



Luke 10:25–29

25 On one occasion an expert in the law stood up to test Jesus.

‘Teacher,’ he asked, ‘what must I do to inherit eternal life?’

26 ‘What is written in the Law?’ he replied. ‘How do you read it?’ 27

He answered, “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, “Love your neighbour as yourself.” 28

‘You have answered correctly,’ Je-

sus replied. 'Do this and you will live.' 29 But he wanted to justify himself, so he asked Jesus, 'And who is my neighbour?'

Reflection

You don't have to be an expert in political theory to recognise Karl Marx a champion of working class people. And yet so far as researchers can tell he never truly knew or had a friendship with a single member of the working class. His colleagues were the intellectual elite from the middle-class. He never stepped foot in a mill or a factory or a mine or any other industrial workplace during the course of his whole life. And so no matter how brilliant you believe his political theory or his legacy to be; somehow this knowledge of his personal life makes

it all ring hollow. Because it would appear that he did not practice what he preached. Champion of the working class he may have appeared to be; but his personal life was conspicuously absent of anyone from a blue collar background which must give us pause. But before we become too critical of Marx, we have to acknowledge that few of us manage to live up to what we espouse intellectually. In today's passage Luke records Jesus having a conversation with someone like this, someone like us. Let me read it to you from Luke 10:25–29,

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1 R. Kent Hughes, *Luke: That You May Know the Truth* (Preaching the word; Wheaton, Illinois: Crossway, 2015), 397.

read it?’ 27 He answered, “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, “Love your neighbour as yourself.” 28 ‘You have answered correctly,’ Jesus replied. ‘Do this and you will live.’ 29 But he wanted to justify himself, so he asked Jesus, ‘And who is my neighbour?’

Some time after the triumphant return of the seventy-two whom Jesus had sent out on mission to the towns and villages of Galilee, Luke shares with us an encounter Jesus had with an expert in the Old Testament law; a religious leader, highly versed in the Old Testament Scriptures. It’s a fascinating encounter which will result in one of Jesus’ most famous and perhaps most

misunderstood parables – the parable of the good Samaritan which we'll look at tomorrow. Today's passage frames it up.

Now, in those days a Rabbi would teach or preach sitting down, and a student out of respect or deference would stand up when they asked a question. But when the expert in the law does so, Luke suggests that all is not what it seems. Verse 25,

On one occasion an expert in the law stood up to test Jesus.

His test was this,

'Teacher,' he asked, 'what must I do to inherit eternal life?'

Now at one level this question is very right;

but it is also very wrong, in fact making no sense at all. The question is very right in that it uses the language of inheritance. Just as children are the natural heirs of their father's estate, so too only members of God's family can inherit eternal life. But the question is very wrong as well because there's nothing you can do to become a son or a daughter. You're either born into a family or not. Earning or meriting is all well and good but it sits off to one side; It's a different category, because in the end those who inherit are God's children. But God's children also bear the family likeness. Through the work of the Holy Spirit increasingly they practice what they preach. The fruit of their lives often points to what has happened inside of them. And so perhaps that's why Jesus plays along and quickly cuts through the theory, to the

practice. Jesus asks him what he thinks. You're an expert, verse 26,

26 'What is written in the Law?' he replied. 'How do you read it?'

The expert in the law answers with the very words Jesus himself has used to sum up all the law and the prophets. No doubt he's heard Jesus on this before.

27 He answered, "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, "Love your neighbour as yourself."

The genius of this reply is that it sums up the ten commandments, sitting under

which, if you like, are all the other prescriptions of the Old Testament law. The first four commandments have to do with loving the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your strength and with all your mind which comes from Deuteronomy 6:4–5 and the final six commandments have to do with loving our neighbour as ourselves which is a verse from Leviticus 19:18. And the logic behind this is that loving God leads to loving those created his image. Jesus replies positively,

‘You have answered correctly,’

But here’s the catch,

‘Do this and you will live.’

You see the expert in the law didn't ask Jesus about the Christian way of life. He asked him the way to eternal life. And where eternal life is concerned the whole of Scripture speaks with one voice,

no one will be declared righteous in God's sight by the works of the law Rom 3:20

The law is great in theory. Theoretically if we did manage to love the Lord our God with all our heart and with all our soul and with all our strength and with all our mind"; and, "Love our neighbour as ourself." then through the law we would be righteous in God's sight and be counted worthy of eternal life. But the very great problem is that no-one in the history of all humankind has managed to keep the law

other than Jesus.

28 ‘You have answered correctly,’ Jesus replied. ‘Do this and you will live.’

‘Give it a go,’ says Jesus. ‘Try your heart out’. But those who do so honestly realise that the deeper purpose of the law is to make us conscious of our sin. Of our inability to live up to the righteous character of God. Of our need of a saviour.

And so as expected the conversation takes the usual turn. Because in his pride, he doesn’t want a saviour, he wants like all of us to justify himself. And perhaps deep down he knows that he can’t live up to the theory, so he tries to shrink down the target. Luke continues,

29 But he wanted to justify himself, so he asked Jesus, ‘And who is my neighbour?’

And as we’ll see tomorrow, Jesus won’t let him or any of us play this game.

Think & Pray

But for today I’d like you to meditate over that summary of all of the law and the prophets. Verse 27,

“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, “Love your neighbour as yourself.””

It is true that this side of heaven this is an ideal that only Jesus can meet. And yet, we've been born again into the family of God. Jesus is our brother. We share the same Father. And as we grow up in him we increasingly begin to bear the family resemblance. The Holy Spirit is transforming us from the inside out. And when we give ourselves over to his work, when we fully embrace our status as children of God and desire more than anything else to grow up to be like our Father and follow in his footsteps then we find ourselves increasingly loving God with our everything and pouring ourselves out in love of neighbour.

Where does this passage find you today? Is God your first love? Is he your everything? Is his desire for your life the lens

through which you see and do and enjoy everything in this world? And who is your neighbour? How can you love them today as yourself? Plenty to think and pray about this morning as you go out into your week.