Love Supplied to the World Around Us

Luke 10:25-37

Introduction/Recap

I want to start this morning by drawing our attention to three things which I said in last week's message. And bring that into the message this week – there is a direct correlation between love supplied within the body of Christ (last week's message) and love supplied to the world around us (which is this weeks message).

In the book of Leviticus 19, the command is given from Moses to the people of Israel to love your neighbor as yourself (Lev. 19:18) – Jesus tells us this is the second commandment. The first and greater commandment is for us to love God with "all our heart, all our soul, all our mind"…and here in Luke's gospel he adds… "all our strength". An impossible command that we saw is only made possible through the new birth where God takes hearts, souls, minds that were formerly dead to God and makes them alive to God where we can now receive and enjoy the love of God vertically. But next we need to supply it horizontally, and so Jesus goes on to say that a "second is like it" which is love for our neighbor. In Leviticus, the command to love our neighbor is first applied to the family of God (Lev. 19:9-18), but also it is extended to the stranger or foreigner outside of the family of God (Lev. 19:33-34). We could summarize the first and second commandment by saying, "we receive, we enjoy, and THEN WE SUPPLY the love of God in Christ…first within the church, and then to the world around us…unto the glory of God." (watershed).

There is an integral, necessary, relationship between love received, enjoyed, and then supplied and love supplied is first extended to the church and then from the church to those outside of the church. **Three things that I said last week:**

- **God is love – love is an essential attribute to who God is (1 Jn. 4:8,16)**. God has always been love, even before mankind and the angels were created, ***because*** Father, Son, and Spirit have always mutually and perfectly loved one another as 3 distinct persons all sharing a single divine nature – one God, three persons – perfect in unity and diversity and love. Father, Son, and Holy Spirit are perfect in loving and perfect in love – love is essential to the very being of God.
- **God's love is "*perfected among us*" when we love one another as the church (1 John 4:12)** – by perfected we don't mean that God Himself is perfected or His love is somehow lacking and only perfected when we love one another, nor do we mean that we become perfect through loving one another as though we could attain to some status of sinless perfection, but that "perfected" in that verse really speaks of "completed" or the "desired outcome fulfilled". God's "love mission" fulfilled.
- **Love within the church is first received from God and then extended to the world as a Trinitarian Mission (John 17:23)** – God has spilled over into creation His Trinitarian love. Jesus prayed for this mission of the Triune God to be attained. He prayed to the Father, "***I in them and you in me, that they may become perfectly one, so that the world may know that you sent me and loved them even as you loved me.***" His prayer is that the church would experience the love and unity of the Trinity by the way that we are united and love one another. But secondarily, that our love for one another would be "***so that the world may know that you sent me and***

loved them even as you loved me." So Jesus' prayer shows the mission of the Trinity to spread God's love and unity first to the church and from the church to the world.

So we see in Leviticus 19 the love of God supplied within the family of God and then also to the stranger. And we see in John 17 within the prayer of Jesus the love of God first supplied to the church and then the churches job to supply the love of God to the world. This is the mission of God to spread His perfect Trinitarian love to the world…***and if we don't love one another and if we don't spread our love to the world around us God's mission will not be "perfected" or "brought to completion"…at least not through us.***

Church of Ephesus – left their first love

It's interesting, that in Revelation 2 Jesus writes through John a letter to the church in Ephesus and his indictment against them is that they had "***abandoned the love [they] had at first" (Rev. 2:4).*** They failed to be a church that either loved God or loved one another or loved people in the world – maybe all three, He doesn't say. I think it's all three because there is an integral relationship between loving God and loving one another and loving one another and loving people in the world – if you fail to do one you fail at them all. Irregardless, they were no longer characterized as a church of love. He commands that they repent, and if they fail to become a church characterized by love Jesus tells them, "***I will come to you and remove your lampstand from its place" (Rev. 2:5)*** – in other words, they will cease to be a church in His eyes. We are the light of the world – if we don't love, our light will burn out as a church!

Loving your neighbor in Luke

There are three different places where the gospels mention the first and second commandment. In Matthew, Mark, and in Luke. Each writer frames the conversation of Jesus with the scribe within the context of the writers intention. Matthew is writing primarily to the Jews – so the conversation with the scribe (lawyer) is set within several debates between Jesus and the Jewish leaders. Luke mentions the first and second commandment – love God, love neighbor – but then expands on what it means to love your neighbor (Matthew doesn't do that). This doesn't mean that their stories are mixed up, rather, each gospel writer is emphasizing certain vantage points of the conversation to fit within their intention in writing their own gospel account. Matthew's intention is to the Jew, and Luke's intention (we talked about this when we learned about Zacchaeus in Luke 19) is writing primarily to the Gentiles, to show that Jesus comes to the outcast, to the stigmatized and marginalized. ***Basically, Jesus is FOR ALL (card)***. So Jesus has encounters with centurions, with women (far more than the other gospels), with Gentiles, with Samaritans, with tax collectors and sinners. Jesus is clear in Luke that ***"[He has] not come to call the righteous but sinners to repentance" (Luke 5:32)***, He is accused frequently of being a "***a glutton and a drunkard, a friend of tax collectors and sinners" (Luke 7:34)***, and He makes it clear that the "***Son of Man came to seek and to save the lost" (Luke 19:10***).

That Jesus is sent *to the lost* is emphasized in the gospel of Luke more than the other gospels – you have a lost coin (15:8-10), a lost sheep (15:3-7), a lost prodigal son (15:31-32), two lost tax collectors (Levi and Zacchaeus – 5:27-28; 19:1-10), a lost prostitute (7:36-39), a lost demoniac (8:26-39), a lost leper (5:12-13), and a lost centurion (7:6-9)…on and on He is coming to seek and save the lost and the lost in Luke's gospel are often those who would be stigmatized within the Jewish culture – so you also have the negative responses of the Jewish elite of grumbling, complaining, and accusations against

Jesus. You remember that we saw the people grumbling when Jesus invited Himself into the home of Zacchaeus.

It makes sense then, that in Luke's gospel, he chooses to give Jesus' description of loving your neighbor by making a foreigner, a Samaritan, the model neighbor and the Jewish elite those who failed to love as a neighbor. Let's see this in our text…

And behold, a lawyer stood up [this is a scribe trained in the law of Moses**] to put him to the test, saying, "Teacher, what shall I do to inherit eternal life?" *[***he doesn't really care about Jesus' input…he is testing Jesus to try to trap Him in His words. He is referring to the future resurrection promised from the prophet Daniel – "*many of those who sleep in the dust of the earth shall awake, some to everlasting life, and some to shame and everlasting contempt*." (Dan. 12:2)] [26] He said to him, "What is written in the Law? How do you read it?" *[***so Jesus turns the tables back on him…and by stipulating "in the law" He is removing all of the fruitless discussion of the religious leaders and simply asking, "What does God's Word say about this?***"]* [27] 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." [28] And he said to him, "You have answered correctly; do this, and you will live." *[***so up to this point, Jesus is in total agreement with the scribe. The first and second commandments – yes! And He affirms it with the Mosaic formula – "do this and you will live***"…***but then, the scribe has to open his mouth further. Never a good thing when we talk too much right?] [29] But he, desiring to justify himself, said to Jesus, "And who is my neighbor?" [**the word justify probably means to "vindicate" himself. He wants to vindicate himself to be righteous and to be clean and clear of any guilt and seen as someone who has loved his neighbor and will therefore be among the resurrection of the righteous to everlasting life. The man wants to put limitations on the definition of "neighbor". He wants to justify himself by softening the command of Moses to make it more palatable. Jesus completely blows limitations out of the water by making a Samaritan the definition of "neighbor". By affirming a Samaritan, He removes all ethnic and religious boundaries and welcomes in everyone as a possible exemplar neighbor to whom we are to love, *BECAUSE* Samaritans were the wrong ethnicity, and believed the wrong things religiously. Here is the parable…**]**

[30] Jesus replied, "A man was going down from Jerusalem to Jericho, and he fell among robbers, who stripped him and beat him and departed, leaving him half dead. [Luke is most likely charting out a dangerous route known as the "Pass of Adummim" which had a reputation for being a dangerous and treacherous path. It was a steep decline from 2,600 feet down to 825 feet, it was rocky, windy, there were a lot of caves which made good hideouts for robbers who would lie in wait. So this is a well-known and dangerous journey. The kind of place you want to move through quickly and not get out of the car. To stop and help someone in need would not be simply inconvenient, it would be dangerous and you would be putting yourself at risk. Stop a moment and ask yourself, "how would you respond in this situation?" Would you help the man? Would you walk on? What would you do?**] [31] Now by chance a priest was going down that road, and when he saw him he passed by on the other side. [32] So likewise a Levite, when he came to the place and saw him, passed by on the other side. [**two of Israel's elites, a priest and a levite. Maybe it was too risky, maybe inconvenient, maybe they didn't want to defile themselves. Jesus provides no good excuse, He doesn't give any excuse – they simply did the wrong thing. It would be like saying, "a pastor and a deacon". Neither did what they should do. Both failed to love their neighbor**] [33] But a Samaritan, as he journeyed, came to where he was, and when he saw him, he had compassion. [**now enters the hero of the story. A Samaritan. The Samaritans were hated by the

Jews. There was a history of animosity between them and without getting into detail they believed the wrong things, worshipped God in the wrong ways, and both groups – Jews and Samaritans – hated one another. ***What people group today do you have the greatest challenge with***? Is it a political group? Is it a group that affirms all the wrong things? Is it a group that is bent on overturning all that you hold to be sacred, that God holds sacred. Make no mistake, the Samaritans were in many ways wrong within their beliefs, but still, Jesus uses a Samaritan as the ideal neighbor showing that just because someone belongs to a particular group or "tribe" doesn't mean that we know all about that person. Who might Jesus use as the model neighbor were He to tell the story today? Do you see how Jesus in telling this story is removing all religious and ethnic limitations in defining "neighbors" that we are to love? Jesus, when He met with the Samaritan woman (John 4) didn't shy away from correcting her about her false religious beliefs, her sinful living conditions, but He loved her, He spent time with her, and He engaged her – He went out of His way to meet with her] **[34] He went to him and bound up his wounds, pouring on oil and wine. Then he set him on his own animal and brought him to an inn and took care of him. [35] And the next day he took out two denarii and gave them to the innkeeper, saying, 'Take care of him, and whatever more you spend, I will repay you when I come back.' [36] Which of these three, do you think, proved to be a neighbor to the man who fell among the robbers?" [37] He said, "The one who showed him mercy." And Jesus said to him, "You go, and do likewise."** [notice that the lawyer can't even bring himself to say "the Samaritan" is the neighbor…he simply says "the one who showed mercy". Jesus has trapped the lawyer and forced him to affirm that the Samaritan is the good neighbor in the story. And Jesus has forced you and I to think first before assuming we know all is to be known about someone simply because they belong to a particular lifestyle or "tribe" or "group" of people.]

Two points: Major and Minor Point

Now I want to give two points from this story, one is the minor point and another the major point. I think in this passage it's easy for us to get the major and minor point switched where the minor point is made the major point and vice versa.

Minor point - The Samaritan loved this man as his neighbor. He actually did something…He didn't just see the problem, He didn't just feel sympathy, He acted. Love does something. Notice the several ways that he goes above and beyond! 1) comes up to him; 2) binds his wounds; 3) anoints the cuts with oil and wine; 4) he loads the man on his own mule…probably walking the rest of the way himself; 5) takes him to an inn; 6) provides care and comfort for the man (two denarii would be 24 days of room and board). Furthermore, he goes out of his own way to return and care further for him after. He does what Jesus taught, he goes the extra mile in.

Knowledge of the love of God isn't enough…it must be put into action. ***Love that penetrates the heart must also influence the hands***. If we do not supply the love of God, the question is whether or not we have rightly received and enjoyed the love of God. Notice that the Samaritan had "compassion on him" – the verb speaks of a deep-seated empathy that comes from ones stomach or bowels. It's a word often used of Jesus when He saw people hurting or in need. He was "pained to the stomach", his "gut was wrenched" when he saw this man in need. This non-religious, non-believing man shows greater religion than the religious elite – the priest and levite. This is the minor point and its very important, but it isn't the major point of Jesus in telling this story.

Major point - Everyone is your neighbor therefore love indiscriminately – **The story isn't primarily about *what love does*, rather, it's about *to whom love is extended*.** Jesus is using a Samaritan, a

foreigner, and He is making him the hero and exemplar of the story AHEAD of the religious elite, exalting the Samaritan as the model neighbor, to show that neighbors are not just within the family of God. AND there are times when people outside the family of God can exercise love even better than we can. ***When people outside of the family of God love better than people within the family of God – we are to be rebuked. This parable is a rebuke of Jesus to the religious elite – Priests, and levites. Pastors, deacons, Christians…all of us are rebuked by this story if we allow religious or ethnic differences to prevent us from loving others.*** Loving others does not mean we will always agree with others, it doesn't mean we enable others, and it doesn't mean that we need to partake in the sins of others. I have no doubt that Jesus refrained from laughing at certain jokes that were taught at table with the tax collectors and sinners. I have no doubt that Paul was careful to not compromise when he sat at the Corinthian tables. In fact, he warns the Christians in Corinth to be careful to not share in the Corinthian idolatry when invited as a guest (1 Cor. 10:23-30)…but he also said, ***"though I am free from all, I have made myself a servant to all, that I might win more of them.*** [20] To the Jews I became as a Jew, in order to win Jews. To those under the law I became as one under the law (though not being myself under the law) that I might win those under the law. [21] To those outside the law I became as one outside the law (not being outside the law of God but under the law of Christ) that I might win those outside the law. [22] To the weak I became weak, that I might win the weak. ***I have become all things to all people, that by all means I might save some. [23] I do it all for the sake of the gospel, that I may share with them in its blessings."*** **(1 Cor. 9:19-23).** Jesus, and Paul imitating Jesus, were willing to enter into risky, awkward, scenarios in order to love others and win others to the Kingdom of God. ***This is what it looks like to receive, enjoy, and supply the Trinitarian love of God to others…it's incarnational. Jesus became a man…entered into our muck and mess in order to save us. He limited Himself. He put Himself at great risk…and it literally caused Him to be put to death! But He did it for you and for me…so that anyone, so that everyone who puts their allegiance into Jesus as the King is welcomed to His table to receive the free and lavish love of God in the gospel. Jesus invites all to be citizens of His Kingdom through faith and allegiance to Him.***

Luke, love, and hospitality

How can we put this *incarnational love* into practice? We have just planted a church, in planting a church, by putting that sign out front every Sunday, we are going on record to be those who "supply the love of God to the world around us" by being good neighbors. We have to be real with ourselves and ask ourselves, "what issues do we have with other people that might prevent us from welcoming and loving others?" The Great Commission is risky business.

Another thing that is unique to Luke's writings in his gospel and in the book of Acts is that Luke sets evangelism and reaching the lost within the context of table hospitality.

We saw this with Jesus becoming a guest to Zacchaeus. In Luke's gospel, Jesus eats meals with people. Also in Acts, Paul, and Peter put themselves into uncomfortable, awkward, table setting experiences where they share a meal – putting themselves in the ***risky and awkward place of a guest***. Being a guest is super risky! It's risky because its awkward, it's risky because it's uncomfortable and inconvenient. ***It's risky especially when we're a guest, because we're putting ourselves into vulnerable situations where we enter in to the beliefs, and table mannerisms, and customs, and worldviews, and convictions that often clash with us.***

By sharing a meal, we're sharing our lives. The Jews did not eat with Gentiles or anyone that would "defile" because they saw it as rubbing off on them and defiling them. Sharing a meal is risky because you can be shamed by the religious culture as a "drunkard" or a "friend of sinners". Every time Jesus mixed with the "wrong crowd" He was accused as being a partaker of their sin (Luke 7:34; 15:1-2). Peter had to go before the church in Jerusalem to give an account for entering the home of a Roman centurion named Cornelius (Acts 15:7-11). Paul confronted Peter for his unwillingness to eat with Gentiles when certain leaders from Jerusalem show up in Antioch (Gal. 2:11-14). Paul told the Corinthians to become charitable guests and to eat what was put in front of them with thanksgiving even in the midst of the pagan religious practices surrounding a meal of offering food to idols (1 Cor. 10:23-30). ***Over and over evangelism is set in the NT within the context of sharing a meal. WE MUST BE HOSPITABLE PEOPLE.***

So here is a very tangible way that we can love those within the walls of the church and outside the walls of the church – by being good hosts in our homes and in our church, and by being good guests within the homes of our neighbors. This will mean putting ourselves at risk. This will mean entering into inconvenient and often awkward circumstances. It may even cause us to be ridiculed by people within the family of God…Jesus was also. But I firmly believe that we can honor the Lord and glorify Him by the way we commit to loving our neighbor by practicing good table manners within the church, within our homes, and within the homes of others. By sharing a meal, we show people that though we may believe differently, we acknowledge that they are important because they too are created in the image of God. They too are those whom God loves. They too have value. God longs for His Trinitarian love to reach them also.

Young Adults: Trinity in Redlands - I was talking with my good friend who is a young adults pastor in California. He has given to me over the years several examples of young adults who came to their fellowship and didn't believe or behave as they did. He said that they are committed to welcoming young adults into their group as they are. They don't expect people to believe and behave prior to belonging. They welcome them and give them a place where they can belong, where their questions can be explored, and where they can be loved unconditionally, where they too can hear the Word of God taught. What they've noticed is that when people first feel like they belong, that they are welcomed as they are not as they should be, they begin to behave differently and eventually after hearing over and over the gospel taught, they believe upon Jesus.

Our expectation *shouldn't* be: come if you believe and behave a certain way and THEN you can belong.

Our expectation *should* be: You belong here, we welcome you as you are, and over time we trust that you will behave differently, and sooner or later as we pray, as you listen to God's Word taught, as you are loved…you will believe.

Let's pray.