The Good Samaritan Parable

Right answers, right action, and how to read God's word

SPEAKER	Matt Ryniker
DATE	Sunday, November 6, 2022
PASSAGES	Luke 10:25-37; Leviticus 19:17-18; Leviticus 19:33-34; Luke 14:12-14; Galatians 6:8-10; Romans 12:10-16; Ephesians 6:10-18
MESSAGE	Begins at 1:09:19 in the service

THE BIG IDEA

The lawyer who tested Jesus had the right answers but not the right action. In the Good Samaritan, Jesus answers the real question — *how do you read it?* — and shows that a life-giving reading of God's word is marked by mercy, compassion and action. We want good theology and we want to act on it, because the goal is not to know the Bible but to know the God who wrote it.

KEY TAKEAWAYS

- Spiritual warfare is not spooky. We fear God, not the devil, and our most important act of warfare is standing with God in faithful obedience.
- Start the fight where you have failed most and lost hope; God's mercy can do what willpower cannot.
- The lawyer answered "what is written" but never "how do you read it." Jesus showed that the problem was there.
- Jesus turns the question around: not "who is my neighbour?" but "who proved to be a neighbour to the man who was beaten?"
- In Luke, good theology always sees, has compassion and acts — like the Samaritan, the prodigal's father and Jesus at the widow's gate.

- God is not lurking for a gotcha moment, and he is not fooled by our chosen snapshots. He is interested in our whole life.
- Give to those who cannot repay you, and love the household of faith with brotherly affection.

▶ 1:09:19

Before the sermon, Matt wanted to re-articulate last week's call to spiritual warfare. A friend had told him some people have little experience of it and may have heard only words. "Big picture: we should fear God, not the devil."

Spiritual warfare without the spookiness

▶ 1:10:02

He was not exalting the enemy's power, as some online voices do, "really goofy and spooky." All authority is Jesus', yet we and angels alike can partner with opposition to God, so our choices are part of the battle. And prayers are not magic, "as if we're pulling levers and adjusting gears in the invisible realm." The most important act of warfare is to stand with God in faithful obedience.

▶ 1:10:44

So Paul tells us to be strong in the Lord, in the strength of his might, not ours, and to put on the armour of God — not incantations and amulets (Ephesians 6:10–18). We do not wrestle against flesh and blood; the people who oppose us are themselves victims of evil. The war was won in Christ, and until he returns we fight in his power.

▶ 1:12:42

Matt walked the armour. The belt of truth and the breastplate of righteousness: a conservative theology, which simply means "instead of adding to or cutting or adjusting what I see in the Scripture, letting God himself use his word to add to, cut or adjust in me." Then the gospel of peace, the shield of faith, the helmet of salvation, the sword of the Spirit, the word of God — and "praying at all times in the Spirit."

A personal story

▶ 1:14:45

Matt rarely talks about his personal life, but he confessed that for several years he had been addicted to checking the news and Twitter — what is happening, what really happened. He could pretend it was for

intercession, “well, I was really just addicted,” often tearfully telling God he did not want to keep checking and could not stop. It was not inspiring faith but fear.

▶ 1:15:57

He told a sister in Christ who hears from God for others to tell him anything she sensed, “even if it’s a little bit prickly.” Thirty-five minutes later she called back: *be careful with watching things that don’t shine with God’s glory, because he doesn’t want you in fear; he wants faith for you.* What he could not win by willpower, “a merciful word from God’s heart was able to do” — and he has walked free ever since. “When I think of spiritual warfare, I think of freedom. I think of joy replacing bondage.”

▶ 1:17:20

His “pastoral chat”: ask the Spirit to highlight the area where the enemy mocks you for consistent failure, and wage war there. “Let’s start with the giant rocks, the big boulders,” as David took the stronghold of Zion (2 Samuel 5:7). Come to God like the persistent widow (Luke 18:1–8). Many of us are like the lepers outside Samaria begging for food, not knowing the enemy army has already fled and a feast awaits (2 Kings 7:3–9).

The parable, read slowly

▶ 1:19:32

The sermon itself connects to last week’s on having enemies and loving them. Familiar passages can switch our brains off — “yeah, do good things, whatever” — so Matt read slowly.

> “And behold, a lawyer stood up to put him to the test, saying, ‘Teacher, what shall I do to inherit eternal life?’ He said to him, ‘What is written in the Law? How do you read it?’ And he answered, ‘You shall 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 your neighbor as yourself.’ And he said to him, ‘You have answered correctly; do this, and you will live.’”
>
> LUKE 10:25–37 ↗

▶ 1:20:41

Jesus asked two questions — what is in the law, and how do you read it — and the lawyer answered only the first, from Deuteronomy 6:5 and Leviticus. “Do this,” Jesus says to the second, “and you will live.”

▶ 1:21:33

“Love your neighbour” appears twice in that chapter. Once with some ambiguity: “You shall not take vengeance or bear a grudge against the sons of your own people, but you shall love your neighbor as

yourself" (Leviticus 19:17–18) — are only my own people my neighbours? And once that clarifies it: "You shall treat the stranger who sojourns with you as the native among you, and you shall love him as yourself, for you were strangers in the land of Egypt" (Leviticus 19:33–34).

▶ 1:22:55

So the lawyer, "desiring to justify himself," asks, "And who is my neighbour?" — which sounds like wanting to find out who is *not* your neighbour. "We've all been there."

▶ 1:23:30

Then the story: a man beaten by robbers and left half dead on the Jericho road; a priest and a Levite who pass by on the other side; and a Samaritan who sees him, has compassion, binds his wounds with oil and wine, carries him to an inn, and pays for his care. "Which of these three, do you think, proved to be a neighbor to the man who fell among the robbers?"

▶ 1:24:52

Jesus shifts the perspective. He is not asking which character you are, but: if you were the man beaten and left naked, who neighboured you? "The one who showed him mercy." "You go, and do likewise."

More than a lesson in being good

▶ 1:25:27

Matt "love-hates" this parable, partly because it gets reduced to a lesson on being a good boy, or a morality tale against xenophobia — not wrong, but not the fullest reading — or worse, "you religious people need to take a cue from nice pagans." On close examination, it is about how a life-giving understanding of God's word is marked by compassion and action.

▶ 1:26:39

Luke flags conflict: whenever an expert in the law appears, trouble is brewing. Recall the man with the withered hand on the Sabbath, and the dispute over how to read Torah and act on it (Luke 6:6–11), or Jesus saying such experts load people with burdens without lifting a finger (Luke 11:46).

▶ 1:27:58

The lawyer "had right answers but needed right action." So the chain runs: *who is my neighbour* clarifies *how do you read it*, which answers *what must I do to inherit eternal life*. "Jesus is not just giving us a lesson on being nice to outsiders. He is actually illustrating how to interpret God's word in a way that leads to life."

▶ 1:29:21

Healing on the Sabbath was a theology of action from a Jesus who knows God as compassionate Father to the lowly, while the synagogue leaders read a lawgiver who prized rigid observance over mercy. "This wasn't an argument about facts, but how do we read the word and respond to it." Again and again in Luke someone sees, has compassion and acts: the prodigal's father (Luke 15:20), the Samaritan, Jesus at the widow's dead son (Luke 7:13–15). "This is good theology."

▶ 1:30:07

Luke foreshadows it in Mary's song of God's mercy from generation to generation (Luke 1:50) and Zechariah's of mercy promised to our fathers (Luke 1:72). In the parable of the sower, the fruitful ones hear and do the word (Luke 8:15); and the rich man would not have ignored Lazarus had he rightly used Moses and the Prophets (Luke 16:29–31). The irony: a Samaritan with a different Torah was the model reader of Torah.

Not a snapshot, and not a gotcha

▶ 1:31:30

To Jesus, our theology is measured not only by how correct it is but by how we live. In our insecurity we do one grand nice deed, photograph it and make it our profile picture; Jesus is interested in our lives generally, "not a chosen snapshot — especially not the snapshot we choose." And the reverse is just as false: God is not lurking for a cruel gotcha moment, "aha, I saw you pass by that guy that one time."

▶ 1:32:50

So at Hope we want good theology and action from it, and "I can't have one without the other." Power and character, righteousness and compassion, belong together, "because the goal isn't to know the Bible well. The goal is to know its author." Do we know his mercies?

▶ 1:34:17

That ties back to the warfare: choose the stronghold of your failure and persistently ask God, in his mercy, for breakthrough. "We don't represent an army of God's people who win arguments." Matt is a stickler for theology because he does not want to worship a false Tiki Jesus — but a gotcha Jesus lurking around the corner is also a Tiki Jesus. "The real Lord of glory wants you to know him as Father," not merely to know how to address him that way.

▶ 1:36:55

A true theological reading of the Bible is an encounter with the living God who shapes your life. Any philosophy works when things are going well. "I want to experience the grace and power and love of God in the most difficult seasons."

What it looks like

▶ 1:37:34

> "When you give a dinner or a banquet, do not invite your friends or your brothers or your relatives or rich neighbors, lest they also invite you in return and you be repaid. But when you give a feast, invite the poor, the crippled, the lame, the blind, and you will be blessed, because they cannot repay you. For you will be repaid at the resurrection of the just."
>
> LUKE 14:12–14 ↗

▶ 1:38:45

Jesus did not forbid inviting friends: the poor guests might become friends; the woman who found her coin called her friends to celebrate (Luke 15:8–10); he taught guests to take the lower seat at a host's table (Luke 14:7–11); and the prodigal's father wanted the brother at the feast. The point is that we trade favours expecting repayment, "and Jesus is saying that is your reward." The kingdom way is to embody God's compassion by giving to those who cannot give back.

▶ 1:39:15

> "For the one who sows to his own flesh will from the flesh reap corruption, but the one who sows to the Spirit will from the Spirit reap eternal life. And let us not grow weary of doing good, for in due season we will reap, if we do not give up. So then, as we have opportunity, let us do good to everyone, and especially to those who are of the household of faith."
>
> GALATIANS 6:8–10 ↗

▶ 1:40:23

Matt did not want anyone to leave thinking the answer is random acts of service "as gotcha positives." It is embracing who God is and living in brotherly love with his household first, but also toward all: "Love one another with brotherly affection. Outdo one another in showing honor... Contribute to the needs of the s

▶ 1:41:49

Keeping our theology tight matters enormously, but doing it means being transformed by the renewing of our minds (Romans 12:2) and experiencing the living God acting through us in power, purity, compassion and generosity. "This is not a heavy burden — boy, y'all better step it up, or else." It is an invitation, and when the body lives it, "it is so sweet and pleasant to be surrounded by brothers and sisters seeking to bless you, seeking to cover your sin with love."

▶ 1:43:28

To close, Matt invited those who identify with the beaten and naked man, who need a neighbour and need mercy, to stand — for themselves or for someone they love — so the body could hold up their hands as Moses' hands were held up (Exodus 17:12). "What I'm looking for is victory where we're hopeless." And the church prayed over them.

FOR FURTHER STUDY

SCRIPTURE IN THIS MESSAGE

- Ephesians 6:10–18
- 2 Samuel 5:7
- Luke 18:1–8
- 2 Kings 7:3–9
- Luke 10:25–37
- Deuteronomy 6:5
- Leviticus 19:17–18
- Leviticus 19:33–34
- Luke 6:6–11
- Luke 11:46
- Luke 15:20
- Luke 7:13–15
- Luke 1:50
- Luke 1:72
- Luke 8:15
- Luke 16:29–31
- Luke 14:12–14
- Luke 15:8–10
- Luke 14:7–11
- Galatians 6:8–10
- Romans 12:10–16
- Romans 12:2
- Exodus 17:12

FOR YOUR HOPE GROUP

1. Matt urged us to wage spiritual warfare where we have failed most and lost hope. What “boulder” might God be highlighting for you?
2. The lawyer had the right answer but not the right action. Where do you know what Scripture says but struggle to do it?
3. Jesus asks who proved to be a neighbour to the beaten man. When has someone unexpected shown you mercy, and how did it change you?
4. How do you tend to picture God — keeping score for a gotcha moment, or as a compassionate Father — and how does that shape the way you read the Bible?
5. Who could you bless this week who has no way to repay you?

ABOUT THE SPEAKER

Matt Ryniker is Hope Chapel’s senior pastor — his own description of the job — and reports to the church’s governing board, who he cheerfully calls his boss. He and his wife Mandy have been held up from Hope’s own pulpit as an example to the congregation. He spent a stretch of his working life as a public school teacher, and he still teaches the parent dedication classes where families commit to raising their children to follow Jesus — a theme that runs straight into this message.

Watch the full message:
https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=TzhKtvLaVl8&t=4159s

These notes summarise a message preached at Hope Chapel in Austin, Texas. They are a reader's aid, not a transcript — scripture references link to the full passage so you can read it in context.