

“Like a good neighbor, State Farm is there.” That is of course the slogan for the insurance company State Farm. Like a good neighbor State Farm is there.” In the Gospel for today, Jesus commands us to be a good neighbor.<sup>1</sup>

### Be a Good Neighbor

- I. By drawing near to those who need help.
- II. By going above and beyond to help them.

First, be a good neighbor by drawing near to those who need help. In the Gospel for today an expert in the law asked Jesus, **“Teacher, what must I do to inherit eternal life?” (Luke 10:25)** As Jesus often does, Jesus answered a question with another question,<sup>2</sup> **“What is written in the law?” (Luke 10:26)** The expert in the Law said, “Love God with all your heart, soul, strength and mind. And love your neighbor as yourself” (Luke 10:27). Jesus said, “You have answered correctly. Do this and you will live.” (Luke 10:28). But then the expert in the Law asked a follow-up question, **“And who is my neighbor?” (10:29)**

We really need to reject the premise of that question. You see the question, “Who is my neighbor?” implies that there are people who are not my neighbor. It implies that there are people that I don’t need to love. But Jesus does not allow us to limit the people we need to love. We cannot limit those we love to our own race or our own nationality. The main character in Jesus’ parable is a Samaritan, a person of a different nationality. “Love your neighbor” means show love to people of every race, of every nationality. Jesus also does not allow us to limit those we love to only people who are kind to us. Jesus said “Love your enemies.” Therefore “Love your neighbor” means show love to absolutely everybody.

And one way we show love to them is by drawing near to those who need help. In the parable there was a man who needed help. **“A man was going down from Jerusalem to Jericho, when he was attacked by robbers. They stripped him of his clothes, beat him and went away, leaving him half dead.” (Luke 10:30)** This man desperately needed help. And there were two men who saw him and could have helped. But instead of drawing near to help him, they kept their distance and passed by on the other side. **“A priest happened to be going down the same road, and when he saw the man, he passed by on the other side. So too, a Levite, when he came to the place and saw the man, he passed by on the other side.” (Luke 10:31-32)** Do we ever “pass by on the other side,” so to speak? Do we ever avoid those who need our help? Maybe we see or suspect someone is sad but instead of asking them about it, we just let it pass. Why do we do that sometimes? Maybe we are afraid of the time and emotional energy it might take. Maybe we don’t want to disrupt our schedules. And so instead of drawing near to the person who needs help, we pass by on the other side.

But when the Samaritan came upon the man, he didn’t pass by on the other side. Instead, he drew near. **“But a Samaritan, as he traveled, came where the man was; and when he saw him, he took pity on him. He went to him and bandaged his wounds” (Luke 10:33-34a).** So don’t pass by those who might need your help. Be a good neighbor by drawing near to them. When you see someone who looks sad, honestly ask them how they are doing and how you can help. When you come upon someone who needs your help, God has brought your neighbor into your life so that you can show love to them. Be a good neighbor by drawing near those who need your help.

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<sup>1</sup> I owe this summary and the theme for my sermon (“Be a Good Neighbor”) to Darrell Bock, *Luke 9:51-24:53*, Baker Exegetical Commentary on the New Testament (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1996), 1018.

<sup>2</sup> I owe this insight to Randy Newman, *Questioning Evangelism* (Kregel, 2004).

And, secondly, be a good neighbor by going above and beyond to help them. This Samaritan didn't do the minimum. Instead he went above and beyond. Look at all the things that the Samaritan did. First, the Samaritan gives him first-aid<sup>3</sup> with bandages and medicine to heal the wounds. **"He went to him and bandaged his wounds, pouring on oil and wine."** "Oil" would sooth the wounds. "Wine" would disinfect the wounds.

The Samaritan didn't stop there. **"Then he put the man on his own donkey, brought him to an inn."** And he didn't just drop him off at the inn. He stayed to take care of him. In fact, he stayed with him all night.

And he doesn't stop there. After taking such a severe beating this man might need to recover for a number of days. And so the Samaritan pays for an extended stay for the man and pays for the innkeeper to take care of him. It says **"The next day he took out two denarii and gave them to the innkeeper. 'Look after him,' he said, 'and when I return, I will reimburse you for any extra expense you may have.'" (Luke 10:35)**

The Samaritan goes above and beyond the minimum. He goes above and beyond what might be expected. He gives of his time. He gives of his money. All for a man that he doesn't even know. When we see people who need our help, let's not do the minimum that we can to help them, let's go above and beyond. When you see someone who needs your help, ask, "What can I do?" And then after you've done that, ask, "What else can I do?"

And what motivates us to do that? Because when we were headed for hell, God had pity on us. And he did a lot more than what anyone would expect, he sent his own Son to die, to take our place under the curse of the Law so that we could be free. Heaven is our inheritance! So let's go above and beyond to help.

Jesus concludes the story by asking the expert in the law, **"Which of these three do you think was a neighbor to the man who fell into the hands of robbers?"** The expert in the law replied, **'The one who had mercy on him.'** Jesus told him, **'Go and do likewise.'** (Luke 10:36-37) Did you notice that Jesus changed the original question?<sup>4</sup> The expert in the law asked, "Who is my neighbor?" (10:29) Jesus asks, **"Which of these three do you think was a neighbor to the man who fell into the hands of robbers?" (10:36-37)** Jesus is saying, "Don't ask, 'Who is my neighbor.' Instead **"Go be a neighbor."**<sup>5</sup> Be a good neighbor by drawing near to those who need help and by going above and beyond. Amen.

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<sup>3</sup> I owe this to I. Howard Marshall, *Luke*, 449.

<sup>4</sup> This is pointed out by many commentators. I owe this wording to Joseph Fitzmyer, *Luke*, 888. Also, David Pao, note on Luke 10:36 in the Zondervan NIV Study Bible; edited by D. A. Carson (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2015), 2097.

<sup>5</sup> I owe this wording to Darrell Bock, *Luke*, 1018.