



Sermon Transcription • Abbotsford

April 29/30 2017 - Greg Harris

Ask How Not Who- (Luke 10:25-37)

[Please Note: This transcript has been lightly edited for ease of reading. Also, some headings have been added in square brackets to aid the reader in locating portions of the sermon.]

We're going to be looking at Luke chapter 10, and starting in verse 25. It says this,

“On one occasion an expert in the law [so, imagine a really highly trained theologian] stood up to test Jesus. ‘Teacher,’ he asked, ‘what must I do to inherit eternal life?’ ‘What is written in the Law?’ he replied. ‘How do you read it?’ 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.’ ‘You have answered correctly,’ Jesus replied. ‘Do this and you will live.’ But he wanted to justify himself, so he asked Jesus, ‘And who is my neighbour?’ In reply Jesus said: ‘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. 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 him, passed by on the other side. But a Samaritan, as he traveled, came to where the man was; and when he saw him, he took pity on him. He went to him and bandaged his wounds, pouring on oil and wine. Then he put the man on his own donkey, brought him to an inn and took care of him. 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.’ Which of these three do you think was a neighbour 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.’”

If you've been in the Christian circle for a while, and going to church for a little bit, you've probably heard the story of *The Good Samaritan* before. It's a really popular parable and often it's talked about, in really great ways, like this: They'd tell the story of saying “This Jewish guy who is from Jerusalem is travelling down the road to Jericho, which is a very dangerous road, everybody knew it was a really dangerous road. And as he's on the road, he gets attacked, he gets robbed, and he gets left for dead on the side of this road.” And, as you're hearing this story, you're thinking to yourself, “yeah, that's not surprising because the Jericho road is a really scary place to walk.” “And then there's a priest and a Levite, who come along the same road.” And part of you is thinking, “yeah, they might help— they're good guys: Priests and Levites?” Part of you is also thinking, “yeah, but they also might not help because I know that if they touch the body and the guy dies, now they're unclean, and so now they have to go through a washing ceremony to become clean before they can go back to doing their



priestly duties. So, maybe they're not actually going to help. And, so, when they don't, you think, "Meh, they probably should have, but they didn't. But I bet a Jew is going to come and help." And then the twist of the story is that it's a *Samaritan* who shows up and none of us gasp. Every single one of us thinks, "Yeah, that's how the story goes." But, if you listen to the story for the first time as a Jewish person, you would have been absolutely shocked that a Samaritan would stop on this highly dangerous road to help this Jewish man who is dying because, look, Jews and Samaritans did not like each other.

And the point that's often made with this story is a really *good* one. The point is: we should be like the good Samaritan. If you see someone who has a need, we should do what we can to help meet that need, even if it's going to cost us a lot of money: two denarii was like two days wages. If it's going to cost us money or time, whatever it is, we should be like the good Samaritan, we should help those who are in need.

Dr. Haddon Robinson is a great preacher in our contemporary age and he talks about being a good Samaritan meaning this, "Helping anyone whose need you see; whose need God had put you in a position to meet." To be a good Samaritan means that you're helping anyone whose need you see; whose need God has put you in a position to meet, even when it's costly.

So, imagine you're walking down the aisles of Costco. You probably did it this week, so it's not that hard to imagine. You're walking down. And the great thing about Costco is the little sample tables, right? They're awesome! Free stuff, it's great! But, Costco is kind of tricky because sometimes there's sample tables and, other times, there's other people standing on the side of aisles that don't give away samples, they're trying to sell you something. So, this past week, I was in Costco walking with the cart, and my son was in the cart eating his snacks. We're walking and this guy says, "Excuse me, sir! Do you want to have the best sleep of your life? If you do, you should buy this pillow!" And my response to this man was I pretended he was not there. I just totally ignored him. And if you're here this weekend, I'm sorry. [laughter]

Maybe you're similar to me. Maybe when the vendors approach you, and you don't have any interest in buying their product, you just pretend they're not actually there. Or, if you're walking in the mall and the people try to sell you skin cream and you wonder to yourself, "Why are you picking me out? Am I breaking out? What's happening to my skin?" And you try to ignore them, you try to pass by and you don't want to actually look at it, you just kind of ignore the situation. And we think, "Meh, it's not that big of a deal. Don't worry about it- it's not exactly like you're *sinning* or anything."

Now imagine you're scrolling through your Facebook feed, like you probably did this week. And you see a friend, or a friend of a friend, who posts on there that something crazy has happened in their life where this house they've been renting for months and years, they now have to be kicked out of it because new people have bought the house and they want to remodel the house, or maybe they want to sell it for more money, or rent it out for more money than what they're currently getting. And your friend, or this friend of a friend, is in this moment of crisis because they can't afford a new place because they market went *crazy* since they started their rental. They can't afford enough space for



their family that's grown since they started renting that place. And you read their post and you read their cries for help. You can either choose to just keep scrolling until you find the cat video, or you can choose to be like the good Samaritan who, if there's anyone whose needs you see and who God has put in you in a position to meet, you actually try to meet it.

Look, all of that's true, and it's good, and we should think about it, and we should should think about ways that we can help meet the needs of others. But Luke 10:25-37 isn't *only* about the commandment or the encouragement to be like the good Samaritan. Luke 10:25-37 is *also* about, in the bigger context, Luke saying, "Don't be like the expert theologian. Don't be like the expert in the law. Don't ask the kinds of questions that the lawyer asks." So, you know when you're in math class, if you're still in math class, or maybe it was a long time ago— I have very bad memories of math class, because I'm not very good with numbers and, so, that's why there's accountants to help with taxes and financial planners to help with financial planning— but maybe you're in math class now, or you remember it. It's not just on the test, it's not just 'Write your answer', right? What does it say? 'You've got to show your work! It doesn't matter what the answer is, you've got to show your work!' So, look, I feel like I want to show you my work a little bit here. I want to show you why I think that Luke 10:25-37 is *actually* trying to encourage us primarily to *not* be like, or ask questions like, the expert in the law: this expert theologian.

So, in Luke 10:1-16, what's going on is, Jesus is sending out 72 disciples into all kinds of towns and he says, "Look, I want you to go to these towns. I want you to preach to them this message: the Kingdom of God is coming near! I want you to talk to them about *me!*" Jesus tells them, "I want you to talk to them about my my ministry and tell them, 'Look, you need to listen to this Jesus. You need to follow this Jesus.'" And, Jesus tells the seventy two, "Here's what's going to happen: some towns, you're going to go to them, and you're going to say this message and they're going to say, 'Whoa! the Kingdom of God is coming near?! You need to come into my house and eat some of the food I'm going to make you, so that you can tell me more about this, because I want to get on board!' And other towns are going to hear you say, 'The Kingdom of God is coming near!' And they're going to say, 'Yeah, not interested'. And to those towns, you're going to say to them, 'Okay, well, you see this dust that's on my feet? I'm going to shake that off because I don't want anything to do with you guys anymore. I gave you the message, if you don't want to come and be a part of this Kingdom that's coming, there will be judgement.'"

See, in verse 1 through 16, Jesus is sending out the 72. What He's telling them is, "When you go out and you do ministry, some people are going to accept the message that you're preaching but some people are going to reject it." So, just for clarity, let's say that the people who accept it are person 'A', and the people who reject are person 'B'. Now, let's read verse 17-24 together,

"The seventy-two [that were sent out] returned with joy and said, 'Lord, even the demons submit to us in your name.' [They're saying, "We did so much cool stuff! You should have seen us, it was really cool!"] He replied, 'I saw Satan fall like lightning from heaven. I have given you authority to trample on snakes and scorpions and to overcome all the power of the enemy; nothing will harm you. [He's saying, "You're right, really cool stuff is going to happen with your



ministry when you preach this good news.”] However [Jesus says], do not rejoice that the spirits submit to you, but rejoice that your names are written in Heaven.’ At that time Jesus, full of joy through the Holy Spirit, said, ‘I praise you, Father, Lord of heaven and earth, because you have hidden these things... [the message of the Kingdom; about Jesus and salvation itself.] You have hidden these things from the wise and learned, and revealed them to little children. Yes, Father, for this is what you were pleased to do. All things have been committed to me by my Father. No one knows who the Son is except the Father, and no one knows who the Father is except the Son and those to whom the Son chooses to reveal him.’ Then he turned to his disciples and said privately, ‘Blessed are the eyes that see what you see. [He’s saying, “Don’t you get how cool it is that you’re understanding what God is doing in the world through me?”] For I tell you that many prophets and kings wanted to see what you see but did not see it, and to hear what you hear but did not hear it.’”

In light of the ministry that happened with the 72 disciples, the cities that they were visiting, and the responses that they were getting, Jesus is listening to these reports and he is responding by saying, “It’s amazing the way that God works in His Kingdom, that unexpected things happen. The insiders who should get it, don’t, and the outsiders who shouldn’t get it, do.” What he’s saying is that there are the wise people who have it hidden from them and there are the children who have it revealed to them. The wise who have it hidden from them, they don’t get it; they reject it. The child who has it revealed, they do get it.

Look, that language of, “the wise and understanding have it hidden from them, and the child has it revealed to them,” that doesn’t maybe hit us as much as what the original audience would have heard. But what that means is that if you expected anyone to understand what God was doing in the world, it would be those who were wise and learned. You know who didn’t understand what was going on in the world? Kids. People who have no idea what’s going on, those are the people who are actually getting the message, and Jesus is saying, “Man, it’s really cool that those who seem like, on the inside, that they should get it, that they don’t get it, and that those who shouldn’t get it actually do.” Then, we have our passage, verse 25-37, that we already read, where the lawyer, theologian comes up to Jesus and say, “Let me ask you a question, ‘How do I get saved? How do I inherit eternal life?’” And Jesus says, “Wow, you’re a really good theologian. What do you think?” He says, “Well, I’ve got to love God with all that I have and I have to love others, my neighbours, as myself.” And Jesus says, “Right; nailed it! You’re a good theologian. If you do that, you’re going to live. If you live that way in response to what God has done for you, that shows you get it.” Then the lawyer asks the question, “Okay, fair enough, but who is my neighbour? Like, who do I actually need to love?” Jesus tells the story about the good Samaritan. He says, “Okay, which of the three *proved* to be a neighbour to the man that was in need?” And the lawyer says, “ Well, the one who helped proved to be the neighbour.” Here’s what’s going on, the lawyer is asking the question, “*Who* is my neighbour?” and Jesus asks the question, “Who actually proved themselves to *be* a neighbour?” Here’s the problem, the lawyer is asking a question that he shouldn’t ask. If you understand what God is doing in the world and you are responding to His grace towards you, you don’t ask, “Who do I need to love?” And, here is this guy, the lawyer and trained theologian, who is the definition of ‘wise and understanding’. He should *get* what God is doing in the world, but... he doesn’t. After the scene with the good Samaritan— the



parable of the good Samaritan, the engagement, the conversation between Jesus and the lawyer—what we have next is an encounter with Jesus and Martha and Mary.

Jesus is in the house with two women and one of them comes to them and says, “Jesus, my sister Mary is not helping *at all* with anything I need to get done. Instead, she is just sitting, hanging out with you, and listening to you talk. Tell her to help me.” And Jesus says, “Woah, woah, woah. Don’t critique Mary for wanting to sit and enjoy a relationship with me and listen to my teaching because that’s what it’s actually all about.” See, Mary is presented as an example of someone who shouldn’t get what’s going on, but she does. See, in our context and culture, we don’t think that just because someone is a woman means they’re incapable of understanding things. Yet, in the ancient culture, what’s going on is women were like the children; they shouldn’t understand what’s happening. What God’s doing in the world, that’s for trained theologians and men to figure out, but kids and women? Man, they can’t get it.

See, what Jesus is doing in Luke 10, what Luke is trying to show, is that the Parable of the Good Samaritan isn’t just an encouragement for us to love those who have need and to try to meet the needs of those who have them. But, Luke 10:25-37 is also trying to tell us is, don’t be like the expert theologian. The point is the conversation between Jesus and the lawyer. The problem with the lawyer is that he was asking the question, “*Who* do I need to love?” rather than, “*How* can I love others?”.

Look, here’s the big idea of Luke 10:25-37 is, when it comes to loving others, Christians ask, “How?” not, “Who?”. The problem with the lawyer is that he was asking, “*Who* do I need to love?” But, when it comes to Christian, when it comes to loving others, we need to ask the question, “*How* do I love them?” not, “*Who* do I need to love?”. Look, I think you and I are a lot more like the lawyer and theologian than we like to give credit for. See, I’ve grown up in the Valley my whole life, and there’s a lot of people who say things like, “Well, I don’t need to love *them!*” Who the “them” is is different for different people. Sometimes, the people, the “them” that we don’t need to love, sometimes it’s people who have different sexual ethics than us. Sometimes, it’s the people who have a different religion than us. Sometimes, it’s people who are a different skin colour than us. Through our jokes, through our Facebook posts, and through our coffee conversations, we make it clear that, “We don’t have to love *them!*”

On June 12, 2016, a gunman named Omar Matteen killed 49 people in a gay nightclub in Orlando. In the Facebook posts and coffee conversations, people were saying things like, “Well, *those* people had it coming...” See, their heart is telling them, “I don’t need to love *them.*”

Dr. Russell Moore is a theologian and ethicist in a denomination in the United States and, in response to that event in Orlando, he wrote these words in Time Magazine,

“Let’s realize that, in this case, our gay and lesbian neighbours are likely quite scared. Who wouldn’t be? Let’s demonstrate the sacrificial love of Jesus to them. We don’t have to agree on the meaning of marriage and sexuality to love one another...”



Because Christian who want to respond to God's grace to them, don't ask the question, "Who do I love?" they ask the questions, "How can I love?"

On January 29, 2017, a guy named Alexander Bissonnete walked into the Islamic Cultural Centre in Quebec City and killed six people who were worshipping there. In the Facebook posts and the living room coffee conversations, you could overhear people saying things like, "Well, *those* Muslims had it coming... We don't have to love *them*." Dr. Russell Moore's words are just as fitting in that instance as it was in the night club in Orlando. He would say something like,

"Let's realize that, in this case, our [Muslim] neighbours are likely quite scared. Who wouldn't be? Let's demonstrate the sacrificial love of Jesus to them. We don't have to agree on [whether Jesus is the Son of God and Saviour of the world] to love one another..."

Because Christian ask, "How?" not, "Who?"

Or you might be aware of the conflict that's happening in West Abbotsford on the Townline Hill region of our city. Townline Hill area is a turf for some gang wars that are happening in our city. It is not uncommon to hear on the news or read in newspapers, that there was a shooting, of a targeted nature, of one gang trying to kill someone from another gang. The victims and the attackers in these situations are predominantly young men of East Asian/Southeast Asian descent; Indo-Canadian people. You can see in the Facebook posts and you can hear in the living room coffee conversations, people say things like, "Well, as long as they take care of it over there... As long as it's just among themselves, right?... As long as they don't hurt anyone else... If *they* don't hurt us, then...." See, we read those news reports and we hear them and our heart says, "Well, I don't have to really love them."

Rather than praying for our neighbours and trying to become friends with people who are different than us, instead, we decide to head for the hills. We have people, when we are moving into the area, tell us, "Man, you don't want to live in *that* area because *you* wouldn't fit in with *them*." In our heart we think, "Yeah, I don't have to love *them*." See, we are more like the lawyer than we give ourselves credit for. We ask the question, "Who is our neighbour?" when we ask the question, "Do I really need to love *them*?"

Look, if you are a Christian and you believe the Gospel—you believe that Jesus has saved you by grace alone. Your response, when you feel in yourself the temptation to say, "I don't need to love *them!*", the only response is repentance. To say, "Lord, my heart is not as it should be!" Shame on us who are sinners saved by grace, who decide to draw lines and limits around who is worthy of our love and care. Because Christians ask, "How?" not, "Who?"

This shift is our minds, in our thinking about how do we ask, "How I love?" rather than, "Who I love?" is a *major* shift in thinking! But, it expresses itself in some small, but meaningful, ways, this shift. So, imagine you go to school and at your school there's someone in your class who no one wants to hang out with. They sit alone *a lot* and they play alone *a lot*. Maybe they don't understand the same jokes that you get, and maybe they think different things about what is fun and what is not. See, if you are a



Christian, and you believe in Jesus, and you are trying to live a life that's going to honour Him, the question that we ask in our classroom is not, "Do I need to love that person who is weird?" The question is, "How can I love that person?" When you see someone being bullied, for whatever reason—it doesn't matter who is being bullied or who is the bully themselves— the response to that situation is not, "Do I actually need to love that person in this situation?" The response of someone who wants to love Jesus is, "How can I step in for the person who is being treated so poorly?" Because Christians ask *how* we should love, not *who* we should love.

Maybe you are not in school anymore, but you are at a church. We gather together as the Church on weekends, so that we can sing songs to God, we can hear the Word preached, we can see babies be dedicated, and we can do all kinds of great things to try and encourage one another to keep loving Jesus and keep following Jesus. We come together as the Church so that we can encourage each other, and, yet, it's very, very easy to try and gather together as the Church and just come in with the mindset of "What can I get out of this time? How do I get the most out of my church experience? I want to pick the right seat, in the right venue, so I hear the right songs and I get the right preacher. I want to consume the most I can because I want to be encouraged in my faith." Yet, the reason we gather together as Christians is to encourage others.

So, our community groups are a great place for us to grow deep in relationships with people, to pray for one another, and to walk through situations together, and to praise God together, and to look at all the good and bad of what life is like. Then, when we come together as the whole community at Northview Church, part of what we do is we come with the mindset of "How can I be a blessing to someone else today? How do I ask myself, not *who* should I care about, smile at, be friends with or talk to, but *how* can I make people around me feel like this is actually a place where they belong?" Look, when it comes to Christians, there is no such thing as the "cool kids" and the "outsiders". There is only sinners, saved by grace, who want to encourage other sinners, saved by grace, to keep following this God who saved them.

See, it's a major shift in our thinking to go from "Who should I love?" to "How can I love them?" And, yet, it plays itself out in very everyday ways. Look, the motivation for this, as Christians, is *not* to say, "Look, I'm going to be a great person who loves all kinds of people and ask, 'How?' not, 'Who?' and I want to do it because I want to show God how great I am!" That's not the motivation! The motivation is the Gospel, for us. The motivation of why we ask, "How?" not, "Who?" is because Jesus asked, "How?" not, "Who?". There is one guy in the history of the world who could come and legitimately ask in his life, "Do I have to love *them*? The ones who are convicting me a crime I did not do; do I have to love *them*? The ones who are crucifying me; do I have to love *them*?" O man, but it's good news Jesus didn't come asking, "Who do I need to love?" but He came asking, "How can I love?" because this is how He loved us. He came and He lived the perfect life we couldn't live. He came and He died for our sins, in our place, and He rose again to say, "Look at what the power of God can do! It take death and turn it into life. It doesn't just make good people better, it makes dead people live." When we get that message and we let that truth soak our hearts—that we are saved because Jesus asked, "How?" not, "Who?"— then we live our lives thinking, "Man, how can I live?" not, "Who should I love?"... Because Jesus loved us first, we love others. Because Jesus loved us by asking, "How?" not,



“Who?”, we respond by asking ourselves, when it comes to loving those around me, we ask “How?” not, “Who?”.

Let me pray for us. Father, I am thankful for your Word. I am thankful that Jesus didn't ask who He should love, but, instead, He asked how He could love and He showed that He loves us because of what He did in His life, and death, and resurrection. Now, as an act of worship to you in our lives, would you help us ask the question, “How?” not, “Who?” when it comes to who we love. Not to gain favour with You, but because we already have it and we want to live a life that glorifies You and helps others see just how amazing this grace actually is. We don't deserve You and, yet, because of what You have done, we can actually have You and that's the best news. Help us to live in light of it. We pray this for your fame and in Christ's name, Amen.