

Old School | Neighboring (Luke 10:25-37)

April 19, 2020 | Matthew McNutt

INTRODUCE MYSELF.

Christianity 101 What are the basics of Christianity? Does God have a purpose for my life? If you have questions about Christianity or you want to be more grounded in your faith, come explore answers in this class led by Pastor Nate Keeler. Christianity 101 Class meets online via Zoom Video Conference on **Sunday afternoons (4:00-5:30 p.m.) Starting today until May 31**. This class is open to anyone. Invite your friends, family or neighbors to attend; just make sure you email Pastor Nate beforehand so he can get you the Zoom login info!

Giving Online / Mail We worship God through our singing, through the study of the word, and through our giving. There are two ways you can do so; you can give online on our website as either a one time or reoccurring gift – in fact, you could pause the video now and do it as part of your worship now - or you can mail your offering.

We are in the third week of a six week series we're calling **Old School**.

I love Old School stuff; here is some of the music I listen to in my corner of the house. It just feels better when it's skipping and imperfect. 80's soundtracks are amazing.

In this series we're asking the question, How do we not only survive, but thrive spiritually during this season? We may be modern people, but there are some old school spiritual practices that God calls us to that play a big role in the answer. **In the first two messages, Pastor Nate** introduced us to the practices of Abiding and Fasting.

This week we're looking at a third old school practice that is as important now as it was thousands of years ago; **neighboring**.

Luke 10:25-37 (NIV) 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?"

An expert in the law 2000 years ago was someone who was an expert in the first five books of the Bible. This was someone with religious authority.

²⁶ "What is written in the Law?" he replied. "How do you read it?"

And as is often the case, Jesus threw the question back to him, after all, he was an expert. What do the scriptures say about it?

²⁷ 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 neighbor as yourself.'

When he says “Love your neighbor as yourself,” he’s quoting Leviticus 19:18. This was a law. There’s more going on with this word “neighbor” than we might realize at first glance; the Greek word was defined as more than just the person who lives nearby – it was a broader word than that. Already this expert recognizes that the responsibility to love others is bigger than just his street. But it was still limited.

Even though from the beginning God made it clear that His intent was to bless the world, not just the Jewish people, the religious leaders and people in general understood this commandment to be an inwardly focused directive, a command to love their Jewish neighbor. Which means, as a conquered people under the Roman government – most of the known population of the world would have fallen outside of his definition of neighbor.

Which makes Jesus’ answer fascinating; perhaps because he knew the expert wasn’t ready to finish the conversation?

28 “You have answered correctly,” Jesus replied. “Do this and you will live.”

Jesus was not teaching that we earn salvation by loving our neighbor. He was emphasizing that loving our neighbor is a symptom of loving God with all our heart, soul, strength and mind.

You don’t buy Eagles gear to become an Eagles fan; it’s a symptom of your love for the birds. You don’t go to a Taylor Swift concert to become a Tay-tay fan; it’s a symptom of your love for her music. I don’t go to Star Trek conventions to become a Trekkie; it’s a natural result of a love that is already present!

29 But he wanted to justify himself, so he asked Jesus, “And who is my neighbor?”

Do you see what’s going on? Deep down, he knows his definition of neighbor, even if a little big, is not big enough. He’s looking for that checklist – exactly who do I need to love, where is the line drawn? Who are my non-neighbors?

At this point, Jesus tells a parable, a story He created to make a point. We are so far removed from this time and culture, though, that it can be hard for us to see just how incredibly politically, religiously, and racially charged this story was. Jesus pushed all the buttons. This is the Jesus that called judgmental religious hypocrites names and flipped tables in the temple. Buckle up.

30 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.

This road was well known for its danger. It would be the equivalent of walking alone through the worst part of town at midnight.

31 A priest happened to be going down the same road, and when he saw the man, he passed by on the other side. 32 So too, a Levite, when he came to the place and saw him, passed by on the other side.

It was getting tense. These were religious leaders. They knew the law, they knew their responsibility to help one of their own in need. Maybe the listeners were thinking of excuses; maybe it looked like a trap? Maybe they thought the man was dead and didn't want to become ceremonially unclean and unable to perform their religious duties?

33 But a Samaritan,

This was shocking. Outrageous. To the Jews, Samaritans were half-breeds. Traitors. Religiously offensive. If they were going to travel, they would take a far longer route rather than touch Samaritan dust or breathe Samaritan air. It was political. It was racist. It was religious. The Samaritans checked all their non-neighbor boxes.

It would be as though I told the story today and set it in the inner city. One of our church members had been jumped and left for dead, and Pastor Todd came along – saw him, and crossed the road. Then Pastor Nate came, saw him – imagine the hope the church member would have felt? Here is my pastor! But Nate sees him and crosses to the other side. But then Colin Kaepernick comes along and he helps him.

Some of you just got tense.

Let's spread that feeling around.

But then President Trump came along.

But then an Islamic person.

But then Jerry Falwell.

But then a gay person.

But then Tom Brady. Oops. Everyone here hates him.

What do these people have in common? At their mention, people immediately group up with their team to react. It's not a perfect illustration, but maybe one of them triggered something in you, a glimpse of what the Jewish audience would have felt hearing that someone from the other team was about to be the hero.

33 But a Samaritan, as he traveled, came where the man was; and when he saw him, he took pity on him. 34 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.

³⁵ 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.'

The Samaritan went way beyond the minimum. He risked his own safety. He risked becoming religiously unclean. He took on tremendous financial sacrifice; we're not sure, but that two denarii would have been enough to care for all the man's need for anywhere from a few weeks to a couple months. He literally did everything he could for this stranger in need – and promised more if needed!

³⁶ "Which of these three do you think was a neighbor to the man who fell into the hands of robbers?" ³⁷ The expert in the law replied, "The one who had mercy on him." Jesus told him, "Go and do likewise."

You see the struggle here with who Jesus made the hero; the expert can't even bring himself to say "Samaritan." He's just, the one. That man. The guy. Do you know that feeling? Of having to say something good about someone you hate?

But that's not the point I want to get at. Do you see what Jesus did? He pushed all the buttons; race, politics, religion – and then flipped the question.

The expert wanted to know, "who is MY neighbor?"

He was drawing the line out there; how do I classify others to determine who is worthy of my love?

Jesus asked the question, "Who IS THE neighbor?"

I am called to BE a neighbor to anyone I encounter! Instead of trying to classify others, I need to classify myself. I am to be the neighbor! Do you see the difference?

Our inclination is to look out for ourselves. To think in terms of how something is impacting me.

In Oregon, there are **three mountains known as the Three Sisters**. When I was 12 or 13, my dad, younger brother and I hiked the South Sister with some others from our church; it's the tallest one. 10,363 feet. **Yeah, I made it to the top.** It was brutal. My dad, brother and I were definitely in over our head. My brother ran out of water and asked for some of mine, to which I said, "NO! There won't be enough for me!" Not my finest moment. After the horrified looks of the rest of the group, and some threats from my dad, I gave him some.

But so often that's our gut response, isn't it? How does this impact ME? How does this impact MY future? My security? But in Jesus' economy, it's a different set of values.

Jesus calls us to Go and DO likewise.

In **Matthew 5:41**, Jesus is talking about neighboring and says,

Matthew 5:41; If anyone forces you to go one mile, go with them two miles. (NIV)

Under the Roman law, a soldier could force them to drop what they were doing and carry his load for a mile. Which effectively meant ending up two miles out of the way because they would have to walk the mile back! It was an insult, a constant reminder they were a conquered people by a dangerous government and Christ's instruction was to not only submit but go beyond what was required.

In **Luke 8**, Jesus heals a demon possessed man, but in the process casts the demons into a nearby herd of 2000 pigs who then threw themselves off a cliff and died. I love in the Sight and Sound Theater performance of Jesus as the rest of the town reacts and tells Jesus to leave, one man laments, "you have financially ruined us." 2000 years later, we only remember them as the ones more concerned with their economy than the Savior and saving lives.

In **Matthew 25**, Jesus tells a parable in which some are revealed to be saved and some revealed to be destined to punishment. When they were confused at why some were chosen for salvation, here was Jesus' answer:

Matthew 25:35-36 (NIV) ³⁵ *For I was hungry and you gave me something to eat, I was thirsty and you gave me something to drink, I was a stranger and you invited me in,* ³⁶ *I needed clothes and you clothed me, I was sick and you looked after me, I was in prison and you came to visit me.'*

We worry about the temporary. What about the economy? Who can we blame for this season? Are these people worth the cost? Is neighboring worth the sacrifice?

But Jesus calls us to be the neighbor. To go beyond what is required. To empathize with those who suffer in ways we don't. To ask the question, how can I demonstrate Christ during this time?

- Do my words hurt my Chinese-American brothers and sisters?
- What does my focus on money say to my friend whose mother just died alone in the hospital?
- Do my impassioned posts online build walls or create bridges?

Do my words and actions send the message that I am a neighbor, a person to reach out to? Or do they warn people off? Does the unmarried pregnant woman think it's safer to go to an abortion clinic than me? Do my marginalized friends feel I'm someone who understands injustices that happen to them or am I unsafe because I will be too distracted by how it impacts my politics, my income, my comfort?

I love what **Dr. Mika Edmondson**, a pastor and author in Grand Rapids wrote:

You cannot love your neighbor while supporting or accepting systems that crush, exploit, and dehumanize them. You cannot love your neighbor while accepting less for them and their family than you do for you and your own.

What does neighboring look like?

It looks like loving God with all our heart, soul strength and mind.

What does loving God like that look like?

It looks like loving others the way that Christ loves them.

It means sacrifice. It means empathy. Instead of outrage, understanding. Sacrificing my security – financial, physical, safety – for the sake of others. It means being a neighbor to everyone, not just the ones I like.

If you're not neighboring well, how could you be loving God well? The two are vitally linked.

What is one way, large or small, that you could be the neighbor today? This week? In person? Online? With your family? With the stranger at the store? With the politician you disagree with? Is your schedule so packed that you don't have the margin to neighbor? What gets in the way of you pursuing this practice? What needs to be sacrificed?

In the book, "The Art of Neighboring," the authors quote Brian Mavis:

"In this life, we can do only a few things really well; I think it's a good idea to make certain that one of those things is what Jesus says is most important."

Let's be known for being people who neighbor well.

Close in prayer / Neighboring Title slide

Reminder to join on Facebook Live, Monday 10am