

Oh Father God, thank you so much. The joy that is present today is actually palpable. You can feel the joy that people have brought in in their hearts. Yes, there will be trouble. Yes, there is trouble. Yes, there is worry. Yes, there are all kinds of things going on. But we are in what is called a sanctuary and it is called a sanctuary for a reason. We come to you in this sanctuary that you provide so that we can open our hearts and our minds and we can love you and love one another and enjoy your presence and enjoy the presence of all of our family. We love you Lord. We ask you now to take your place as the pastor and the teacher of this church. Lead us in all things Lord in song and in prayer and in your word let us hear what you want us to hear. Let us learn what you want us to learn in Jesus name. Amen. The focus today is going to be on one of the most widely known, one of the most well used and one of the most misused pieces of scripture in all of our Bible. And that is the concept of loving thy neighbor. I really want to take a look at that. And at first I thought I'm going to bring out the origins of that great commandment, moving back into the Old Testament and how it was brought forth in the New Testament. Then I began to think of the use and misuse of this biblical text. And I really want to bring that out today because if we're going to love our neighbor, Jesus tries desperately to teach us who our neighbor is. And we're not going to find out who our neighbor is and how we are then are to treat them and they are to treat us unless we go into the context of that parable of the Good Samaritan. And that's what we're going to do now. That's the direction that it changed. So beginning with Luke 10, beginning with verse 1 and reading this. "The Lord now chose 72 other disciples and sent them ahead in pairs to all the towns and places he planned to visit." "These were his instructions to them. The harvest is great, but the workers are few." "So pray to the Lord who is in charge of the harvest. Ask him to send more workers into his fields." "Now go and remember that I am sending you out as lambs among wolves." "Don't take any money with you, nor a traveler's bag, nor an extra pair of sandals, and don't stop to greet anyone on the road." "Whenever you enter someone's home, first say, 'May God's peace be on this house.'" "If those who live there are peaceful, the blessing will stand. If they are not, the blessing will return to you." "Don't move around from home to home. Stay in one place, eating and drinking what they provide." "Don't hesitate to accept hospitality because those who work deserve their pay." "If you enter a town and it welcomes you, eat whatever is set before you, heal the sick and tell them, 'The kingdom of God is near you now.'" "But if the town refuses to welcome you, go out into its streets and say, 'We wipe even the dust of your town from our feet to show that we have abandoned you to your fate.'" "And know this, 'The kingdom of God is near.' I assure you, even wicked Sodom will be better off than such a town on Judgment Day." "What sorrow awaits you, Corazene and Bethsaida? For if the miracles I did and knew had been done in wicked Tyre and Sidon, their people would have repented of their sins long ago, clothing themselves in burlap and throwing ashes on their heads to show them their sins." "Yes, Tyre and Sidon will be better off on Judgment Day than you, and you people of Capernaum, you will be honored in heaven." "No, you will go down to the place of the dead." That's the beginning of Luke 10, and he's leading into the teaching of the Good Samaritan when the teachers of religious law try to capture him and catch him when they say, "Okay then, who is my neighbor?" Remember these disciples and the plight of these disciples as we move forward today. So as we spoke about, and as I sort of gave you a little bit of context that we're digging into this morning, the parable of the Good Samaritan has been told, of course, over and over and over again. It has been used and misused as one of the primary teachings of Christianity, "Love Thy Neighbor." And to be sure, it is. But I really want to dig into the parable and dig into the context so that we know exactly what that means. So if we are told, "Well done demonstrating the love of God by loving your neighbor," we know that it is true. We're aware of what we've done, or if we're told, "That is certainly not loving your neighbor, and you're supposed to be a Christian," we know if we are in the right or in the wrong. We can talk about the superficial aspects of "Love Thy Neighbor." It comes from the teachings of Deuteronomy, and that's why when the teacher of religious law is asked, "What is the greatest commandment? To love the Lord God with all your heart, soul, strength, and mind, and love your neighbor as yourself," there you go. There's the crux of the teaching. But if we

leave that open to interpretation for two and a half billion Christians, it really becomes a mess. Because all of our definitions of what that means and who our neighbor is can wipe out any solid, definitive meaning that Jesus Christ is trying to bring forward. So let's take a look at this parable and understand what is Christ trying to teach. One day, an expert in religious law stood up to test Jesus by asking him this question, "Teacher, what should I do to inherit eternal life?" Jesus replied, "What does the law of Moses say? How do you read it?" Which is very important. How do you read it? Because I'm going to ask you this question of how do you read it? How have you been reading it? How has the Christian church been reading it? That's a very important question that Jesus asks. It's kind of like when he says, "Who do you say that I am?" Because people are saying all kinds of things. He says, "Who do you say that I am?" What is your definition of what it means to inherit eternal life? And the man answered, "You must love the Lord your God with all your heart, all your soul, all your strength, and all your mind, and love your neighbor as yourself." Jesus told him, "Do this and you will live." So there's the superficial teaching. And sometimes when we read the parable of the Good Samaritan, we don't include that part or we don't include the parts that come after it. We just want to read the parable of the Good Samaritan and condemn religious people and praise other people. And then now we've got all kinds of things going on that leave it open to interpretation to as many people as there are who read it. You've got to take a look at the text. And that's what I was convicted of last evening as I was thinking over these things. Convicted of the text. We always talk about the first test of Scripture is Scripture itself. Scripture informs Scripture. The first commentary on any theological construct is the Bible. You don't take a theological idea and then say, "This is what I think about it. This is how I think it applies over here. This is what I think about it because I'm so smart and I can figure all of that out." If you have a theological idea, you go back into the Bible and you open it from cover to cover and you say, "What is God saying about that idea from start to finish?" Because there's not a single Christian foundation, foundational Christian idea that just pops into Scripture and stands there alone. Where did this come from? Why would Jesus say that? It's nowhere else in the Bible. It is. And so that's what we need to do, if only on a limited basis. In Luke 10, we read about how the disciples went out. We read about what they were expected to do. And we read about their expectations of the people they were meeting. If peace truly comes upon you in that house, stay in that house. Eat and drink and do your work and accept their hospitality. But if they reject you, they're rejecting me. Dust off the feet, your feet and walk away. For their rejection of me, it's going to be worse than Sodom in the day of judgment. There's context leading up to the parable of the Good Samaritan. So the man wanted to justify his actions because that's seemingly what he remembered. He wanted to trap Jesus. That seemingly was a very easy question. No trap involved. Okay, do this. You'll inherit eternal life. Jesus knows what's up. So he asked Jesus, "And who is my neighbor?" And then the parable of the Good Samaritan begins. Jesus replied with a parable. A Jewish man, very important, was traveling from Jerusalem down to Jericho, and he was attacked by bandits. They stripped him of his clothes, beat him up, left him half dead beside the road. By chance, a priest came along, but when he saw the man lying there, he crossed to the other side of the road and passed him by. A temple assistant walked over and looked at him lying there, but he also passed by on the other side. Then a despised Samaritan. We talk about the Samaritans are held up as these individuals who are unclean. They're kind of Jewish and kind of related to the roots of the Jewish people, but by a kind of shady area. They're unclean and they're up there in Samaria, and we don't mess with them at all. A despised Samaritan came along, and when he saw the man, he felt compassion for them. Going over to him, the Samaritan soothed his wounds with olive oil and wine and bandaged them. Then he put the man on his own donkey and took him to an inn where he took care of him. The next day, he handed the innkeeper two silver coins, telling him to take care of this man. If his bill runs higher than this, I'll pay you the next time I'm here. Now, which of these three would you say was a neighbor to the man who was attacked by bandits? Jesus asked, the man replied, the one who showed him mercy. Then Jesus said, yes, now go and do the same. But here is the twist. Here is the thing that I was actually convicted of when I was going to preach the parable of the Good Samaritan. This is the neighbor. This parable is about the

neighbor in love thy neighbor. Who is my neighbor? And so Jesus tells the story of this man, not a follower of Yahweh, per se, a hated Samaritan, unorthodox, dirty, unclean, all of those things. This parable, when we talk about love thy neighbor as thyself, this parable tells us who the neighbor is. Because we are often accused of not loving our neighbor. That phrase has been weaponized so much in our culture. The fundamental phrase, fundamental teaching of Jesus, love thy neighbor. If you're not for complete chaos and open borders and taking care of it, then you're not loving your neighbor. If you're not down for government mandated vaccines, you're not you're not loving thy neighbor. If you're not down for whatever comes down to pike, whatever social issue that's being pushed or whatever thing that government or culture wants you to do, affirm, etc. You're not loving your neighbor. But this parable is not about you. This parable is about the neighbor. And what we learn about the neighbor is way different than just superficially saying, "Love is love. Go out and love your neighbor as yourself." This parable is about the neighbor. What is the condition of the neighbor? This parable is about order. This parable is about understanding the message that Jesus Christ brings to the world. This message is about individuals who know that they are in need of a savior. This message is about the Beatitudes. Blessed are those who are so poor in spirit, they know they are in need of a savior. And so yes, you can talk about how the religious people, this is a primary point of preaching about this parable, religious people, religious people, they're all hateful and they're all caught up in themselves. And you can preach that if you wish. And Jesus has an awful lot to say about religious people and Pharisees and the Pharisees and all those different things that we can get caught up in. But this parable isn't about the Jewish man, the follower who was beaten. This parable is about the Samaritan who helped him. I want you to see the difference because you are accused of not loving your neighbor. Who is my neighbor? Is it an individual who is causing strife, chaos, disorder? Is it an individual who rejects outright the word of God, as we learned from the disciples who went into the towns? And we know God's reaction to that rejection. It is condemnation. Who is my neighbor? Is it one who is sowing strife in the church and twisting scripture so that we can meet the needs of the culture, meet people where they are, that we may be affirming of every possible sin that you can think of? Well, if you don't, you're not loving your neighbor. That's not who this neighbor is. This neighbor, although perhaps a bit confused about Yahweh, is filled with compassion and behaves like that decent human being. And any decent human being, believe it or not, should behave. This neighbor is not randomly victimizing people. And we're just supposed to say, "Now be careful. Love thy neighbor." No! It's not loving your neighbor if you're allowing your neighbor to be hurt by someone else. I can't really stick up to you because now I'm really confused because you're my neighbor and I love you and you're my neighbor supposedly that I don't know you and you're attacking her and I - who do I help? Who is my neighbor? The one who is filled with compassion. The parable is about the neighbor. And I guess I never realized that because even as a Christian, it's been pounded into my head time and time again. All the different social issues, all the different things about being a pastor, the expectation is love your neighbor. That's a wide open statement like love is love. No, love is not love. God is love. So why don't we, in order to take a look at love, take a look at God? And what does God love? And what is His definition of love? And how does He love? He loves His creation so much that He gave His only begotten Son for the sake of salvation of all humankind. That's love! How much must you hate a person to not share that with them? How much must you hate your neighbor to bring them into a so-called church and say, "What you're doing is just fine." When you know, if you know, in your head and in your heart because you know the Scriptures and you're convicted by God's Holy Spirit, that it's not fine. You have the cure for their cancer and yet you hold it up and say, "Don't worry about it." Your spiritual cancer will bring you eternal life. That is nowhere in Scripture. So yeah, it's a two-way street when we look at the parable of the Good Samaritan, isn't it? Who are we going to serve? We should be filled with compassion and we should serve our neighbor who is beaten, right? That is in desperate need, physical, emotional, oh and spiritual because that's what the church is called to do as well. But we're also called to examine our neighbor because our neighbor, the neighbor is the point of the parable. Who is my neighbor? So we're allowed to look at individuals whom we are going to serve. It's not just

wide open chaos. Well, if you don't do what culture, government, whatever says, you're not loving your neighbor. That's the standard go-to response that I get if I ever, God forbid, I'm not taking his name in vain, if I ever create a boundary for myself and somebody wants something that I can't give or don't want to give. Oh, that's real Christian of you. That's the go-to statement. You've all heard it and you call yourself a Christian. When we adopted a dog a while ago, we had to call yourself a Christian because we had to rehome the animals. What? Well, that's really loving your neighbor. Well, my neighbor is creating chaos, disorder, etc, etc. I love them enough to share the good news of Jesus Christ. Repent. The Kingdom of God is at hand. That's the message that the disciples have, whether they're going to be rejected or whether they're going to be accepted. The disciples do not know when they enter into a town, but they enter into the town with the same message. Repent. The Kingdom of God is near. Ah, get out of here. OK. The full gospel teaches us, go ahead. And it says clearly right there in the text, He will leave them to their own devices. And we look out these walls at this world that has rejected God at every level, that is anti-Christian. And they have been left to their own devices and instead of the Christian church universal saying, no, we must stand firm in the word. Sin is sin. And the good news is that you can be broken of the power of that sin. We say, no, come on. Everything's cool. Your sin will set you free. Exactly. That's the message. God loves you. God does love you. He loves you so much. He gave His only to God, the Son, that so whomever believe in Him will not perish, but have eternal life. He loves you so much that His Son sacrificed on Himself on the cross and was raised by the power of God to break the power that that sin has over you right now. Come on into the church. Bring every kind of sin in here and hear this message. Just like the disciples who walked into the town. Come on in. Imagine everything that you can possibly imagine. Come on in. You're going to hear this message. Now you can accept it or you can reject it. But truth is truth. And they mean everybody needs to hear the truth. That's loving your neighbor, loving your neighbor enough to tell them the truth. That their sin will not set them free. That scripture clearly teaches you're you are getting all of the reward that you will ever receive right now. For the age to come, there will be will experience only God's wrath. You see that? To give you relate to what I'm saying about how it's been weaponized over the years. Loving your neighbor. You're not loving your neighbor. You're not loving your neighbor. Name an issue. Social, political, whatever. If Christians don't get in line, we're not loving our neighbor. Just not loving your neighbor. You're going to bring people who are transgender and homosexual and doing all kinds of things in their life. You're going to bring them into the church and not affirm them where they are. You're going to actually tell them that it is sin and that sin has gripped their soul and sin has gripped their body and the power of Satan is dwelling within them to lead them into hell. You're not going to tell them that. Then you don't love them. It would be like me saying, oh yes, I'm saying, John, I love you brother. While knowing, while knowing and knowingly just affirming and leading him right into hell. I love you so much. I'm going to allow you to enter into hell and into eternal torment. That's not how this thing works. That's not why God's Holy Spirit was poured out upon the earth to create church. Truth is truth. If we want to be good neighbors, we tell the truth. And yes, we are allowed to look at who is our neighbor and not just say, no, you know what? That's don't, don't you don't turn one of Jesus's most foundational teachings into a platitude that you're going to try to use to guilt me into supporting your cause. It won't work because I know the truth. I can look at who the neighbor is and obviously if the neighbor is living in sin, living a sinful lifestyle, if obviously the neighbor has turned their back on God and salvation through Jesus Christ, they are in desperate need of the power of God and you're going to say, no, it's okay. What? Not you. But you understand that generalities, even those under the umbrella of Christianity, you throw the name of Christ around and Christ says it's okay, then it has to be okay. And you know why Christ says it? He never said it was okay, but I said it's okay. So this really rocked me when I started reading the whole context of chapter 10 because he's leading up and he gives that prayer of Thanksgiving and he knows. And that's like around verse 21 and beyond. And he talks about hiding the realities of the kingdom of God from those who are not ready to hear it yet and revealing it to those who are willing to teach the truth. God knows what he's doing. And then he goes and visits Martha and Mary. Verse 38. As

Jesus and the disciples continued on their way to Jerusalem, they came to a certain village where a woman named Martha welcomed him into her home. Her sister Mary sat at the Lord's feet listening to what he taught. But Martha was distracted by the big dinner she was preparing. She came to Jesus and said, "Lord, doesn't it seem unfair to you that my sister just sits here while I do all the work? Tell her to come and help me." But the Lord said to her, "My dear Martha, you are worried and upset over all these details. There is only one thing worth being concerned about. Mary has discovered it and it will not be taken away from her." That's the same message. That's the same message. Mary understands her desperate need of a Savior. And Martha is still worried about all of the worldly things. So whether we're talking about Mary, you know, that is a reinforcement. That's a little exclamation point on the end of the parable of the Good Samaritan. Where he now goes, okay, there's the teaching. Here's a very practical application of it. You have the opportunity to worship at the feet of your Savior and you choose not to take it. In a very real way, you turn your back on that because you're caught up in whatever hospitality, traditions, whatever the case may be. But the message here is that both have the opportunity to worship at the feet of the Savior. Only one takes that opportunity. And when the one who is caught up in worldly things says, "Hey, tell her to stop worshiping you and get over here and help me." He says, "No." You're allowed to say "no" as a Christian. No. He says, "No." For she understands things that you're not understanding, Martha. You're running around like a chicken with your head cut off thinking that somehow, some way, that's going to benefit your soul. He knows that only faith in him will ever benefit her soul. So in a very real way, and I encourage you now, because as it shifted over to all of Luke 10, take all of Luke 10 today and see how each one, every aspect, every teaching that is held in Luke 10, really is the parable of the good Samaritan. Every one of them is the beatitude, "Blessed are those who know they are poor in spirit, for they will inherit the kingdom of God." We talk about the townspeople, the ones who understand they're poor in spirit, and they hear the word of God, and the disciples stay, and they serve, and they eat, and we hear the ones who will not even, do not even care, they do not recognize, and they reject the word of the disciples who have gone into their town, and thus God rejects them. Down to another very practical example after the parable about a very common, what would be a very common, ordinary situation in our homes today. An opportunity to worship at the feet of the Savior, who's there, he's there. And he's very well meaning, very wonderful. Martha and Mary have spoken up very well, but one is rejecting that opportunity, and one is recognizing that opportunity. Oftentimes that's what I say about our Thanksgiving Eve service. Not too many people take advantage of it, I don't know if they care, or they don't hear it, or it doesn't matter to them, and it's okay, because you're all autonomous moral beings, and you're making good decisions. But I always say, in the midst of being a Martha, in the midst of all of it, because it's important to you, and you're very well meaning, and you're buzzing around like a chicken with its end cut off, doing this, doing that, planning this, planning that, all kinds of food needs to be ready at the same time. This and people coming in from out of town, everything is like this, and you have an opportunity to come share the Lord's service. 45 minutes, 45 minutes, and long day. Singing a couple of songs, share the Lord's separate, take a breath, worship the theme of the Savior, and then get back at it, because you're all very well meaning, no matter what. You know, you're like, "I reject God at Thanksgiving!" That's not what you're doing. That's not what you're doing. But I would encourage you, I would encourage you, turning that parable, I'm going to flat out ask, turning that parable a little bit upside down and saying, "It's not necessarily about you, it's about the neighbor." Did that make sense to you? Yes or no? So you're picking up what I'm putting down? I've never thought of it that way. It's been beaten into my head so much. Love your neighbor, love your neighbor, love your neighbor. You've got to be a Christian, love your neighbor, no matter what, love your neighbor. And then you realize how often, how many times you heard that during COVID. You're not loving your neighbor. The parable is about the neighbor and their behavior. And so we are allowed to take a look at that. And it's a two-way street. It's a two-way street. Like any relationship. Amen.