

LOVE THY NEIGHBOUR

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In an "every man for himself" world, such as we are living in today, the teachings of Jesus bring to light the deterioration and weakness of our present-day systems. The basic theory of today's methods is get to the top and advance yourself, regardless of who it hurts or crushes.

*"And, behold a certain lawyer stood up, and tempted him, saying, Master, what shall I do to inherit eternal life? He said unto him, What is written in the law? how readest thou? And he answering said, Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy mind; **and thy neighbour as thyself**. And he said unto him, Thou hast answered right: this do, and thou shalt live. But he, willing to justify himself, said unto Jesus, And who is my neighbour? And Jesus answering said, A certain man went down from Jerusalem to Jericho, and fell among thieves, which stripped him of his raiment, and wounded him, and departed, leaving him half dead. And by chance there came down a certain priest that way: and when he saw him, he passed by on the other side. And likewise a Levite, when he was at the place, came and looked at him, and passed by on the other side. But a certain Samaritan as he journeyed, came where he was: and when he saw him, he had compassion on him. And went to him, and bound up his wounds, pouring in oil and wine, and set him on his own beast, and brought him to an inn, and took*

care of him. And on the morrow when he departed, he took out two pence, and gave them to the host, and said unto him, Take care of him; and whatsoever thou spendest more, when I come again, I will repay thee. Which now of these three thinkest thou, was neighbour unto him that fell among the thieves? And he said, He that shewed mercy on him. Then said Jesus unto him, Go, and do thou likewise" (Luke 10:25-37).

The first twenty-four verses of this chapter state the account of Jesus sending out the seventy elders, and upon their return they were telling Jesus what had taken place. Verse 17, *"And the seventy returned again with joy, saying Lord, even the devils are subject unto us **through thy name?**"* Please note what is said here, the devils were subject to who? The seventy elders. How? Through the name of Jesus. *"But when the multitudes saw it, they marvelled, and glorified God, **which had given such power unto men**"* (Matthew 9:8). Men have and will always marvel at the tremendous investment God has made in such mortal men. However, regardless of how glorious these events had been, Jesus brought their feet back down to earth when He said, *"Notwithstanding in this rejoice not, that the spirits are subject (note) **unto you**; but rather rejoice, because **your names are written in heaven**"* (Luke 10:20). I wonder, after reading an account such as this, if we may not sometimes focus our endeavours on the wrong

things as well as over-emphasizing the wrong things. Let us make no mistake, Jesus Himself was thrilled at what these elders had done through His Name, but He could see they were more taken up with the miracles than the reality of knowing Him and knowing that their names were written down in heaven. Luke 10:21 bears out this truth, **“In that hour Jesus rejoiced in Spirit”** That is a glorious statement. It ought to thrill every reader’s heart to know that God has hid these precious truths from the wise and prudent and revealed them unto babes. Praise His Name!

As Jesus expounded these tremendous truths, there was a very highly-educated gentleman in the crowd, whose profession was studying law, and he tempted Jesus by saying unto Him, *“What shall I do to inherit eternal life?”* (Luke 10:25). Now we must note here how Jesus answered him. Once again, as always, He met the man on the level and ground he was most familiar with which was the law. He said to him, *“What is written in the law? How readest thou?”* (Luke 10:26). May we all learn a lesson here and that is to never try to show men how spiritually intelligent we are by speaking to them in terms with which they are unacquainted and unfamiliar, but rather to get right down on their level of understanding. That is where we must begin. Jesus said to this lawyer, *“Read to Me what the law books say.”* This is what he read, *“Thou shalt love the Lord with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy strength, and with all thy mind; and thy neighbour as thyself”* (Luke 10:27). God does not leave a man much to serve the world with. He asks for **all** of our heart, soul, strength and mind and then to love our neighbours.

Jesus then answered the man by saying, *“Thou hast answered right; **this do, and thou shalt live**”* (Luke 10:28). With such wisdom, Jesus had him answer his own question, right out of the law book. He suddenly realized what he had done and in order to justify himself he said to Jesus, *“And who is my neighbour?”* This was a good question and may the Holy Spirit enable us all to see and accept the answer by using a parable, which is an earthly story, with a heavenly meaning.

This parable brings out the difference between one being religious and being spiritual. The priest and the Levite were religious men, as they saw this fellow-human being in the ditch. They passed him by because they were all wrapped up in their theology, without understanding or being able to apply what they read and taught. As we would say today, we wouldn’t want to become involved: they felt he was not their responsibility; he was not one of their parishioners or followers. After all, they were so busy and had no time to apply in reality, in everyday living, what they thought they believed and taught. The good Samaritan was not that way. It seemed to matter not who the man was or what he believed. He was in dire need, and therefore he was obligated to assist him in whatever way he could. The reason he felt it was his responsibility was, that regardless of his color or creed, he was his neighbour, or in other words a fellow-human being, who was in need. The mercy of God is to the whosoever. We must all remember that.

The scriptures bear out that a neighbour is not just that person over the back fence, but a fellow- human being. We will deal a little more with that later. Now, I am sure the Samaritan was just as busy and in as big a hurry as the others. He no doubt could ill-afford the time or expense in attending and caring for this fellow, who was a total stranger. After all, he probably got what was coming to him any way, as I have heard so many say in our day. But regardless of all the excuses his own mind could have brought before him, he ministered to him. The good Samaritan gave three things in administering his ministry to this fellow-human being:

1. He gave of **himself**. He understood what the lawyer had read, and gave to God of his love, his heart, soul, strength and mind. No one can be effectively used of God until they are willing to give unreservedly of themselves to their ministry. Paul writes, *“I beseech (earnestly entreat) you brethren, by the mercies of God, that **you present** your bodies as a living sacrifice”* (Romans 12:1). Paul writing to Timothy says, *“Neglect not (ignore, disregard, leave undone) the gift that is **in thee** (not on thee but in thee, a possession, imparted by the laying on of hands) which was given thee by prophecy, with the laying on of the hands of the presbytery. Meditate (think deeply) upon these things; **give thyself wholly to them** that thy profiting may appear to all. Take heed unto **thyself** and unto the doctrine; continue in them; for in doing this thou shalt both save thyself, and them that hear thee”* (1 Timothy 4:14-16). It requires consecration beyond word. We must act upon what we believe.

2. He gave of his **time**, a very precious commodity in this day and age. Time is something the scriptures tell us that we must redeem (buy back) for *“the days are evil”* (Ephesians 5:16). We are all so busy, doing what? The Bible teaches us first things first, *“But seek ye **first** the kingdom of God and His righteousness; and all these things (food, clothing, etc., the necessities of life) **shall be added unto you**”* (Matthew 6: 33). God help us all to get our eyes off making that almighty dollar and get things back into true focus and begin to see and take time to act upon what we see, as the Samaritan did. As Paul wrote to the Ephesians, we must redeem, or buy back the time. We have allowed ourselves to become so involved in making a living that now we are in a place where we must buy back or recover the time we have squandered.

Never has man lived in such a push-button, time-saving day as we are living in, and yet with all of our modern conveniences and time-savers, we have less time to do what really should be done. May God help us guide the generations to come.

3. He gave of his **money** (possessions). Here again, the teaching of Jesus encourages us all to give and it shall be given, see Matthew 13:12. It is far *“more blessed to give than to receive”* (Acts 20:35). How often we are willing to assist as long as it does not cost us anything. There will be times when we must give not only of ourselves and our time, but also share those temporal things, that in this country of ours, God has so lavished upon us. May He teach us and help us to be good administrators of that which He has entrusted us with. We should always remember we can never out-give God.

Let us carefully listen to the answers Jesus gave this man who enquired as to who was his neighbour, verses 36 & 37, *“Which now of these three (the priest, Levite, or Samaritan) **thinkest thou, was neighbour unto him that fell among the thieves? And he said, He that shewed mercy on him. Then said Jesus unto him, Go and do thou likewise.**”* (Luke 10:36-37). The Phillips translation puts it this way, **“the man who gave practical sympathy.”**

It is so easy to say, and it sounds so spiritual, *“I will be praying for you,”* when we should be doing something practical about the situation at hand. If you want a good lesson on being practical, read carefully the book of James. He taught us, *“But be ye **doers** of the word and not hearers only, **deceiving** (who?) **your own selves**”* (James 1:22). He also tells us: If a man asks us for bread or clothing and we say, *“Depart in peace, be ye warmed and filled; notwithstanding ye give them not those things which are needful to the body; **what doth it profit?**”* (James 2:16). Chapter 4: 17, *“Therefore to him that knoweth to do good, and doeth it not, to him*

it is sin.” This language is plain and to the point, but how true. God help us all to be more practical and put legs on our prayers and get out and do, rather than just listen. First, we listen, then we do.

The establishing of the kingdom of God on the earth is this world’s **only** hope.

Little wonder Jesus taught us to pray; *“Thy kingdom come. Thy will be done in earth (these temples of earth), as it is in heaven”* (Matthew 6:10). This is His will. This was and is His prayer and it **shall** come to pass.

*“And he shall judge among nations, and shall rebuke many people; and they shall beat their swords into ploughshares and their spears into pruning hooks, nation shall not lift up sword against nation, **neither shall they learn war anymore.** O house of Jacob, come ye, and let us walk in the light of the Lord”* (Isaiah 2:4-5). How and when shall this be, when we as subjects of every nation on the face of the earth become good neighbours and love one another and every nation of the earth becomes neighbourly, which means friendly, kindly, toward each other? If all of mankind could see the value and blessing derived from being a good neighbour, what a different world it would be to live in. You say this will never be. Oh yes it will. Listen! Jesus taught, *“And this gospel of the kingdom **shall be preached in all the world** for a witness unto **all nations:** and then shall the end come”* (Matthew 24: 14).

Nothing is impossible with God, and I have been amazed at how often the words “all” and “every nation” are used in the Scriptures. If at the tower of Babel God could, by confusing their tongues, divide and separate men, He is also able, in the end time, to bring them all together again. Praise His Name.

Leviticus 19: 18, “Thou shalt not avenge (inflict punishment in return for or on behalf of) nor bear any grudge against the children of my people, but **thou shalt love neighbour as thyself**, I am the Lord.” It is so easy to hold a grudge against another person. God says we are not to do that, but rather love that person, just like you do yourself. We are definitely commanded (not just asked) of the Lord to love our neighbour or fellow-human being. The scriptures also tell us there were two commandments given in Mark 12:30 & 31. The first one is verse 30, *“And thou shalt love the Lord thy God with **all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy mind and all thy strength: this is the first commandment.**”* The second one is verse 31, *“And the second is like, namely this, Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself. **There is none other commandment greater than these.**”*

They are two very simple statements, very basic, very ordinary, but oh so important. I am sure that is why John wrote, *“If any man say, I love God, and hateth his brother, he is a liar; for he that loveth not his brother whom he can see, how can he love God whom he hath not seen?”* (1 John 4: 20). The teachings of the Bible are very clear and simple to understand, providing we are willing to accept them. How could the priest and the Levite truthfully say we love God and yet turn their backs on their brother, lying wounded in a ditch? Jesus also taught, *“Verily I say unto you, Inasmuch as ye have done it unto the **least of these my brethren, ye have done it unto me”*** (Matthew 25:40). The mercy and the love of God are extended to every man and woman, regardless of colour, race or creed, so let us all endeavour to be administrators of such love and mercy by sharing His bountiful goodness, that He has so lavished upon us, with those who stand in need of it.

We are further taught by the apostle Paul that love is the fulfilling of the law in Romans 13:9-10. Paul teaches us here what we ought not

to do, such as commit adultery (yes, and that is still in effect in 1977, regardless of what our present society has accepted as its standards). Thou shalt not kill, or steal, or bear false witness, or covet, and he goes on to say, *“and if there be any other commandment, it is briefly comprehended in this saying, namely, **thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself.** Love worketh no ill to his **neighbour: therefore love is the fulfilling of the law.**”* My, what clear cut, unquestionable principles to live by!

*“We then that are strong ought to bear the infirmities of the weak, and **not to please ourselves.** Let every one of us please his neighbour for his good to edification”* (Romans 15:1-2). The Phillips translation puts it this way, *“We who have strong faith ought to shoulder the burden of the doubts and qualms of others and not just go our own sweet way. Our actions should mean the good of others - should help them to build up their characters.”* In other words we should be an example to those around and about us, which includes our neighbours.

*“For, brethren, ye have been called unto liberty; only use not liberty for an occasion to the flesh, **but by love serve one another.** For all the law is fulfilled in one word, even in this; Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself. But if ye bite and devour one another, take heed that ye be not consumed one of another. This I say then, Walk in the Spirit, and ye shall not fulfill the lust of the flesh.”* (Galatians 5:13-16). We are to serve one another by love. The whole of the law is fulfilled in one word, and that word is **love**, and we ought to love our neighbours as we love ourselves. Why? Because they are a fellow-human being and it is the commandment of God. If we walk in the Spirit we will not find ourselves yielding to the lusts of the flesh, our lower nature.

*“If ye fulfill the royal law (the Lord’s law) according to the scripture, **thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself,** ye do well. But if ye have respect to persons, ye commit sin, and are convinced of the law as transgressors”* (James 2:8- 9). It seems so easy in this age to show respect of persons, one above another, and this ought not to be. The colour of a person’s skin, their social standing, their degree of education or their wealth, should never be used to discriminate. I do fear sometimes that this word discrimination is overplayed and taken out of context. The word discriminate means to distinguish, to make distinctions in treatment, to show partiality or prejudice.

Today, just because we don’t get our own way or things don’t go the way we think it should, we hear the cry of discrimination. The royal law states that we should love one another, we should respect everyone for what they are is and not classify them. God has a way of making all men and women equal, and when we all stand before the Judge of all the ages, it won’t matter how much money we left behind or how much education we had or on what social level we were. In the sight of God, **all men and women are equal.**

It is contrary to the Word of God for a man to be womanly or a woman to be manly. They both have their separate roles in life. A man can never take the place of a woman nor can a woman take and fill the role of a man. God never intended this to be, so why should we try to change it? I realize this is contrary to present day thinking, but the time has come when the Church of the Living God must stand up for what the Word of God teaches regardless of what the present system advocates. If we are genuinely honest with ourselves we will have to admit that the present system leaves much to be desired. Let the man take his full responsibility as a man, as a husband and the primary financial provider for the family, and let the woman fulfill the office of a wife, a mother and homemaker as God has ordained.

This wonderful order of God in no way belittles the place of a woman in the affairs of life, but rather places her in the office that God ordains that she holds and where she will find the most pleasure, enjoyment and fulfillment. God bless the dear women who have the courage of their convictions to do what they know to be the mind and will of God for their lives regardless of what various organizations are endeavouring to promote. This is not to say that godly women should never occupy positions in the workplace outside of the home. In some cases due to illness of the husband or other unusual circumstances, it is necessary for the wife and mother to take a job outside the home. In other cases, for example, after children are in school during the day, a wife and mother may take a job with hours that will allow her be home when her children are at home. However, the first responsibility of a wife and mother is to be a keeper at home because, according to God's perfect design, no one can fulfill that role as she can. Note the following scripture: *"That they may teach the young women to be sober, to love their husbands, to love their children, to be discreet, chaste, keepers at home, good, obedient to their own husbands, that the word of God be not blasphemed"* (Titus 2:4-5). There is nothing on earth more lovely, more beautiful, than to see a woman, feminine in every way, acting like a lady and taking her proper place in the home and in the world. If you want the scriptural description of a virtuous woman, read Proverbs 31:10-31. Verse 23 says, *"Her husband is known in the gates, when he sitteth among the elders of the land."* Because of her, he has found his rightful place. Verse 28, *"Her children shall rise up and call her blessed; her husband also, and he praiseth her."* What for? Because she is a career woman, holding down a high office in some corporation? No, no, a thousand times no! She is called blessed and praised because she is a virtuous woman, fulfilling the role in life that God has ordained for her. Please take the time to read these verses from Proverbs and let the Holy Spirit make them come alive to you.

Listen further to what the Proverbs teach us in chapter 30:21-23, *"For three things the earth is disquieted* (is disturbed, quakes, is restless), *and for four which it cannot bear:*

1. *For a servant when he reigneth;*
2. *A fool when his is filled with meat;*
3. *For an odious (contentious) woman when she is married;*
4. *And an handmaid that is heir to her mistress.*

We often wonder why there is such unrest and turmoil in the earth. Here the Scriptures tell us the reason. There is nothing that will bring more unrest than someone, man or woman, who is trying to fulfill a role that God never intended them to fill. There is a place for everyone. God has so ordained that as members of His body, we have definite places to fill. It is the same in the secular world, there are those who are cut out for the various professions and as long as we are willing to acknowledge in one another those gifts and talents that God has given us and allow them to operate through those whom He has granted them to, harmony will reign, but when, because of that almighty dollar, we strive for that which is not our lot, we find such disorders as we have in the earth today.

"As for my people, children are their oppressors, and women rule over them. O my people, they which lead thee cause thee to err, and destroy the way of thy paths" (Isaiah 3:12). You often hear the argument raised that women are just as clever and intelligent as men and there is absolutely no question about that. In fact, in many ways they may supersede men, but this is not what we are talking about. God has created men to fill certain ministries (roles) in life and He has created and prepared women to fill special places in the great plan and purpose that He has ordained. Therefore, each have their special call in life. We are all equal in the sight of God and may the Lord help us all to begin to treat one another, whether male or female, whether black or white, rich or poor, educated or illiterate, as neighbours, fellow-human beings, respecting the office that each holds in the sight of God who has created us and breathed into us of the breath of life.

Who then is our neighbour? In the case of the man who fell among thieves, it was the one who gave **practical sympathy** or, in other words, ministered to his need; the one who, regardless of his religion or political beliefs or his racial origin, treated him as a fellow-human being.

Who are your neighbours? Look around, I'm sure you will find them. ✚

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