

Text: Luke 10:25-37

Theme: The More Neighborly Neighbor

July 10, 2016

Back in my farming days, I remember times when I would meet a neighbor discing nearby the road and we would both stop our tractors, mine on the county road and his in his field and sit at talk across the fence. How often to things like that occur today? Today, we're in a hurry. We've got places to go and things to do. As we look at the account of the Good Samaritan, we are reminded of a different world and a different time in our world. Even so, we focus our hearts today on how to be a more neighborly neighbor.

I. By God's original intent, we were created to be neighbors. A. However, we struggle to be neighborly. 1. We struggle because we are competitive. In the past twenty-five years, has this community become more or less competitive? If it's sports, we need to win. If it's the workplace, we need to be a step above everyone else. On the golf course where we are supposed to be relaxing, we're obsessing over the next shot, where it might land that we don't want anyone else to notice. I don't like it; you don't like it, but we're struggling more every year with competition, struggling so much that being neighborly continues to take a beating when it should come second nature.

2. We struggle because of our perceived time limitations. How many of you have more time on your hands than you know what to do with? Now, how many of you never have enough time to do all you would like to do? 24 hours - that's all we have in each day. What we don't use, we lose. It's been that way since forever, but what has changed is our choices. Things that were a priority ten years ago, aren't priorities for many today. We'd like to do more things for others, to be more neighborly, but we can't help it! It's not our fault. That's just the way of the world today. It may be the way of the world, but how we use our time is still our choice.

3. We struggle to be more neighborly because we forget God is in control. How many times do we find the phrase, "I am the Lord," in our Old Testament lesson? We may have calendars on our iPhone or keep our mental lists thinking we're in control, that we've got things under control. Yet, we're filling our minds with nonsense! We're not in control, not in charge, not calling the shots. The One who created you, He is in charge, in control. He establishes our life-priorities, but, so often, we ignore His priorities, especially the priority to be neighborly because, according to our thinking, we have more pressing things to do.

B. Aware of our struggles, how do we follow God's plan by being more neighborly? 1. We become more neighborly by recalling the events of Good Friday. "Wait a minute. What does Good Friday have to do with being neighborly?" Actually, everything. The lawyer in our text wanted to justify himself. But, we must not miss the reality of Jesus' statement. The only way the lawyer could attain eternal life was to be perfect. To become more neighborly, we return to the cross and remind ourselves that first we need Jesus as Savior. Apart from Good Friday, neighborly, by God's definition, neighborly as a response to faith is impossible.

2. We become more neighborly by contemplating the example of Christ. If we were to connect Christ to one of the people in the parable, which would be the Christ-like figure? Which would most closely resemble what Jesus would have done? The answer is obvious, but contemplating that example, taking that example

to heart, making that example our pattern for life, that's our challenge. More neighborly leads us to be more like Christ, to review the example of Christ as He walked the earth and then to create that image in our minds as our starting point, our stepping out point, our example as we become more neighborly.

3. We become more neighborly by making time to be neighborly. As the Samaritan left home that morning, how many hours did he plan to spend taking care of a half-dead robbery victim? Did he leave home searching for an opportunity? Was it even on his radar for the day? Neighborly events that are truly neighborly in every respect are not planned, but occur unexpectedly according to our time frame. When you find yourself in an opportune moment that doesn't look opportune, you are there by God's design. As we make time to do what we didn't plan to do because God needs it done, we will accomplish the most rewarding task of our day.

4. We become more neighborly by choosing to demonstrate compassion. How many hours of compassion training had the despised Samaritan received prior to this event? How many continuing education hours had he logged? Compassion isn't taught. It's something we choose to do. Of all the traits associated with Jesus, compassion is by far the most common. The words in our text are so like Jesus, "And he looked at him and he had compassion." Doesn't that sound exactly like Jesus in His life on this earth? Neighborly people choose to be compassionate. As we seek to be more neighborly, we, likewise, choose to be more compassionate.

5. We become more neighborly by doing something helpful. Back to the Samaritan. Did he have a Bachelor's degree in nursing? Was he trained as a first responder or EMT? Yet what did he do? It says that he bound up his wounds, pouring on oil and wine, took him to an inn and took care of him. To each of us, Jesus says, "Do something to help another person in need. It may not be the perfect something, but you can be sure I will bless your efforts and will provide whatever is needed to fill where you are lacking." By doing something, we demonstrate care and as we demonstrate care, we demonstrate what it means to be a neighbor.

6. We become more neighborly by being willing to go the extra mile. Jesus was an extra miler. What about you? Are you willing to go above and beyond the call of duty for the sake of someone else? The Samaritan took the man to an inn and paid for his stay and his care because he was an extra miler. More neighborly calls us to go the extra mile, to do what others would not do, to care when others choose not to, to compliment when it would be easier to say nothing, to build up others so that they realize that they, too, are a valuable part of this church. Neighborly people go the extra mile because they've learned that what goes around comes around in God's good time.

7. Sitting on our tractors shooting the breeze may be a thing of the past, but being a neighbor to those around us is still in vogue, still what our God expects from us and still what we choose to do when we desire to become a more neighborly neighbor. Amen.