

35. Jesus Answered a Lawyer

In our last topic, we saw that we want to learn to rejoice with our physical and spiritual children about the way that the Lord works through their lives. However, after we rejoice with them we want to help them refocus so that their real rejoicing is over the fact that their names are written in heaven. In this way, the things that they say and do will bring glory to God and not to themselves. In our topic today, we are going to see that a lawyer asked Jesus a question to try and justify himself and we will see how Jesus responded.

One day a lawyer tried to trap Jesus with a question. Luke 10:25-29 says, “And behold, a certain lawyer stood up and tested Him, saying, ‘Teacher, what shall I do to inherit eternal life?’ He said to him, ‘What is written in the law? What is your reading *of it*?’ So he answered and said, “‘You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, with all your soul, with all your strength, and with all your mind,’ and ‘your neighbor as yourself.’” And He said to him, ‘You have answered rightly; do this and you will live.’ But he, wanting to justify himself, said to Jesus, ‘And who is my neighbor?’” This lawyer had no desire to learn when he asked his question. Instead, his desire was to test Jesus. Here, we see a common attitude of many people.

The word translated “lawyer” was the word that was used to describe a scribe who was considered an expert in the Old Testament law. Luke 14:3 says, “And Jesus, answering, spoke to the lawyers and Pharisees, saying, ‘Is it lawful to heal on the Sabbath?’” Here, we see that Jesus asked the lawyers and Pharisees the question since they were supposed to be the experts on Old Testament law. As a result, Jesus did as He often did when people asked Him a question and answered their question with a question. Jesus asked what the law taught. The lawyer gave basically the same summary of the law that Jesus gave in Matthew 22:37-40. Jesus told the lawyer that he had given the correct answer. Jesus told him to keep that law and he would live.

Suddenly, the lawyer knew in his heart that he did not have that kind of love for God. As a result, he decided to only deal with the part of the commandment that deals with the relationship of man to man. In order to try and justify himself, the lawyer asked another question, “And who is my neighbor?” Jesus answered the question of the lawyer by telling the story that has become known as the story of the Good Samaritan.

Luke 10:30-35 says, “Then Jesus answered and said: ‘A certain *man* went down from Jerusalem to Jericho, and fell among thieves, who stripped him of his clothing, wounded *him*, and departed, leaving *him* half dead. Now by chance a certain priest came down that road. And when he saw him, he passed by on the other side. Likewise a Levite, when he arrived at the place, came and looked, and passed by on the other side. But a certain Samaritan, as he journeyed, came where he was. And when he saw him, he had compassion. So he went to *him* and bandaged his wounds, pouring on oil and wine; and he set him on his own animal, brought him to an inn, and took care of him. On the next day, when he departed, he took out two denarii, gave *them* to the innkeeper, and said to him, ‘Take care of him; and whatever more you spend, when I come again, I will repay you.’” Notice that the Bible does not call this story a parable.

The road from Jerusalem to Jericho was a twisting, winding road as it went down about thirty-three hundred feet in just seventeen miles. As a result, it was considered a dangerous road because there were many places where thieves could hide. This particular man was traveling this road alone and was attacked by a group of thieves. These thieves showed no mercy. They even took his clothing. They wounded and injured him so that he was half-dead. Then, they went on their way and left the man to die. Here, we see a real picture of the sinfulness of many people when they think that they will not be caught.

The word translated “chance” means *by accident or by chance*. We see that sometime later in the day three different people came by the place where the man was dying. The first was a priest. Here, we see that a religious leader was the first to see the man. The priests were the religious leaders of the Jews who offered the sacrifices in the temple. This priest saw the man and passed by on the other side of the road. He was a religious leader, but he had no compassion. The second person to come by was a Levite. The Levites assisted the priests and also carried out many civic duties in the various cities. He also lacked compassion, because he came and looked and then passed by on the other side of the road.

The third person to come down that road was a Samaritan. Normally, the Samaritans did not travel this road, because in addition to the danger of thieves, there was also the rejection that Samaritans regularly received from the Jews. In contrast to the priest and the Levite who had no compassion for a fellow Jew, we see that the Samaritan felt compassion and it caused him to take action to help the injured man. The word translated “compassion” means *to be moved from within by love*. The priest and the Levite had no love for a fellow countryman. However, the Samaritan had that love even though the Samaritans were rejected by the Jews. The Samaritan poured oil and wine on the wounds and then bandaged them. The oil and wine were used to disinfect and sooth. Then, the Samaritan bandaged up the wounds.

However, the Samaritan did much more. He also put the man on his animal, brought him to an inn and took care of him throughout the night. The next day, when the Samaritan had to leave, he gave the innkeeper two days wages and asked the innkeeper to take care of him. He also said that if the cost was more that he would pay the additional amount to cover the expenses for the man to heal the next time he returned.

Then, Jesus asked the lawyer a question. Luke 10:36-37 says, “‘So which of these three do you think was neighbor to him who fell among the thieves?’ And he said, ‘He who showed mercy on him.’ Then Jesus said to him, ‘Go and do likewise.’” The lawyer was faced with a question that he could only honestly answer in one way. It was very obvious that the priest and the Levite did not act as a neighbor. However, the lawyer was unwilling to even use the word Samaritan to answer the question. As a result, the lawyer said that the one who showed mercy was the neighbor. Jesus then told the lawyer that if he were going to be a neighbor, he would have to have the same kind of actions and not just speak the words.

Then, Luke 10:38-42 says, “Now it happened as they went that He entered a certain village; and a certain woman named Martha welcomed Him into her house. And she had a sister called Mary,

who also sat at Jesus' feet and heard His word. But Martha was distracted with much serving, and she approached Him and said, 'Lord, do You not care that my sister has left me to serve alone? Therefore tell her to help me.' And Jesus answered and said to her, 'Martha, Martha, you are worried and troubled about many things. But one thing is needed, and Mary has chosen that good part, which will not be taken away from her.'" From John 11, we know that this was the town of Bethany.

Here, two sisters show us two very different ways that people respond to Jesus. Martha welcomed Jesus into her house but then became very busy preparing a fancy meal for Jesus and those with him. In contrast, her sister Mary just sat at the feet of Jesus and heard His teaching. The word translated "heard" means *to hear so that there is understanding*. Mary really wanted to understand what Jesus was teaching and enjoy fellowship with Him. In contrast, the word translated "distracted" means *to be driven about mentally*. In her mind, Martha was more concerned with serving Jesus than she was with listening to Him and learning from Him. She was probably trying to prepare a very elaborate dinner. However, she got upset because her sister was not helping her. Her anger came out in her words, "Lord, do You not care that my sister has left me to serve alone? Therefore tell her to help me."

Jesus then gently explained to Martha that she had her priorities wrong. The word translated "worried" means *to be troubled with cares*. The word translated "troubled" means *to be troubled in mind*. 1 John 1:3-4 says, "That which we have seen and heard we declare to you, that you also may have fellowship with us; and truly our fellowship *is* with the Father and with His Son Jesus Christ. And these things we write to you that your joy may be full." Martha was distracted by her own plans to make an elaborate dinner and she was not able to enjoy fellowship with the Lord. In contrast, Mary had chosen to learn from Jesus and enjoy fellowship with Him.

Jesus gently explained that Mary had chosen the most important thing because she had chosen that good part. The word that is translated "good" means *that which is good in its character and beneficial in its effects*. The word translated "part" means *a part as distinct from the whole*. Mary had chosen to experience the joy that comes from true fellowship with Jesus. That was much more beneficial than being driven by busyness, like Martha, who had her focus only on service for Jesus. Jesus said that the good part would not be taken away from Mary.

Here, we see a key lesson that we want to help our physical and spiritual children understand. It is very easy to become a person that is driven like Martha when we try to serve the Lord through our own efforts. Instead, Jesus wants us to help our children learn to be led like Mary as we show them how to enjoy fellowship with the Lord that will cause their joy to be full. Our lives will have a much greater impact when we are led by the love of Christ, instead of being driven by the fear of people. May the Lord richly bless you as you show your children how to be led by the love of Christ.