

Loving Our Community

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Priorities | January 18, 2026 | John 4; Luke 10:25-37; Mark 12:31; Leviticus 19:18; Leviticus 21:1-4; Matthew 22:34-40

Prepared from the spoken message and lightly edited for readability. Scripture quotations and spoken phrasing are preserved as delivered.

Well, if you have your Bibles, I want to invite you to grab them and turn to Luke chapter 10. And we'll get there momentarily. I've told you before, it's amazing how similar my voice sounds to Derell's when I'm in my car by myself worshipping. It's a wonderful thing. And uh thank you, Derell, for leading us in worship. That was one of the first songs that Derell led us in when he joined our team several years ago. and uh grateful for the worship ministry of our church. We're in week two of a priority series, what we're calling it. And if you're new to Champion Forest, we have three what we call focus priorities. This is a

mission statement for us of sorts. It's what we funnel uh our ministries and programs and events through it just as kind of a rallying cry uh for us as a church. It's what's most important to us. I'll put it uh to you uh give it to you up on the screen. and we go over these the first few weeks of the new year. And I just want to remind you uh that this is the focus priorities of our church. Um and as you'll see, these should be priorities to you because you are the church. Uh we are the church, the body of believers. And so what's important to us as a body of believers is

important to us as individuals. And we simply say it like this. Trans champion force advances the kingdom, the kingdom of God. And how do we do that? by making disciples, loving our community, and strengthening the church. Now, I do want to pause right here at the outset of this message, encourage you uh to be back next week because under the banner of strengthening the church, we did making disciples last week, and under the banner of strengthening the church, which we'll do next week, uh I'm going to present to us as a church the future vision and direction that we believe God is leading us to go. And so if at all possible, you do not

want to miss next week. We've been working on this for the better part of a year praying, seeking the Lord. And we believe that we're ready to unveil what is next for us at Champion Forest next weekend. And so you're going to want to be back. But today, it's focus priority number two. It's the title of the message, loving our community. Last week, all about making disciples, and that was under the banner of the great commission, Matthew chapter 28. loving our community. Where do we get that? Well, we get that from what the scripture calls the great commandment. We'll get to Luke 10 here in just a moment, but Matthew chapter 22 is where the

great commandment is rooted. And the text will be on the screen for you. But when the Pharisees heard that he had silenced the Sadducees, they gathered together, and one of them, a lawyer, asked him a question to test him. Teacher, which is the greatest commandment in the law? And he said to him, Jesus answering, "You shall love the Lord your God with all of your heart, with all of your soul, and with all of your mind. This is the first and great commandment, and the second is like it. You shall love your neighbor as yourself on these two commandments. Depend all the law and the prophets." Jesus said, "You sum up the entirety of the

teaching, what you read, and the law and the prophets. You drill it down and what it's all about is loving God with everything that you've got and loving your neighbor as yourself. Mark will add in his gospel account of this uh conversation that was taking place in Mark 12:31, the second part, there is no other commandment greater than these. Now, with that being said, we're going to look at Luke 10. And the story that we're looking at today is probably one of the most well-known stories that Jesus ever told. We know it as the parable of the good Samaritan. Jesus, of course, was a master storyteller. No one could tell a story like him that

would capture people's imagination, that would keep their attention. And whenever he told these stories, he told them with a purpose because behind the story was always a spiritual truth or a spiritual lesson that he was trying to communicate. In fact, that's what the definition of a parable is. It's simply a story that is told that has a spiritual lesson or a spiritual truth tied to it. And in the parable of the good Samaritan, it has to do with the second part of the greatest commandment, loving our neighbor as ourself. Let's look at this. It's so so good. Luke chapter 10. We're just going to walk through this passage of scripture and we'll add some commentary

and make some notes as we go along. Luke chapter 10 verse 25. Listen to what the scripture says. And behold, a lawyer stood up to put him to the test, saying, "Teacher, what shall I do to inherit eternal life?" Now, just a couple of things here. When we read the word lawyer, we don't need to think about a court attorney that you specialized in business law or civil law. This was a person who was schooled in the Torah. In other words, a better translation, they were a theologian. They knew the scriptures backwards and forwards. And just as your pastor, let me give you some helpful advice. You may not ever need it, but just in

case, listen. No matter how smart you get, no matter how many Bible studies you attend, no matter how much your knowledge grows of the scripture, you never want to play Bible trivia with the one who wrote [clears throat] it. All right, that's what's happening here. This lawyer, he asked a great question. And the way Jesus deals with this man and answers this question is very, very interesting. We're going to come back to it at the end of the message today. But I just want you to observe. Notice the exchange that takes place here. Very interesting. Verse 26 in true rabbitical form, Jesus answers a question with a question and he says, he said to him,

"What is written in the law? How do you read it?" And the lawyer theologian answered, "You shall love the Lord your God with all of your heart and with all of your soul and with all of your strength and with all of your mind and your neighbor as yourself." He answers this question by giving Jesus the what we read earlier, the greatest commandment. And the lawyer in saying this, he he is thinking and he is stating out loud what he believes that if I do this, if I will love God with everything in me and if I'll love my neighbor as I love myself, then I will have eternal life. And look at how

Jesus answers. Verse 28. And he said to him, you have answered correctly. do this and you will live. Now, you would think that the conversation would be over. The lawyer theologian asked the question. Jesus has him answered himself, says that he answered it rightly, gives him a passing grade, but something is not sitting right with this lawyer. And so, he asked a follow-up question. Look at it in verse 29. But he desiring to justify himself said to Jesus, "And who is my neighbor?" Now, very important that we peel back the layers to what's going on here. We don't know exactly what this guy is thinking, but the scripture gives us a little insight. It says

he was trying to justify himself. Some of your Bibles may translate he was trying to vindicate himself. I mean, he wants eternal life. What must I do to make sure I inherit eternal life? That was the original question. And in his mind, again, he's schooled in the scriptures, loving the Lord his God with all of his heart, mind, soul, and strength. He checks that off the list. I've got that. But he's also knowing the law as he does. Leviticus 19:18 commands you love your neighbor as yourself. Now, when that was originally given, neighbor, it's changed a little bit. when it was originally given neighbor for the most part meant fellow Israelites uh his Jewish people

but since that time now in the days of Jesus there's been some new people moving to the neighborhood so he's thinking Romans these power hungry authoritarians the ones that are charging us an exuberant amount of taxes the ones that are holding us down and holding us back. Is that my neighbor? What about these pagan Gentiles? They've moved into the neighborhood. They don't worship at our temple. They don't worship the one true God. Are they my neighbor? I'm not going to bring I'm not even going to bring up the Samaritans. Surely you don't mean them. those that mix their pure Jewish bloodline with different races and they tried to replace the temple in Jerusalem and put

it somewhere else. Surely you don't mean to love them. And so Jesus just a followup to this question, who is my neighbor? Tells a story. He shares a parable. Look at verse 30. Jesus replied, "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." Now, this road from Jerusalem to Jericho stretched about 17 miles. It was on a descent because Jerusalem is on a mountain, and it was full of curves and twists, really rugged terrain. Uh, and I want you to keep in mind here, I'll show you a picture of what this would have looked like back in the

day. You'll see it on the screen now. I want you to keep in mind as people travel this road now, there were no bies. All right? There's no way to stop. You're not getting beaver nuggets along the way. This is a rough journey here. Most commentators point out that it was a perfect place for robbers and thugs and thieves to hang out. In fact, it was such a notorious road, you never wanted to travel alone if you didn't have to. It was known, the nickname was as the way of blood or the path of blood, the bloody pathway. And so you see even in this picture, it been very easy for people to kind of

stake out and just jump out and um hurt someone. That's evidently what's happened because Jesus says it was on this road that a man fell among thieves and robbers. They stripped him, beat him, and they have left him barely alive. They did a number on this dude and he is in need of help and he's in need of help fast. Jesus continues the story. Look at verse 31. Now by chance a priest was going down that road. You almost get a sense of relief. A man of the cloth comes by and the scripture says he saw him. I want you to underline that. That's very important. He saw him but then he passed by on

the other side. That's not good. We continue. So likewise a Levite, that's an associate pastor, he walks by. All right. They help the priests in the temple. And when he came to the place, he saw them. Underline it. But look at WHAT HE DOES. HE passed by on the other side. Now, before we jump to any conclusions and make judgments on these two religious men for not helping this man in need, let's remember who Jesus is directing this story to. He's talking to a lawyer, a trained theologian. And as he is sharing this story, I can't prove this, but this lawyer, this theologian trained in the scriptures, I I see a rolodex of scripture going

through his mind, thinking about this. And when he hears these words that a priest walks by and does nothing, this man's thinking in his mind, well, that's not that's not that big of a deal. Leviticus 21:es 1-4, he knows the law. And what it stipulates is that if a priest comes in contact with a dead person that's not a family member or a relative, they become ceremonially unclean. And so him hearing this, not not much of a red flag. The Levite, exact same thing. I mean, the greatest fear of a Levite would be to be cut off from the blessing of God, to be cut off from God's people. If he touches an unclean person,

he himself becomes unclean and he has to go through ceremonial rights in order to be purified again. Look at what the scripture says. He was coming from Jerusalem to Jericho, which chances are that means they were serving at the temple, giving their time, and they were on their way back home, wherever it was they were going. If they touch this man, they become ceremony unclean. They got to go back to Jerusalem and go through a week-long period of being ceremonially cleansed. And so this man who is hearing this story about this priest and Levite who come by with a fish decal on the back of their donkey, but they don't stop. It doesn't raise many

red flags. It's understandable if you know the intricacies of the law. Add to that, let's just use our imagination. I admit I'm reading into the text a little bit, but if they've been serving in Jerusalem, they've been there for two weeks. It took them longer there to get back. Now they got to go back to their home. I mean, this is inconvenient. They're probably like me and you. They want They've been away from their families. They want to see their family. They've been [clears throat] gone for a couple weeks. They want to catch their kids' ball games. They got other business to attend to. Plus, they're not nurses or doctors. What good can they really

do? More than that, THEY'RE ON THE BLOODY PATH. The way of How do they know THIS ISN'T A SETUP? HOW DO THEY KNOW THIS GUY ISN'T ACTING? And they stop to render aid and they themselves get jumped and beaten and robbed and stripped and beaten and left for dead. The point is, we don't need to pass judgment too quick on these religious men for the choice that they made. Because the fact is, let's be honest, you and I, figuratively speaking, we walk by people every single day who are beaten and stripped and left for dead by Satan in the world. We see them and we just pass right on by. We think somebody else will

come and help them out. They got a cell phone. I bet they've already called somebody. Help's probably already on the way. What can I really do at this point? The priest, the Levite, truthfully, their actions are not that far from our own. They're not bad people. They're probably just busy people. They got things to do. They got places to go. They got people to see. And stopping and rendering aid is just not on their to-do list. They saw him, but they passed by on the other side. Now, notice the progression. A priest walks by. A Levite walks by. Now, in the mind of this theologian, surely the next person that walks by is just a

fellow Israelite, fellow Jewish person. But this is where Jesus throws just a nasty curveball and he buckles this lawyer at the knees because look at what the scripture says. Luke 10:33, but a Samaritan. Uhoh. Now, this wasn't expected at all. Again, Samaritans despised in the minds of of the Jews. You just read John chapter 4 where it states, "Jews and Samaritans had no dealings with one another during the dispersion when Israel Judah was captured. The Assyrians took many of the Jews into bondage. The Jews they left behind, they then repopulated. And those Jews that were left behind married some of these pagans from these other nations that they repopulated the area with. They did the

most grave sin a Jewish person could ever do. They mixed their bloodlines. So when the Jews who had been deported came back and saw that these Jews had intermarried and mixed their bloodline there was that that was despicable. They were despised. Plus again the Samaritans tried to move the temple worship in a different area. There was no love loss between these two people groups. They were detested. In fact, if you read ahead to verse 36, when Jesus answers his own question, says, "Who did the who showed this person mercy?" The the the lawyer answering can't even bring himself to say the Samaritan. He just says, "The one who showed him mercy." I mean,

this is a big deal right here. And what Jesus is doing, what he's teaching in this moment is he's destroying perceived prejudices. And he's answering this lawyer's two questions that he began with. One, what can I do to inherit eternal life? And two, who is my neighbor? Look at verse 33. But a Samaritan as he journeyed came to where he was. And when he saw it, look at it. All three people saw this man in need. But only one felt something. The Samaritans saw him and he had compassion. Some of your Bibles translate this. He had pity. The word carries with it this idea of from the gut. I mean, he felt for this person.

Bible teacher Ray Pritchard defines compassion is this. You're hurt in my heart. Samaritan saw him, felt compassion, and that compassion moved him to action. Amazing. One emotion, compassion, pity, moved him to what I count eight or nine actions right here. Look at it in verses 34 and 35. He went to him, bound up his wounds, poured on oil and wine, set him on his own animal, brought him to the end, took care of him. The next day he took out two deni and gave them to the inkeeper, saying, "Take care of him, and whatever more you spend, I will repay when I come back. It's amazing what this Samaritan did. And bottom line is he

did what he could with what he had. And that's what God asked of us. That when someone crosses our path that's in need, we do what we can with what we have. And here's where Jesus brings it full circle and makes the lawyer answer his question. Look at verse 36 and 37. Which of these three do you think proved to be a neighbor to the man who fell among robbers? And he said, "The one who showed him mercy." And Jesus said, "You go and do likewise." Amazing. Now, we're going to get into some application here in just a moment because again, my goal for this series is to be the most practical message series I've

ever preached. I'm going to share how we can love our neighbor, how we can love our community. But I think it's fair to say that a major truth that Jesus is teaching here is that anyone we come across who is in need, that's our neighbor. Regardless of their social status, regardless of their world view, regardless of what they can do for us, none of that matters. And really the question that we need to be asking as believers in Christ is not who is my neighbor, but the question that we need to be asking is who can I be a neighbor to? Who can I show mercy to today? That God, who can I show the

same mercy you've shown me, who can I show that mercy to today? This is the question that we need to be asking. Then God by his grace we God open my eyes and anybody that crosses my path that I see Lord help me to feel it and let that emotion of compassion and pity cause me to jump into action on their behalf. Which by the way we call this the parable of the good Samaritan. Did you realize in scripture nowhere here does Jesus call this man good? We made that up because of his actions. We call him the good Samaritan. Jesus never said that. He just says a Samaritan, a certain man. But what he

did was good. His empathy led to action. Speaking of this is Martin Luther King Jr. weekend and we do honor his contribution to our country. you know, 250 years this year, America's birthday, and we're going to do something special this summer to celebrate it. But certainly Martin Luther King, Jr., he made this country a better place. And I came across this weekend in studying this passage of scripture, Luke chapter 10, the final speech that Dr. King ever gave the day before he was assassinated, April the 3, 1968. This speech is called I've been to the mountaintop. Now, if you've never heard it, I'm just telling you tomorrow in honor of Martin Luther King Jr. Day,

a federal holiday, you need to go online, just listen to this speech. So, you can find it on YouTube. It's on it's out there. Just listen to it. It's powerful. He was speaking in Memphis and was set to lead a protest, a nonviolent protest. And this is what made Martin Luther King so great. It wasn't just what he said, but it's how he went about his business that helped change the world. But in Memphis, he was standing up for the rights of sanitation workers. And he was calling for a protest. And he was calling to boycott some goods that he knew if they boycott it, it would turn some it would turn some heads. It

would get some attention. And he was calling for average everyday people who had busy lives, who had activities of their own, who had jobs. He was calling on them to get in the game and protest with them, march with them, stand up for these workers regardless of what it may cost them. And he cites Luke chapter 10, the parable of the good Samaritan in this speech. And what he calls for, I love this, is a dangerous unselfishness. That's what he said about the good Samaritan. He had a dangerous unselfishness. Listen to Dr. king in his own words. >> You know, it's possible that the priest and the Levite looked over that man on the ground

and wondered if the robbers were still around. >> Or it's possible that they felt that the man on the ground was merely faking >> and he was acting like he had been robbed and hurt in order to seize them over there. Love them there for quick and easy seizure. And so the first question that the priest asked, the first question that the Levite asked was, "If I stop to help this man, what will happen to me?" >> But then the good Samaritan came by and he reversed the question. IF I DO NOT STOP TO HELP THIS MAN, what will happen to him? >> That's the question before you tonight. >> NOT IF I STOP TO

HELP THE SANITATION WORKERS. What will happen to my job? >> Not if I stop to help the sanitation workers. What will happen to all of the hours that I usually spend in my office every day and every week as a pastor? >> The question is NOT IF I STOP TO HELP this man in need, what will happen to me? The question is if I DO NOT STOP TO HELP THE SANITATION WORKERS, WHAT WILL HAPPEN TO THEM? That's the question. >> It's pretty good, isn't it? Dangerous, unselfish. It's not about what'll happen to me. It's about what'll happen to him. Now, Jesus in answering this question right here, loving your neighbor as yourself, he exposes something

in this lawyer theologian. very important that we see this because at the end of the day when we sit here and say how can I be like that good Samaritan the we can't love our neighbor as ourself unless there is a heart change it's impossible love people different than us love people that hate us it's impossible to love our neighbors and show them mercy as God has showed us mercy if there's not first a heart change. And this is why listen to how Jesus answered this question. Go back to this lawyer theologian's original question. What must I do to inherit eternal life? And Jesus gives him something to do. This happens again in Luke chapter

18. The rich young ruler comes to Jesus and says, "What must I do to inherit eternal life?" Now, this is the question that we need to be asking. What must I do to inherit eternal life? And both people asked Jesus this question. Do you understand? In the history of ever, there's never been a greater softball question to Jesus. What must I do to inherit eternal life? THIS WAS THE PERFECT opportunity for JESUS TO SAY, "WHOA, WHOA, WHOA. IT'S NOT ABOUT WHAT YOU DO. IT'S ABOUT WHAT I DO for you. IT'S ABOUT BELIEF AND TRUST IN ME. IT'S NOT ABOUT WHAT YOU DO THAT SAVES YOU. SALVATION IS A GIFT THAT I GIVE YOU." BUT JESUS

DIDN'T SAY THAT IN EITHER SITUATION to the rich young ruler. He said, "You want to inherit ETERNAL LIFE, GO SELL everything and come and follow me." He gives them something to do here in the parable of the good Samaritan. You want to know how you inherit ETERNAL LIFE? GO LOVE your neighbor, your Roman, your gentile pagan neighbor, that Samaritan that you hate. He commands them to do something that HE KNOWS IS IMPOSSIBLE. WHY? BECAUSE IT'LL lead them to the end of himself to where they call on the mercy of God. AND WHEN THEY CALL ON THE MERCY OF GOD, THAT'S WHERE THE HEART changes and we're therefore able to show people mercy. So the practical

application is for those whose hearts have been changed by God. How can we love our community? How can we be a good neighbor? How can we live in Dr. King's words with a dangerous unselfishness that shows mercy to others. I want to show you several ways here as we bring this message to a close. Now, if you remember last week, we have a driving question behind all of our focus priorities. That driving question behind making disciples was who's going to be behind you? Like at the end of the day, when you stand before the Lord and give an account for your life, and we all will, each and every person will give an account for

their life. The only thing that's going to matter is who's behind us that we've helped be more like Jesus. That's the only thing that's going to matter. It's what we got to show for. So the driving question behind this focus priority of loving our community is simply this. If champion force disappeared tomorrow, would anyone in our community know, care or miss us? I mean that's the driving question. Like we want to live in such a way we want to be the light of Christ in such a way that if we disappeared off the map tomorrow, people would say, "What happened to that church, man? And they fed me when I was food insecure. Man, they

helped mud out my home when the hurricane came. They're like Doug James who came into my school and served as a mentor, read to our kids, and was just a positive role model. What happened to that church? That's the driving question. We want we want to share the love of Jesus verbally and vocally. Absolutely. The gospel is what changes lives, but we also want to share the love of Christ tangibly because there's great there's great power when we show the love of Jesus and share the love of Jesus. And so I want to give you some ways and these are just some of the ways that you can intentionally make sure that you're crossing paths

with someone in need. We've already said a neighbor is anyone who God sovereignly ordains to cross your path. But I'm encouraging you today to intentionally put yourself in the path of someone in need that needs mercy. And so here are some of the ways. I'm going to put them on the screen for you. And I can't read through them all, but you can see it. I mean, International Friendship Ministry. You want to teach people in our community trying to learn English as a second language. They use the Bible as a textbook. They share the

gospel. It's a beautiful ministry. Lighthouse for Students. Kelly Martin and her organization talk about being mentors in schools. You can

go in right now through Lighthouse for Students. Community Ministry Center. That's our CMC where we feed the homeless. I had no idea that we had a photo ministry. If you're if you love taking photographs, you know, for our community, we take family photos. We take graduation photos for people that can't afford it. Job photos if you need it. We do that. Feeding the homeless ministry. We have that out of our community ministry center. Fellowship of Christian Athletes. Got Jamie Clark who leads the Northwest uh Association of Fellowship of Christian Athletes. You can be involved in in sports. The Birdwell Foundation for PTSD doing such great work with first responders and vets who are suffering

from PTSD. Caret Pregnancy Center you we talked about that last week. H3 Helpline, Finishing Touch Ministries, Kirsten Bradley and her team go and offer gently used furniture and they help outfit single parents and and those in need and just give them great home to move into. We have a human trafficking ministry, a single mother's ministry, prison ministry, both men and women. Sports Quest. If you love sports, soccer specifically, and you want to use it as an avenue to share the good news of the gospel to show the love of Christ, Mission of Yahweh right here, a shelter that helps women uh homeless women and children. We have a health care ministry that provide uh provides

medical and dental care for low-income uninsured families. Angel Paul's pet therapy. Uh you know, my dog wouldn't pass the test, but maybe yours would. And you want to go in to hospitals and and just uh uh different places where people are petting. Debbie Bennington, her her team do such a a marvelous job. The guards that are lowered when the car care ministry, Frank Allen, our deacons leading that ministry, home care ministry. We got uh places you're a handyman. We've got widows in our church that need people like you that could come in and fix things that they don't know how to take care of or can't take care of anymore. A military ministry, Sharpen Recovery,

Nick Long, a member of this church, does such a great job of helping addicts get off the street in a home. What's my point? My point is there are plenty of places where you can intentionally put yourself in the path of someone in need and show them mercy. And we're asking you to do that. And if you'll put that screen back on there, you see that O bar at championforest.org. That's Owen Bar. If you're interested in any of these things, you say, "I didn't get all of that." You email Owen Bar. I told him I was going to fill his email box up this week. All right. You email him and he will put you

in contact with those who lead these ministries and you can intentionally serve your community, love your community in this way. But you just remember whether you're intentionally doing it, you pray every day, God, help me to see the need, whoever you cross my path with, and I'm going to do what I can with what I have and I'm going to show your mercy to someone else. That is loving our community. We let it be a priority in our church and let it be a priority in our lives. Amen. >> Thank you for joining us for Champion Forest online. We hope today's message encouraged and inspired you. At Champion Forest, we focus on advancing the kingdom

of God by making disciples, loving our community, and strengthening the church. [music] We would love the opportunity to get to know you. To connect with us, just go to championforest.org/connect. We're so glad you

joined us today, and we'll see you again next time.