

#30
July 1, 2018
Living well
Spiritually Mature.

Luke 10:25-37

²⁵ A legal expert stood up to test Jesus. “Teacher,” he said, “what must I do to gain eternal life?”

²⁶ Jesus replied, “What is written in the Law? How do you interpret it?”

²⁷ He responded, “*You must love the Lord your God with all your heart, with all your being, with all your strength, and with all your mind, and love your neighbor as yourself.*”^[a]

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

²⁹ But the legal expert wanted to prove that he was right, so he said to Jesus, “And who is my neighbor?”

³⁰ Jesus replied, “A man went down from Jerusalem to Jericho. He encountered thieves, who stripped him naked, beat him up, and left him near death. ³¹ Now it just so happened that a priest was also going down the same road. When he saw the injured man, he crossed over to the other side of the road and went on his way. ³² Likewise, a Levite came by that spot, saw the injured man, and crossed over to the other side of the road and went on his way. ³³ A Samaritan, who was on a journey, came to where the man was. But when he saw him, he was moved with compassion. ³⁴ The Samaritan went to him and bandaged his wounds, tending them with oil and wine. Then he placed the wounded man on his own donkey, took him to an inn, and took care of him. ³⁵ The next day, he took two full days’ worth of wages and gave them to the innkeeper. He said, ‘Take care of him, and when I return, I will pay you back for any additional costs.’ ³⁶ What do you think? Which one of these three was a neighbor to the man who encountered thieves?”

³⁷ Then the legal expert said, “The one who demonstrated mercy toward him.”

Jesus told him, “Go and do likewise.”

Living Well Spiritually Mature

We have been considering ways to deepen our faith inspired by the book “Emotionally Healthy Spirituality”. We have been talking about our feelings and being able to recognize them and bring all our feelings to the Lord. We learned from Joseph what to do with people from the past who truly hurt us. Last Sunday I preached on Jesus praying in Gethsemane. Jesus shows us what to do when we face the most difficult situations in life.

Today we continue our journey and look beneath the surface. What is truly going inside of us? Who are we truly and why are we not growing as Christians? Peter Scazzero in his books writes, that there are four stages of emotional growth:

Emotional Infants
Emotional Children
Emotional Adolescents
Emotional Adults

Emotional Infants

Look for others to take care of them
Are driven by need for instant gratification
Use others as objects to meet their needs

Emotional Children

Are content and happy as long as they receive what they want
Interpret disagreements as personal offenses
Are easily hurt
Complain, withdraw or become sarcastic

Emotional Adolescents

Tend to be defensive
Are threatened and alarmed by criticism
Keep score of what they give so they can ask for something later in return
Deal with conflict poorly
Become preoccupied with themselves
Are critical and judgmental

Emotional Adults

Are able to ask for what they need, want, or prefer clearly, directly, honestly
Recognize, manage, and take responsibility for their own thoughts and feelings
Respect others without having to change them
Give people room to make mistakes and not be perfect
Have the capacity to resolve conflict maturely and negotiate solutions that consider the perspectives of others.

I believe the first, and maybe even the hardest thing for us, is to admit and realistically see the need for growth. It is scary to realize that, for example, I almost being 40 years old, am not still an emotional adult.

So many of us think, if we know more of the Bible or if we just learn a little bit more, we will be more spiritually mature. I can assure you, that spiritual maturity has little to do with knowledge. Yes, we have to study, to read and learn, but it is no good if knowledge has not helped us to grow spiritually. Just think about the Pharisees. How far away they were from the truth – from the very center of what it means to be a believer. They knew and memorized the Scriptures very well.



We know a person is spiritually mature by the way he/she loves others, especially enemies. This leads us to today's familiar parable of the Good Samaritan. I know most of you know it well. However, Bible is never finished with us. Every time we read with an open mind and with the Holy Spirit helping us we find how much we have missed and how much we do not know.

“A legal expert stood up to test Jesus. “Teacher,” he said, “what must I do to gain eternal life?”” He was somebody who knew the Scriptures very well and had respect. He stood up, he called Jesus “Teacher” and he also believed in and wanted to have eternal life. He knew it all very well. He was not seeking to make sure he got it all right. He thought he knew better. He knew everything. He wanted to test Jesus. His nose was in the air, his attitude was judgmental and his purpose was to show how right he was and how wrong others were.

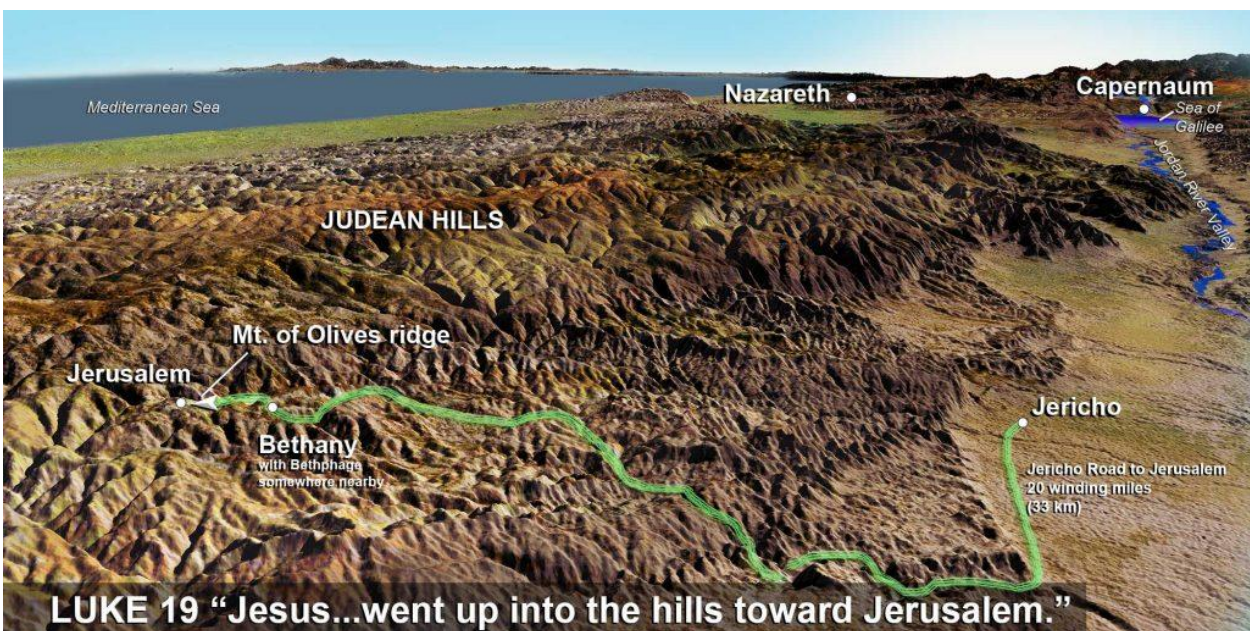
Jesus answered his question with a question. We know we are in trouble when Jesus answers with a question. So, what's written in the Law? What is written in Scripture you know so well? He answers perfectly. A+ : “You must love the Lord your

God with all your heart, with all your soul, with all your strength, and with all your mind, and love your neighbor as yourself.

Think of this answer: to have an eternal life, you have to Love God with all, ALL, your heart, your soul, mind and strength. Do you know how best to check how much you love God? What do you think when you have a little break? What do you have when you have little bit of free time? What are your thoughts when you lay in bed? What are your thoughts when you stand in line and just have to wait? Are you in your thoughts praising God? Are you, in your heart, worshiping Him? Are you thinking about holiness? Scripture says: with ALL. It does not mean a little bit here and there, now and then.

And love your neighbor as yourself. With the same urgency, with the same energy, with the same provision as we do to ourselves. That is a challenge.

It would have been a great conversation., “But the legal expert wanted to prove



that he was right, so he said to Jesus: “And who is my neighbor?”

Jesus starts the story. "A man went down from Jerusalem to Jericho. He encountered thieves, who stripped him naked, beat him up, and left him near death." A road from



Jerusalem to Jericho was a very dangerous road. Everybody in the crowd knew the road. Do we have some dangerous roads in Indiana? Are there some roads you would suggest I do not to walk alone at night? When some mission teams came to Lithuania, I always told them to stay at the hotel and not take any night walks.

This poor man traveled a very dangerous road, known to be full of robbers and yes, they took his clothes, beat him up good and left him lying on the ground near death.

I like to always be on time everywhere, as much as it is in my control and in my power. I do not like or appreciate when things get out of my control or not the way I planned. When the kids go to school, I have to be there at 11:45 AM to pick them up. I am always on time and usually a little bit early.

One time as I left home on time, I saw a car standing in the church parking lot. This is nothing unusual. People stop there so they can talk on the cellphone, people sometimes stop there to sell and buy things. One time, late at night we saw a person walking his dog near the parsonage. I sent Andrew to talk with him. We found out it was a meeting place for him to sell his dog to another person.

So I thought, this lady just stopped to talk on the phone. I went and I got the kids. After that I had planned to take Emma to tutoring. As we passed the parking lot of the church again, this young lady was still at the parking lot. She was standing outside and she looked worried. When I have plans and goals and my time is precious, I do not like to stop and give my time for something I did not plan.

The voice inside of me, very clearly nudged me to stop. I did. I asked if everything Ok. She said she ran out of gas. I asked if I could help her. She said she had a friend coming to help her, but they did not have a container for the gas nor had they any money. She was probably about 19 years old. I told her I could loan her a container and could give her some money for gas.

I am glad I stopped. I am glad the Holy Spirit's voice was encouraging me to do so. Have there been times when I did not stop? Yes, indeed. Have I passed by people when I should have stopped? Yes. Sometimes, I was afraid. Other times the place where I needed to be was more important than to stop and meet the need of the person. By God's grace I hope I will be more and more able to love those who I meet, those who disrupt my schedule, who make my life inconvenient and require unplanned expenses.

The priest went by. He was a busy man. I do not blame him. I can imagine that priest thinking to himself, I'd really like to help, but it would be just my luck to have him die in my arms, and I'd have to go through all of the rites of cleansing. It's an expensive sacrifice I'd have to offer. People might ask questions about what I'm being cleansed from. I will not be able to do sacrifices today. That means I will have no food. I don't know if this is what he thought, but that would be what I would think.

Then the Levite was like the assistant pastor. He took care of the scrolls, kept the operation going, and sometimes did ministry. Jesus says that he came, saw the man, and passed by on the other side. He was probably very busy. He was not able to be late or he thought there is nothing he can do to help him anyway.

The Samaritan was on a journey. Samaritan! Jews and Samaritans were the biggest of enemies. Jews called Samaritans dogs. They said that to eat together with a Samaritan is the same as eating pork...You cannot go lower or hate anybody more than that. He had plans. He needed to be somewhere, too. He stopped. He stopped because he was moved with compassion. That is the same feeling that many times Jesus had for the people he met. Remember the feelings? They are important. God



often communicates through feelings. Feelings can move us to do right things. He got his hands messy. He gave his time.

It is interesting to note that the Samaritan did not put him on shoulders. He put Him on His donkey. He did not take him to his home. He took him to an inn. The Samaritan also did not take care of him for the rest of his life. The next day he paid the innkeeper and left promising to pay for additional expenses.

In other words, the Samaritan did not adopt him or enable him. Rather, the Samaritan did what was necessary to help the victim get back on his feet.

The Samaritan was on a journey minding his own business. He was not looking for the injured and wounded. He encountered a need and was willing to be inconvenienced. I believe the most important lesson is to stop and let ourselves be interrupted. Do not ask questions. Do not judge or give any excuses or justifications.

Part of mature spirituality is when we stop for even those we do not know. We stop to help those who look or smell different. Mature spirituality includes knowing your

limits and boundaries. Do you like speed limits? Time limits? Calorie limits? Work limits? I do not. It is still good for me to know and realize my limits.

For example me, I can not sit still. I always think and want to do things all the time. Because there is always something to clean, something to read, to prepare...Andrew has to tell me, sometimes to make me stop...For Andrew (I asked Andrew's permission to share it) every single time we go to eat in the restaurant, Andrew would order the biggest portion of drink, starter and most likely something unlimited, like ribs... I always give him a look. Most of the times it works and he always grateful afterwards he saw and agreed with my look.

In the end of the story Jesus asked, which one of these three was a neighbor to the man who encountered thieves? The legal expert could not even say the word



“Samaritan”. He said: “the one...”

The legal expert was excellent in his knowledge of the Scriptures. He could go on and on discussing what the word means. Go and do likewise is what Jesus says.

Jesus demonstrated this nearly every time he performed a miracle. He saw a need and he met it. The water into wine, the woman who was bleeding, the Centurion's servant, the ear of the servant of the high priest, the feeding of the 5000.....

Spiritual maturity is seizing every opportunity to love and praise God with all of our heart, mind, soul and strength. It is loving our neighbor – which includes our enemies – as we love ourselves.

Let us renew our commitment to following Jesus' teaching and example. The book of Romans tells us that while we were yet sinners – enemies of God --- Christ died for us proving his love for us.

Let us go and do likewise.