

Luke Study 2 - How to Love Your Neighbour and How to Love God

10:25-11:13

Introduction

In our last study, we saw Jesus on mission. *'As the time approached for him to be taken up to heaven (i.e. die for sin and rise to life; 9:22), Jesus resolutely set out for Jerusalem' (9:51)*. But he also called others to join him in that mission; to follow him.

In this study, Luke starts unpacking what following Jesus - the life of discipleship - means. And it centres around two things: loving God, and loving your neighbour.

Luke unpacks that by putting three stories together. In the first, the parable of the Good Samaritan, Jesus explains what it means to love your neighbour. In the next two - the story of Mary and Martha, and Jesus' teaching on prayer - Jesus explains what it means to love God: to listen to him (in Jesus) and pray to him.

We start with the story of the Good Samaritan.

Read Luke 10:25-37

1. What is the lawyer's question? (v.25)
2. What is the correct answer (according to both the lawyer and Jesus)? (vv.26-28)
3. What is the lawyer's question? (v.29) Why does he ask it? What do you think he is trying to do here? How can we be tempted to do the same?
4. Jesus responds by telling a story (vv.30-35). What happens? What is the difference between the first two travellers and the third? (Note: Samaritans and Jews usually hated each other; see 9:52-53).
5. What is the point Jesus makes at the end of the story? (vv.36-37)
6. What does this tell us about what it means to 'love your neighbour as yourself'?

The lawyer knows he has to love his neighbour. But to make it as easy as possible to think of himself as a good person (*'justify himself'*), he tries to limit who counts as his neighbour, and hence whom he has to love. Jesus won't have a bar of it: if you love God (the first and most important command), you won't limit the number of people you have to love. You'll love everyone; treat everyone as a neighbour. If even a Samaritan can do that, Jesus says, then surely you, a devout Jew, can too.

Having answered what it means to love your neighbour, Jesus now teaches what it means to love God. The first thing to do is to listen to him.

Read Luke 10:38-42

7. Be honest: who do you most sympathise with in this story, Martha or Mary? Why?
8. Why do you think Jesus sympathises with Mary? What is it that she is doing (v.39; see 10:22) that is 'better' than what Martha does?
9. What are the implications of this for our own balance in life between serving Jesus and being replenished by him?

Jesus doesn't tell Martha off for serving him: '*Martha, Martha,*' is very gentle. But he does say it's even more important to listen to him - to be served by him - and that, if you have to choose between one or the other, you should always choose listening to him. This is an especially good reminder for those of us who are busy in ministry: we can become so busy that we don't make time to listen to Jesus by reading the Bible. This is both a correction - don't get so busy that you skimp on personal time in devotion - but also a comfort: Jesus doesn't expect you to be so busy that you can't make time to spend with him.

Does any of this ring true for you?

Having told us that loving God means listening to him, through Jesus, Jesus now tells us it also means talking to him in prayer.

Read Luke 11:1-13

10. Jesus tells his disciples to wish two things for God (v.2) and to ask for three things for themselves (vv.3-4). What are they?
11. How can this prayer shape the form of our own prayers?
12. In case the holiness of God (*'hallowed by your name,'* v.2) makes the disciples think God might be standoffish, Jesus tells a funny story (vv.5-8). What is the point of it?
13. To ram the point home Jesus tells the disciples to pray (vv.9-10) and reminds them how much kinder their heavenly Father (see v.2) is even than their earthly fathers, who love them a lot (vv.11-13).

How is this picture of God's character meant to help the disciples pray?

How can it help us pray? Does our picture of God ever hinder our prayers?

God is our Father: this is the God Jesus reveals to us (10:21-22). That means we are totally dependent on him and so need to pray to him. But it also means he loves us and wants us to ask him for things, audaciously and trustingly.