



Sermon Transcription • Luke 10:25-37

Commit to Community

Pastor Andy Steiger

[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.]

It's good to have you here. I don't know if anyone else...I heard a lot of coughing and sneezing going on there. I got my Christmas cold over the holidays. Anyone else? You know what I'm talking about? I appreciate that you're here, I'm here, we're going to make it through this together. Glad that you're with us. We are in this kind of transition phase, though, where we've gone through that series leading up to Christmas and celebrated the birth of our Savior, and now we're going to be transitioning into a new series, but until then we're in that in between phase. Jeff said, "Andy, you get to preach on whatever you want." And I said, "Perfect." Given that we just went through Romans earlier, I said, "I think I'm going to preach on why I'm not a Calvinist." [Laughter] To which he said, "You can preach on anything but that." [Laughter] Just kidding. No, he said, "Anything you want." And I said, "You know what, what I would love to speak on is the topic of community." It's something that I've thought a lot about, it's something I've been writing quite a bit about on. How important relationships are. How important it is for you and I to be in community. And in fact, what community is, and how essential community is to our humanity, as human beings made in the image of God, our need for relationship. So I just want to make two points as we go into the Scriptures today. The first thing that we're going to look at is that you and I need to be careful that a close community does not become a closed community. And the second thing that I want to look at is if you and I are to remain open and to be the kind of community that welcomes people in, we'll require a change of heart.

[A Close Community Can Become a Closed Community]

And to start, as we begin to look at this topic of what it looks like to be such a close community that we become a closed community, I want to begin by telling you a story. As many of you know, God uses different moments in your life to teach you, doesn't he? And I find that particularly as a parent, God is constantly using moments in my parenting and my interactions with my boys to teach me something of the heart of God. To teach me about my heavenly Father, and about the way that he sees you and I. And I particularly had one of these teaching moments this summer. This summer I had the opportunity to do something with my boys that I've been looking forward to for some time. I took them rock climbing. Now, I love rock climbing. It's been a part of my life for a long time, and you know, as they've been growing up I've gone indoor rock climbing with them, but this summer I had the opportunity to take them out on a real rock in Squamish and climb together. It was a beautiful day and we were having a great time. But you know, it's interesting in those moments, things happen and you learn from them. For example, I learned that you need to remind your children of the basics. And I



know we've got kids with us in the service, so listen up kids. Parents, it's a good reminder. I had done my best setting up the ropes and making sure my anchor was good, and they were tied into that rope just right. And I knew that my son's life was hanging in the balance, literally. But I had failed to mention the very basics of rock climbing. And I realized this when my son made it to the top of the rock, and then I couldn't see him anymore as he took a step onto the ledge, and I began to tell him to come back down, you know, I'm going to slowly lower you back down. And I realized there was a problem when a rock climber from the parking lot came running to me in a panic, about to lose his mind, as he proceeded to explain to me that my son had just removed his rope. He just unclipped from the rope at the top of this mountain. And I was thinking to myself, I forgot to tell him that. Alright? "Keep the rope attached! Do *not* undo that!" I was like, I was in a panic. I was like, what do I do? I don't want to unattach myself, so Nancy quickly climbed up the side of this mountain and got to him and walked him back down. That was a terrifying moment. God taught me, okay? [Laughter] Explain the basics.

But then, after that, my other son, the smallest one, he's nine. We were there with another family, and one of their girls wanted to go for a walk with him. And he asked, "Dad, can I go for a walk with this girl?" And I said, "Absolutely, with my blessing." You know, go for a walk as they're hanging out, waiting for their turn to rock climb. And as he's waiting, he just took a...I heard a scream. I heard him crying, not too far from us, about 20 feet from us. And that's kind of common, I'm not too worried about that. My kids cry, so I didn't worry too much about it. But then I heard the little girl start crying, and screaming. And then I realized (parents you know what I'm talking about), we've got a problem, right? Quickly let down the parent that was climbing and I unattached the rope as quickly as I could and I ran to where I heard him crying. And as I came into the forest, I saw my son holding his arm, and it was bent. He was standing on a rock and took a bad step backwards, and he broke his arm, broke both bones in his arm. And I've got to tell you, parents, when you see your little kid broken, I tell you, I ran up to him and I scooped him up in my arms. Parents, you know what I'm talking about, man. I could have ran anywhere, amen? And I ran to my car, you know. And I quickly took him off to the hospital, and this is him as they put a cast on him, and this picture is after he got all bandaged up, that's my boy William.

And I've got to tell you, as I was just holding my son and as I went through that experience with him, seeing him physically broken, as a parents there is a part of you that is just soul-crushing, as you see your kid broken and so desperately wanting to see him fixed. And as I began to just dwell on that, it was interesting, as I juxtaposed this scene in which I saw him break his arm, but I juxtaposed that to a scene that I'd seen earlier in the summer, in which I'd seen my son emotionally broken. And I've got to say, as a parent it is far more painful to see your child emotionally broken, to see them rejected, to see them relationally broken, than it is to see them physically broken. It is much more difficult. When it happened, that I really clued into this, that I saw how easy it is for a close community to become a closed community, was my son Tristan, his older brother, it was his birthday. And we were out celebrating his birthday and he was with his best buddies, and they are such a tight group. The problem is that they are so close that they become closed off, and William is desperately trying to hang with is older brother. But his buddies are making fun of him, they're not allowing him to become a part of this group. And I could just see it emotionally, I could just see it on his face, as William is just



broken. And so I had one of those parenting moments where I pulled my son Tristan aside, and I said, “Tristan, I don’t know if you see what’s happening here, but you’re so close with your buds that you’re not open to your brother, and he needs you. Your brother loves you. And your brother needs to be in relationship with you, and you need to be in relationship with your brother.” And I said, “And your friends, man, they’re making fun of your little brother. Like, you need to be careful.” And he’s like, “Dad, I didn’t see that.” And I go, “I didn’t think you saw it.” And I was so proud of him, man, because as that day went on and his...I tell you, not five minutes after that, one of his friends started to make fun of his little brother again. Tristan stepped in there and goes, “Woah woah woah, man. That’s my brother. You know, he’s a part of us.” Man, did that change that entire day.

Really, really began to help me to understand our heavenly Father, and how God sees you and I. And his heart for us and our need for community, and our need for relationship, and how God’s heart aches for us when you and I are isolated and rejected. Listen, church, God loves you, and God desires that you would be in community. Now I know that this can be a hard message to hear just coming out of Christmas, as I know that there are many of us that Christmas is not a great time for us for community. Christmas can be a time in which we’re reminded of how broken our family and our friendships are. And I know that there are many of us here today, that we’ve had those moments where we begin to become closed off, and we’re not even sure if we want to be committed to relationships at all. We’re not sure whether or not we are committed to not only allowing people to be in community with us, but us being in community with other people. And it’s important for you and I to appreciate that if you and I are going to flourish, if you and I are going to live the kind of life that God has intended for us, it will only happen through community. Through relationship.

So if you have your Bible, I would encourage you to open it with me. This kind of sets the stage, if you will, as we look at the scene in Luke 10, in which Jesus is having this teaching moment where he is teaching about the dangers of becoming a closed off person. In which he begins to now work on a man’s heart that needs to become open. It’s an incredible piece of Scripture. We’re in Luke 10, I’m going to be starting in verse 25. Jesus is here teaching, and there is an expert in the law who’s been listening to Jesus. And we read in Luke 10:25,

“On one occasion an expert in the law stood up to test Jesus. ‘Teacher,’ he asked, ‘what must I do to inherit eternal life?’”

This is a classic question, right? What do I gotta do to go to heaven, Jesus? Maybe put a little bit differently the way Jesus perhaps would word this is, what does the abundant life look like? What does it look like to experience the fullness of human flourishing? How has God intended life for me to be? It’s an important question for you and I to consider. And this man, clearly, he’s been reading his Scripture, he’s been listening to Jesus. And Jesus, you know, as he’s engaging with this man in this intellectual conversation, responds back to him, Luke 10:26-28,

“‘What is written in the Law?’ he replied. ‘How do you read it?’ [And clearly this man’s been paying attention, because as he responds, he says] ‘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 neighbor as yourself.'"

You see, this guy's been listening. He's been reading. See, this is a common reply. The Jews understood that this is what God has desired for you. Deuteronomy 6, it's called the Shema. Hear O Israel, the Lord your God, the Lord is one. Love the Lord your God with everything that it is to be a human being: heart, mind, soul, strength. Everything, love God. Now clearly this man's been reading his Scriptures, but he's also been listening to Jesus. Because as you read the gospels, as Jesus continually responds to the questions people are asking, he brings them back to this. Love God, but then he adds to Deuteronomy 6 with Leviticus 19: And love your neighbour as yourself. Which this man picks up; he's been listening to Jesus. And by the way, that's an interesting thing to add, isn't it? The reality is that if you and I love God, then we will love the things that God loves, and God loves people. God is a relational God. God is a God who has created you and I to be in community with one another. He desires that we would be in relationship with him, and that you and I would be in relationship with one another. And *this* is where human flourishing takes place. This is what you and I were created for. This is what Jesus came for. This is what we celebrate at Christmas: a relational God who relationally came to us, to save us, for relationship. I love the way the apostle Paul put it, by the way. In Ephesians the apostle Paul explains that Jesus came to break down the walls of hostility, he says, the walls that divide you and I. The walls that divide you and I from God, Jesus came to break those walls down. The walls that divide you and I from each other, Jesus came to break those walls down, so that you and I could be the church. That we could be a group of people committed to our relationship with God, and committed to our relationship to one another.

The problem is though, is that often, we can become so close, we become closed off. And this is particularly true of the Jews. the Jewish nation was a close knit community that had become closed off, and as this man begins to engage with Jesus further, it goes from an intellectual conversation to a conversation of the heart. In which Luke begins to draw our attention here, in Luke 10:28-29. We read,

"'You have answered correctly,' Jesus replied. 'Do this and you will live.' But [verse 29 here, but this teacher of the law] wanted to justify himself, [see he wasn't finished, he was just starting. He wanted to get this out of the way because he wanted to ask the question that was really on his heart] so he asked Jesus, 'And who is my neighbor?'"

And it's interesting, this teacher of the law is asking the right question, but with the wrong heart. It's the right question, the wrong heart. You see, as the Jewish people, they had become closed off to those that were non-Jews, and particularly they had become closed off to Samaritans. And this is significant, because we're going to see in a moment, the story Jesus is going to tell is going to clue us in to what is going on in this man's heart, as the Jews understood and referred to the Samaritans as half-breeds. It's a very dehumanizing term. And the reason that they called them half-breeds is because during the Babylonian captivity, when the Jews were taken off to Babylon, there was a group of Jews who remained in the land, and those Jews intermarried, and they became the Samaritans; half-breeds. They weren't fully Jewish. More than that, not only were they not fully Jewish in the sense of their lineage, but also in their religious practices, as they only accepted the first five books of the



Old Testament, and they did not agree that the temple of which God should be worshiped is at Jerusalem, but instead, at Mount Gerizim. So these people, not only did they disagree with one another, but they hated each other. The Jews disliked the Samaritans so much that they wouldn't even walk through their land. They wouldn't talk to them, they wouldn't touch them. And what this teacher of the law is getting at is he's saying, listen, Jesus, what does God want for me? He wants me to love him, and he wants me to love other people, but surely there's some people that I don't need to love. Like a Samaritan. To which Jesus begins to tell this man a very famous story that has become embedded into our culture. He begins to tell him the story of the good Samaritan.

And what Jesus tells him here, and picking back up in Luke 10:30, Jesus begins to tell him a story of a man, we read. And he says, "Listen, there's this man," and Jesus doesn't tell us if he's a Jew, a Samaritan, he doesn't tell you anything about the background, he just says, "Listen, there's a man and he's going from Jerusalem down to Jericho." Now the teacher of the law would have instantly recognized that this was a dangerous journey. That clearly this man was gambling if he's doing that journey alone, as it was known to be dangerous. And sure enough, as this man's going down to Jericho, there's some robbers that come out, they beat this man, they strip him of his possessions, and they leave him on the road, dead. Half-dead. And Jesus continuing this story, begins to do something quite interesting in the narrative. Normally when you and I tell a story, we will often humanize the hero, and we dehumanize the villain. And you'll know that the storyteller has done this well, particularly when you're watching a movie, because you'll cheer for the hero, but you'll also cheer for the demise of the villain. And what Jesus begins to do, though, is he begins to flip that narrative on its head. And as he begins to explain the story to him, he says, "Listen, as this man is laying half-dead on the side of the road, along comes a priest. And the priest sees this man, and instead of coming and attending to him, he goes to the other side of the road, and he keeps on walking. And then along comes a Levite, and he too, instead of coming to his aid, goes to the other side of the road, and keeps on walking." Now, in the teacher of the law's mind, these are the heroes of the story. These are the religious people. And the equivalent would be, this is a pastor and his apprentice. Surely, if there's anybody who's going to get it right, it's the pastor, right? It's those people that are committed to God, and yet, they're the ones that are getting it wrong. And instead of, you know, them being the hero, they become the villain, and who becomes the hero of the story? Well, this third guy starts coming along, and it's a Samaritan. And the Samaritan comes along and sees this half-dead man on the side of the road, and he runs to his aid. He bandages his wounds, puts him on his donkey, brings him to an inn, and pays for his stay. And more than that, he explains, "Listen, I'll come back and I'll cover whatever costs have been incurred; just take care of him." To which Jesus now looks back over at this teacher of the law, Luke 10:36, and says,

"Which of these three do you think was a neighbor to the man who fell into the hands of robbers?"

Now, you can begin to get a sense of the bitterness of this teacher of the law's heart, as he can't even bring himself to say the name "Samaritan." Instead he replied, "the one who had mercy on him." To which Jesus told him, "Go and do likewise." Go and show mercy on those in need. Don't be a closed



community; be an open community to welcoming people in, knowing that they need you and you need them.

[An Open Community Requires a Change of Heart]

Listen, I just want to make two comments here before we continue on. I just want to highlight two things. The first thing that comes to my mind as I read this, is that you and I just need to take a moment to appreciate what Jesus has just done here. Jesus has just made the common enemy of the Jews, a Samaritan, the hero. He has made a man, in whom he disagrees with, the hero of the story. Listen, Jesus didn't agree with Samaritans. He didn't agree that only the first five books of the Old Testament were inspired. He didn't agree with them, that the proper place to worship was at Mount Gerizim and not in Jerusalem. But yet, he still used them as the hero of the story, and when you read about Jesus, what does he do? He walks into Samaritan lands. He touches and talks to and shares the good news with Samaritans. And the reason I'm bringing this up is I think in our culture today in particular, you and I often get sold a bill of goods that we can't disagree with somebody and love them at the same time. Jesus did it all the time. He disagreed with people and he loved them. And you and I need to understand that those two things are not mutually exclusive. We can do both of those things, and we need to do both of those things. So many people think that to love somebody is to agree with them. In fact, often one of the most loving things you can do is disagree with somebody. I like the way that Timothy Keller put it, he said this: "All churches must understand, love, and identify with their local community and social setting, and yet at the same time be able and willing to critique and challenge it." You and I need to be able to deeply, profoundly love people on the one hand, and deeply be able to disagree with people on the other. You can do both, and you need to. And it's only when you and I have a heart that understands that, and is based in that love for people, but isn't willing to compromise truth, that we can become open to people, and we're not scared to be in relationship with one another.

Here's the second thing that I think is interesting about this passage, and is incredibly convicting that you and I need to think about. You and I like to put ourselves in the seat of the good Samaritan, but Jesus isn't telling you that story because you and I tend to be the good Samaritan. You and I tend to be the teacher of the law. You and I tend to exclude and not welcome in, and we need to be challenged at times. And one of the things that I think about as I read this story is I wonder if I were to ask Jesus that question, who is my neighbour? And he needed to wrestle with what's going on in my heart, in your heart. Who would be the hero of that story? Who would Jesus humanize in your life, in your story, that you need to become open to, that you need to care for? That you need to attend to? This is something that you and I need to think about often. And truthfully, it's difficult and it's convicting. It's challenging. But I've got to say, there is nothing more beautiful than when the church, the bride of Christ, lives that out. When you and I love God, and we love people, the way that he intended us to. It is a beautiful thing. And I've got to tell you, as your young adults pastor, it has been a privilege leading the young adult ministry of this church, because our young adults love God, and they love people. And we have seen that in amazing ways. You know, right now at Northview, if I could just brag about them for a moment. You know, at Northview we have 17 community groups of young adults. We counted the other day, there are 350 young adults in community. We have over 80 leaders



in our young adult ministry that are opening up their homes to community, and we are seeing lives changed.

This is the beauty of the gospel, when you and I live in relationship with God, and you and I live in relationship with one another. And I'm telling you right now, church, that you and I have a choice to make. We can either experience heaven on earth, or hell on earth. You don't need to die to experience those things. You can experience them right now. When you and I experience the abundant life that Christ has for us, when we love him and we love one another, we get a taste of heaven right now. The opposite is also true. When you give up on God and you give up on one another, you can begin to experience hell on earth right now. And listen, if I could just challenge you as you and I go into 2019, my challenge, my encouragement to you is that we would continue to be a church committed to community. A church committed to love God with everything that we are, and a people that are committed to love one another, as we grow in our relationship with the Lord, as we see his love for people and as he continues to direct us to those who are in need around us. Those people who need to be shown mercy and brought into relationship. You and I need to be on the lookout for that. I think that the truth is that there's some of you that in 2019, you need to commit to community. You need to realize that relationship is a vital part of who you are and the way God created you. Some of you need to connect into a community group, and I want to encourage you to do so. Some of you just need to commit to being part of a church family, and participating in that family.

And if I could just close with some encouragement to you, I've had the privilege of just seeing what it looks like when the church is the church. And I saw this recently through a terrible tragedy that took place in our young adult ministry in our church. In november, as many of you know, there was a horrible car accident that took place in Surrey. It left the mother of the car dead. One of the young adults in the back of the car died as well. But one of them, her name is Olivia, was in critical condition, at Royal Columbian Hospital. And I've got to tell you, this is a picture of Olivia. That's her mom, baptizing her with her grandfather at our baptism service a couple years ago. It's been amazing to see God at work in her. But listen, I went to the hospital, and I saw Olivia when she was in a coma, when her lungs weren't working, when there was a machine that was pumping her blood. I saw as she was there, that as the hospital said, "She's the sickest person we have here," I've never seen a person with more tubes coming in and out of them. And I thought, mercy, it is going to take a miracle for her to survive this. And in fact, the second time that we came back to pray for her, pastors and elders, the doctors were in tears as they said, "Listen, we've done all that we can for her. This girl needs a miracle." And it was amazing to see that as the church began to rally behind her in prayer, God healed her body. And is continuing to do so. I had the privilege yesterday morning to go spend with her at the hospital, and I've got to tell you, part of me wanted to go just to pray for her, but there's a part of me that just wanted to go just to see what God's been doing. Because I've got to tell you, when you see somebody who is on death's door like that, and you get to go and you're talking with them, and you're seeing a walking, talking miracle, and this girl who is just thanking God and her community, and this picture is posted right by her bed. And everytime a doctor or nurse comes in, man, she is pointing people to Jesus. And she is so thankful for the community that she has had that has rallied behind her in her time of need. In fact, her father told me, he said, "Andy, yeah it's a miracle to see how her body's been healed, but Andy, what a miracle it's been for me to see the church in action. To see a



body of people that love God and love one another, and rally behind each other. That is a little piece of heaven on earth.” Olivia’s mother, Janine, wrote me a letter and I’d like to read it for you as we close. Again, just a reminder of what it looks like to be the kind of church God’s called us to be. She said,

“Andy, our Christian community experience, where do we start? And how to keep this short? It’s been unbelievable. It’s not 55 days from that tragic day. We still haven’t had to make a meal. We receive meal deliveries every couple of days. Our house is filled with cards, many filled with gift cards to help with gas, parking, food. The continuous offers to help keep pouring in. Everything from cleaning our house, setting up Christmas decorations, feeding our cows, to just coming for a hug, prayers, and support. The fundraisers have also been wonderful. Bottle drives, cupcake sales by her kindergarten class at MEI. Which must have been the best cupcakes ever for how much money they raised. [Laughter] And Brown’s Restaurant social event with auction items donated by local community businesses. We’ve been sent photos of businesses that have put on their sign, ‘Praying for Olivia.’ We are completely blown away by all this love and generosity. But most importantly, the prayers. We cannot thank everyone enough for the amount of prayers that are still storming heaven’s gates daily. He’s hearing them all. Our prayer community rallied non-stop, so when there were times where we were too exhausted to pray, so many were still going. We truly believe Olivia would not be with us today without all of God’s prayer warriors. When I reached out online to Northview for prayer requests for her, I was responded to right away. It gave us great comfort knowing we could reach out to someone directly. Thanks Diana. [Man, we’ve got a great care team here at Northview church.] And continuously updated them during one of the roughest weeks we went through, and that it would get forwarded to everyone on the prayer chain immediately. The prayer requests at times were non-stop, for it was touch and go if she would make it. The offer to send pastors and elders to pray over her and anoint her with oil two different times were greatly appreciated. [And I’ve got to tell you, as a pastor, it was so cool to go with our elders who took time off of work, them and their wives, to come and to pray. It’s awesome.] The time I sent Paul an email about her multiple strokes, and he wrote back asking if he could pray with the congregation since he was emceeding at the evening service, was wonderful. I haven’t even mentioned the Northview young adults and that they organized a special prayer service during the week that this happened, and we heard roughly 500 showed up. We were shocked. There are now 3800 people who follow her sister’s updates on Facebook, and so many respond to each one, letting us know that they are praying for complete healing, which she still needs. So when I say our Christian community has been unbelievable, it really has been. God has truly showed he is all-powerful. They told us her lungs would most likely not breathe again, but God gave her breath. They told us that she would most likely not walk again, but God gave her strength even in her left side, and as of yesterday she walked 150 metres. They told us that she would most likely not talk again or have any expression, but she’s chatting up a storm and has tons of expression, which I can confirm. They told us she most likely would be institutionalized for the rest of her life, but soon, she will be heading to rehab and then coming home. All that’s left to say is our God is awesome, and the love of our community, which he shines through. We give him all the glory, for he is the God that performs miracles, as he clearly did with Liv. Thank you from the Klingler family.”



Isn't that awesome? [Applause] Church, thank you for being the church. And let us go into 2019 loving God with everything that we are, as we seek to love one another, to be the kind of community that he's called us to be. Amen? [Amen.] Let me pray for you,

Lord God, as we come before you this morning, we are so thankful that you love us. We're so thankful that you've broken down the dividing wall that separated you from us, and we can have relationship through your son Jesus. God, we thank you. And Lord, I just pray that you would be working in each one of our hearts. That we would continue to remain open to community, and that we would see those people who are in need of mercy, who need community to rally behind them, that need to be loved. Jesus, I am so thankful for the church, and what an amazing job they've done loving Olivia and her family through this incredibly trying time. God, I thank you for the church and what a slice of heaven it is to see what relationship can look like. And I pray that as we go into 2019, we would continue to be committed to community, and the kind of church you've called us to be. And Jesus, that through you and your work in us, we can be a light in a dark world, we pray. In your power and to your glory. Amen.