we know what God's called us to do in our marriages. We're supposed to love our spouse this way. We're supposed to serve them this way. We're supposed to be faithful this way.

Think about our words. We know how God's called us to speak. The Bible's clear. He doesn't want profanity,

crude language, or crude humor coming out of our mouths. He doesn't want gossip or slander coming out of our mouths. He wants words that are praiseworthy, words that are encouraging, words that build people up and point people to Him. We know that's what Scripture says about our words.

Or think about our parenting and how we invest in our kids or grandkids. We go right back to the Shema, which has just been quoted from Deuteronomy 6. We're supposed to teach our kids to love God with all their heart, soul, and strength. The passage goes on to say we're supposed to teach that to our kids when they're going to bed, when they're waking up, when they're walking down the road - in every aspect of life. That's what God's called us to do as parents and grandparents.

We can go through all the different aspects of God's Word where we know what He has called us to do. But there are times, if we're honest, when we struggle to consistently live it out.

Knowledge is essential. We've got to know what He said, but that knowledge must lead to obedience. Our call from Jesus here is obedience. We're called to love God and to love others. He says it here, and He's very clear in saying it.

But the lawyer keeps pushing. He asks another question, not because he wants the real answer and not because he wants to actually do it. First, he was testing Jesus. Now he's trying to justify his own actions and the times when he doesn't live out the commands of God.

Look at verse 29:

But he, desiring to justify himself, said to Jesus, "And who is my neighbor?"

— Luke 10:29

Again, this is not a clarifying question to help him actually do it. The guy's heart isn't there.

The Good Samaritan

Jesus answers with a parable, with a story, like He often does in His teaching. Look at verse 30. Jesus said this:

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.

— Luke 10:30

This is not a good start for our traveler in the story. He's on a road where people frequently had problems going from one city to the next. It's like the hill country area of Israel. There are plenty of caves, turns, twists, and places for the bad guys to hide.

Surely the lawyer in the story knew of situations like this. If he hadn't stumbled upon one himself, he knew people who had. He probably knew someone who had been robbed on that road, as did the rest of the audience listening.

What Jesus is doing is bringing a real-life scenario that they all would have connected with, putting it right in

front of them, and saying, "Hey, listen. You've all run into a need like this. Let's see how we're supposed to address it."

He's beaten. He's robbed. He's left for dead.

Look at verse 31:

Now by chance a priest was going down that road.

— Luke 10:31

Pause there. This would seem like great news, right? Somebody else is coming down the road. Help is here. All is good now for our wounded traveler.

A priest - a man set aside to serve the Lord in the temple. Surely he knew Leviticus 19, God's law about loving your neighbor and helping those in need. So he's going to care for this guy, right?

Wrong. Look at the entire verse:

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

— Luke 10:31

Just visualize that: going down the road, seeing someone up ahead who is struggling and in need, and rather than moving toward the need, crossing the street and continuing on. He's probably looking the other way so he doesn't get too uncomfortable seeing the need in front of him.

That's what this guy did. He didn't want to be bothered. He didn't care. He was too busy. Whatever the reason, it wasn't good. He just left the man lying there and kept moving.

Verse 32:

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

— Luke 10:32

This is another would-be hero. The Levites weren't priests, but they also served in the temple. They knew what God had called them to do. He's a would-be hero who can make a massive difference in this life.

But remember, knowledge doesn't guarantee obedience.

Don't forget the reason Jesus is telling this story. He's answering a question: "Who is my neighbor? Whom am I commanded to love?" This story is helping paint the picture.

Look at verse 33. Two Jewish religious leaders have already passed by.

But a Samaritan, as he journeyed, came to where he was.

— Luke 10:33

Pause there. I know that as Jesus began that sentence with, "But a Samaritan," the lawyer and the rest of the

Jewish audience there had to have been thinking, "Don't You dare say what we think You're about to say."

Verse 33 says:

But a Samaritan, as he journeyed, came to where he was, and when he saw him, he had compassion.

— Luke 10:33

Jesus dared. He stepped on some toes there. The Samaritan was about to be the hero in the story.

There was a major, major fracture in the relationship between the Jews and the Samaritans. The Jews looked at them as less than, as a people they did not want to be around. There had been years of intermarriage. The Samaritans worshiped on a different mountain than the Jewish people, and the Jews didn't want anything to do with the Samaritan people.

But here, when a priest and a Levite ignored the need, the Samaritan had compassion. In that verse, the word "compassion" indicates this internal, gut-level, heart-wrenching compassion.

He wasn't driven by duty. He wasn't responding to a need because his dad told him to go next door, mow a yard, and respond to a need. He had compassion that was driven by love, and you can see it in what he does.

Look at verses 34 and 35:

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."

— Luke 10:34-35

He didn't say, "Spend up to this amount." He just said, "Spend it, and when I get back, I'm going to repay you."

In case you didn't know, the phrase "Good Samaritan" comes from this story. We use the phrase "Good Samaritan" in our culture. There are Good Samaritan laws. It all comes right back here to this story.

Jesus is holding the Samaritan man up as the example. The man sees the need, and he does not cross to the other side of the road. He does not turn his eyes away. Instead, he moves toward the need. He helps out.

He doesn't leave the man where he's at. He picks him up and moves him to help. He reaches into his own pocket to pay the bill and gives a couple of days' wages to cover the immediate expense. But not just that. He says, "Listen, innkeeper, if you have to spend any more money, go ahead and spend it. I'll come back, and I will cover it."

He's not doing this for his brother. The man on the side of the road is not his brother. It's not his best friend. It's not even a friend of a friend. It's just a random person God has placed in his path who has a need. He's spending his own time, his own money, his own energy, and, I'm sure, a good bit of mental and emotional energy as well, to help someone he didn't even know.

Again, Jesus is painting a picture here. When He's done telling the story, Jesus asks a question of His own in verse 36:

Which of these three, do you think, proved to be a neighbor to the man who fell among the robbers?

— Luke 10:36

The lawyer has an answer, and he knows what the answer is. It's interesting to note that the lawyer couldn't even say, "The Samaritan."

He said, "The one who showed him mercy."

And Jesus said to him, "You go, and do likewise."

— Luke 10:37

It's kind of a mic-drop moment in their conversation, right? I read something this week that said, "If you're going to test Jesus, you should do it sitting down so you don't have as far to fall."

That's what happened here.

Love as the Fruit of Eternal Life

Think back to the original question: "What must I do to inherit eternal life?" Jesus essentially says, "Hey, listen. Love God and love people." That sort of sums up the entirety of God's law. Then He says, "Let Me tell you a story so you can understand what that looks like."

Now, as you read Luke 10 and the interaction Jesus has here, you might have a question. You might be thinking right now, "Wait a minute. Is Luke 10 teaching me that I can earn my way to heaven by doing these good things?"

The short answer is no.

But you might think, "Well, Jesus just told the guy how he can inherit eternal life." You're right. That's what Jesus said.

But let me ask you a question that Jesus and our lawyer friend already knew the answer to: Can that lawyer take what Jesus gave him just then and perfectly fulfill it for the entirety of his life? At all times and in all situations, can he love God with all of his heart and love his neighbor as himself?

Of course not. There are going to be moments when he comes up short in perfect obedience to the words of God. The Bible calls that sin, when we fall short of perfectly meeting God's command. Just like that lawyer is going to come up short, there are going to be times when you and I come up short as well.

Let me remind you that Luke 10, this teaching here, does not exist on its own. We find Luke 10 in the Gospel of Luke. From beginning to end in the Gospel of Luke, we see our need for a Savior. We see Jesus, through His teaching, pointing us to our need for a Savior. When we zoom out of the Gospel of Luke and look at the entirety of the Bible, we're pointed to our need for a Savior.

The reality is this: When we know Jesus as our Savior, we're changed. We become new creations in Him. That's 2 Corinthians chapter 5. The old is gone. We're new creations in Christ. It's an inside-out kind of change.

We become disciples. We learn more and more about all that God has called us to. We grow in our love for Him. We talked about discipleship and that growth last week. When we grow, we learn, we love, and we fall more in love with Him.

That lawyer we read about wasn't seeking to follow Jesus. He wasn't seeking to love Jesus. Like a lot of our world today, he was self-focused. He was trying to justify his actions. He was trying to live in a way that pleased him. Honestly, with his questions, you can see him stiff-arming the Lord, saying he's going to live how he wants to live.

But those who know Jesus as Savior are the opposite. The point Jesus is making here is that the lives of those of us who follow Him are going to be this picture of a sincere love for God - heart, soul, and strength, all that we have. Not only that, but it's going to overflow into a sincere love for others.

Love is how you can tell believers apart.

In the first service, there were a lot of Texans jerseys and Texans shirts. There are some in here as well. You're going to go out to lunch today, and you're probably going to see people in Texans jerseys, shirts, or hats. What are you going to know about those people when you look at them?

Well, one, they're hopeful. But two, they're Texans fans. They've got the gear on. It's making them stand out.

There were some Bears fans in jerseys down here in the first service, and I was like, "How did they get in here?" But they were here anyway.

Listen, they stood out by what they had put on. For believers, we put on love. Love makes us stand out. It should be evident in what we say, how we live, and what we do.

What did Jesus say in John 13:35?

By this all people will know that you are my disciples, if you have love for one another.

— John 13:35

Love makes the believer stand out.

First Corinthians 16 says love is necessary:

If anyone has no love for the Lord, let him be accursed.

— 1 Corinthians 16:22

Let me rephrase it: If anyone has no love for the Lord, let him not have eternal life. Without a love for God, there is no eternal life.

First Corinthians 13:3 says:

If I give away all I have, and if I deliver up my body to be burned, but have not love, I gain nothing.

— 1 Corinthians 13:3

Without a love for people, there's no eternal life. And not because you didn't earn it, but because there's clearly not a love relationship with God if there's not a love relationship with people.

First John 4:8 says:

Anyone who does not love does not know God, because God is love.

— 1 John 4:8

It matters. Love matters. Loving God, loving others, and going and doing it, like Jesus said, is necessary to inherit eternal life. But it's not because you're checking boxes and earning your way into a right standing with God.

No, the love you have for God and the love you have for others is the fruit of the relationship you have with God. It proves that the relationship you have is real. It proves that you are a new creation in Christ.

As we read this parable, we're given the opportunity to evaluate how we love. Are we loving like people who have been loved by Jesus? Would people look at you and your life? Would they look at me and say, "You know what? There's something different about how they love. I can't put my finger on it. I don't know exactly what it is, but there's something different there"?

People absolutely should be saying that about us.

Go and Be a Neighbor

Let me point out something that's often overlooked in this story. The lawyer in verse 29 says, "Who is my neighbor?" He's wanting Jesus to say, "Okay, love these 10 people," or, "Love this group of people."

But Jesus asks a different question at the end of the story. He doesn't say, "Who's your neighbor?" At the end of the story, Jesus says, "Which of these three do you think proved to be a neighbor?"

Do you see the difference there? For the lawyer, "neighbor" is a noun. But for Jesus, "neighbor" is a verb. It's a way of living that gives life to both the giver and the receiver.

Jesus doesn't look around and say, "Hey, that's your neighbor. Go love them." Jesus says, "Hey, go and be a neighbor everywhere God takes you."

Then He practically gives examples, through the Samaritan's life, of what a neighbor looks like.

This morning, as you're evaluating how you love and treat other people in response to God's love for you, maybe you're asking this question: "How can I be that kind of person who, instead of moving to the other side of the road, moves toward the need?"

John Piper says it this way. I love this: "Christians move toward the need, not toward comfort."

Move toward the need. How would your life be different if, day in and day out, that drove you and you moved toward the need?

Think about what it looked like for the Samaritan. There are three super-practical ways love should drive us to be neighbors.

Go Hands-On

The first is this: Go hands-on. If you're taking notes, that's number one in the application right here. Go hands-on.

Not only did the Samaritan not cross the street and look away, but he went hands-on to the man in need. Here's what I mean: He didn't call someone else to handle it. He didn't delegate his compassion to someone he thought would be better suited. He didn't delegate his compassion to someone with more resources. He didn't delegate his compassion to someone who was less busy.

He went hands-on himself. He just got involved.

The application for us is this: When you see a need, move toward it. You're going to have the opportunity this week. It might not be a wounded man on the side of the road. It might be somebody at work. It might be somebody in your neighborhood. It might be a classmate at school.

I don't know who it's going to be, but I'm telling you, there are going to be needs in your path this week. Don't assume that somebody else is handling it. Get involved. Go hands-on.

We've got a lot of opportunities in our church family for you to go hands-on every single week, and I'm going to list a few of them for you. If any of them sound interesting, or if they match up with your passion or skill set, by all means, jump in.

But this is not an exhaustive list. Your meeting of needs, loving neighbors in our community, and being that neighbor out in the community are not confined to a program put on by the church. The program can help, but you can do this in your own walk of life anywhere God sends you.

Here's a few.

Every Saturday, we have groups from our church who go out into homeless camps around our area. There are a lot more than you'd realize, in a lot of places you'd never even guess. We have people who feed the homeless. They take a hot meal out and connect with them. That's a way to go toward the need and be a neighbor.

Every Saturday morning, at about 8:30, we have a group of people who show up here to pass out food to neighbors in our community. We love on them, and we give them food.

Every Sunday morning, a lot of you bring cans and drop them in those carts out front. That's what this is for - to help feed people in our community. It's an easy way to go hands-on. If you've never done that, bring some cans every other week or something. Put them in the deal.

We partner with Lighthouse for Students in elementary schools, middle schools, and high schools, not just in this area but all across Houston, all the way down to Sunnyside on the south side of Houston. They're loving on students, pointing them to the love of Christ, mentoring them, helping them fill out college application forms and prepare for the SAT - things they don't have anybody else in their lives to help them do. It's a great way to go hands-on.

You can mentor in the local elementary schools directly through Klein ISD. Call a principal and say, "Hey, how could I be a good neighbor and serve you?" Nine out of 10 of them are going to say, "We just need more people to mentor and sit down and eat lunch with a kid one time per week."

That's a way to go hands-on.

We have people in our church who, every single week, are volunteering with Care Net Pregnancy Center and Loving Houston. They're volunteering with anti-human-trafficking ministries, refugee ministries, and so many more.

I shared in our first service, because I saw Debbie sitting back there on the back row, that we have an Angel Paws ministry. People who have these dogs have trained them to be therapy dogs, and that's their way of going hands-on to meet needs. It's opened more doors than I could ever imagine, and it is unbelievable to hear them talk about it.

They're called by the hospital systems out in the Medical Center to come in every day, doing end-of-life visits with people who don't have much time left. It opens the door to share the love of Christ.

Our police officers call Angel Paws in after tragic events and scenes that nobody should have to see. It opens a door for these dogs to come in and provide a level of comfort, and for the members of our church family to pray over them and point them to the love of Christ.

These dogs get people into elementary schools. There are kids who are struggling and just need a moment, who are pulled out of class maybe for something. It's a chance for someone to bring a dog there, let them pet the dog, and speak life and encouragement over these kids.

The reason I share that is this: Get creative. Get creative. God's given you so many different avenues to meet so many needs in our community. Don't assume somebody else has got it. Go hands-on.

Love With What You Have

As you do, here's number two. This is what the Good Samaritan did: Love with what you have.

He used his own bandages. It's there in the story. He used his own wine, his own oil, his own animal, and his own money to show the love of God to the person in need.

Use what God's entrusted to you to show the love of God to those around you. That's what we see here.

The question is, what do you have? I know there are some people in here who just said, "Not much."

I'm telling you now, for every person in here, you have more than you think. I promise you. Don't just think about money and stuff. Think about relationships. Think about influence. Think about connections. Think about your work. Think about the opportunities God puts in front of you every single day.

More than anything else, think about the love of Jesus you have in your heart. You have the gospel, the good news of Christ. Love people by pointing them to Jesus - a love that never fails.

Be Generous

Finally, if we're going to love others as good neighbors like this Good Samaritan, we're going to be generous. We're going to be generous.

The Good Samaritan gave what he had on him to the innkeeper - two denarii, a couple of days' wages. Then he said, "Whatever else you've got to spend, spend it."

He had this "whatever it takes" attitude to meet the need in front of him. There aren't a lot of people like that today.

Today, we might see someone in need and think, "You know what? They need some help, so I'm going to help them." As we're deciding how we're going to help them, we begin to calculate it. We think, "Okay, what can I do that will go a little way toward meeting the need and help me feel good, but won't really change things too much for me?"

We want to give and help, but we don't want to give and help if it means we're going to go without.

As I thought about that this week, I'm just telling you, I felt the Lord convicting me in my heart of times when I've calculated my generosity rather than responding to people with open-handed love like we see here. I know I'm not the only one who needed that reminder.

A love for people overflowing from a love for Jesus is going to be generous. It's going to cost us something. True love often requires real sacrifice.

That's not just something Jesus said. It's not just a story He told. That's what Jesus did.

We learn how to move toward the needs of others because Jesus ran toward our need. Jesus went first, sacrificing it all. The Bible says:

While we were still sinners, Christ died for us.

— Romans 5:8

He's the ultimate Good Samaritan who found us beaten and broken by sin, and Jesus moved toward us. He moved toward our need with compassion. He sacrificed for us on the cross. He brings us into eternal life with God when we place our faith and trust in Him.

He's the example. He's the One who showed us how to live with the love and compassion of a neighbor. As we grow in our relationship with Him and in our love for Him, the natural outflow of a growing love for God is a love

for others.

So let's love our community like Jesus loves us.

Prayer

Would you pray with me this morning?

As you bow your head and close your eyes, I just want you to think about the words of Jesus and the command of Jesus to go and do what He's called us to do.

As you consider His words this morning, I want you to offer up this prayer: "Lord, help me to move toward the need." Just repeat that to Him. "God, give me a heart from You that moves toward the needs of others like You moved toward the needs of me."

Thank Him for the way He loved you and the way He moved toward those needs, and ask Him to help you do the same.

As you're praying that, I'm telling you right now that there's a very good chance the Lord has on your heart and mind areas of your life where you can move toward the need. There may be areas of your life you've been ignoring or looking away from. Maybe you haven't been walking to the other side of the road, but at least you've been turning your eyes so you're not uncomfortable.

I want to encourage you: Let the Lord move you toward those needs. Begin to meet them with an overflowing love for others, like Christ has loved you.

If you're here this morning and you're saying, "You know what? It's really hard for me to love other people because I've never experienced the love of the Lord like you're talking about this morning," let me encourage you and say that it starts there.

None of us are ever going to be able to love others like God has called us to love others apart from a love relationship with the Lord. So start there.

If you're here and you've never trusted Christ, in just a minute we're going to stand and sing one last song. We'll have pastors and prayer partners here. We'd love to pray with you about that decision to trust Christ.

Maybe you're saying, "I've trusted Christ, and baptism is my next step." We'd love to pray with you about that.

Maybe you'd say, "You know what? There are people in my life who are hard for me to love. There are needs that are hard for me to meet. I just want somebody to pray with me about it." If that's you, we'd love to pray with you.

Or if there's something else in your life altogether going on, and you just need someone to pray over you, we'd love to be there to pray for you. It would be our honor.

Heavenly Father, we love You so much. We thank You for the way You've loved us. God, I pray that as we continue to grow in our relationship with You, we would be known for our love. God, I pray that we would be a

church family of believers who love our community well by moving toward the needs and loving others.

In the name of Jesus, God, we thank You for that. It's in Your name we pray. Amen.