

Daily Bread with Brother Hwa-Chi (Not reviewed by the speaker, for personal use only)

Luke 10: 25-37

Brothers and sisters, peace be with you, this is Hwa-Chi. Thank the Lord, it's time to read the Bible again. This week, we are going to read Luke Chapter 10 and today we will read verses 25 to 37.

This passage, the Parable of the Good Samaritan, is very rich, and we will take two days to read it. Today, we will quickly read through the entire passage, and then, according to the literal meaning of the text, reflect on it together. First, we will clarify the facts presented in the passage, and then, based on the surface meaning of those facts, we will consider the words spoken by Jesus.

Tomorrow, using the same passage, we will approach it entirely from a spiritual interpretation, adding some personal experiences. We will share the more mysterious aspects of the passage and the parts that can be directly applied to each of our spiritual lives.

Verse 25: "And behold, a certain lawyer stood up and tested Him, saying, "Teacher, what shall I do to inherit eternal life?"

At the very beginning, it clearly tells us that the one who came to test Jesus was a lawyer—an expert in the Law—someone who taught the Jewish people the Law. He came to question Jesus not because he did not understand, but in order to test Him. The word "test" is a very strong word; it shows that he intended to examine Jesus thoroughly and completely, even to raise questions that Jesus might not be able to answer, challenging Him.

How did he ask? He said, "Teacher! What shall I do to inherit eternal life?" Because he was a lawyer, he addressed Jesus as "Teacher." According to Jewish rabbinic teaching at that time, if one understood the Torah—the Five Books of Moses—one

could have eternal life. The concept of “eternal life” as spoken of by the rabbis was somewhat different from how we speak of it today. It did not merely mean eternal life; rather, it referred to having a perfect, rich, and complete life on earth. So this lawyer was challenging Jesus by asking, What must I do in order to live a perfect, rich, and fully complete life? What must I do to inherit eternal life? His concept was centered on doing—on what he must accomplish.

Verse 26-27: “He said to him, ‘What is written in the law? What is your reading of it?’ So he answered and said, ‘You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, with all your soul, with all your strength, and with all your mind,’ and ‘your neighbor as yourself.’ ”

Of course, Jesus knew his intention—that he had come to test Him. And just as Jesus expected, the man’s answer was flawless, completely correct. In Gospel of Matthew 22:34–40, it is also recorded that a lawyer came to test Jesus, asking which commandment was the greatest. Jesus’ answer there was exactly the same: “You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, with all your soul, and with all your mind.” This is the greatest commandment. Then He said, “And the second is like it: You shall love your neighbor as yourself.” So those who were familiar with the books of the Law all knew that one must love God and love one’s neighbor.

How are we to love God? With all your heart, with all your soul, with all your strength, and with all your mind. This passage comes from Book of Deuteronomy 6:5: “You shall love the LORD your God with all your heart, with all your soul, and with all your strength.” Sometimes in Chinese translation, the meaning may not seem so clear. “With all your heart” refers to your heart; “with all your soul” refers to your soul; “with all your strength” or “with all your might” refers to all your power, which is related to your body. The heart is connected to the spirit. So heart, soul, and strength correspond to your spirit, soul, and body—meaning you love the Lord with your whole being.

Here, an additional phrase is included: “with all your mind.” That is, with all your thoughts. The mind is the most dominant part of a person’s soul; it means that what

occupies your thoughts all day long should be the things of God. This presents no difficulty in understanding. After that, you are also to love your neighbor as yourself.

Verse 28: “And He said to him, “You have answered rightly; do this and you will live.”

Because he had asked Jesus, “What shall I do?”, Jesus answered him according to his own words: “Go and do this, and you will live—you will surely obtain eternal life.”

Verse 29: “But he, wanting to justify himself, said to Jesus, “And who is my neighbor?”

He had originally come to challenge Jesus, but unexpectedly, with one simple counter-question, Jesus turned the situation around and left him at a disadvantage. For he himself already knew the answers to these questions—and he also knew that he could not fulfill them. To love God with all one’s heart, strength, soul, and mind—whether or not I truly love God, others may not know. But whether or not I love people, others can clearly see. Therefore, in order to excuse himself for not being able to do it, he asked Jesus, “And who is my neighbor?”

Since he was to love his neighbor as himself, then he would have to love his neighbor as he loved himself. But who, then, is my neighbor? Who is worthy of such love? In Jewish society at that time, a lawyer was considered a relatively honorable profession, so he likely lived in a better area. When he thought of “neighbor,” he probably thought of those living next door to him. Yet when he looked at them one by one, none seemed worthy of his love—much less those living in poorer districts. So, in order to justify himself and appear reasonable, he asked Jesus, “Who is my neighbor?” Jesus knew his question and was unwilling to answer him directly. Instead, He responded by telling him a story.

Verse 30: “Then Jesus answered and said: ‘A certain man went down from Jerusalem to Jericho, and fell among thieves, who stripped him of his clothing, wounded him, and departed, leaving him half dead.’”

The original meaning of Jerusalem is “foundation of peace.” Jerusalem was a mountain city. Jericho, located to the south and at a much lower elevation, lay downhill from Jerusalem. Therefore, the Bible says that one “went down” to Jericho. Jericho was also known as a cursed city. The region between Jerusalem and Jericho was largely wilderness. Robbers often lurked there; it was not a safe road.

This man fell into the hands of robbers. They stripped him of his clothing, leaving him naked; they beat him until he was half dead, and then they left him and went away. So this man, traveling from Jerusalem down to Jericho, was thrown aside on the roadside in the wilderness—barely breathing, stripped naked, and near death.

Verse 31: “Now by chance a certain priest came down that road. And when he saw him, he passed by on the other side.”

A priest was one who served in the temple, helping the people offer sacrifices. He was someone who should regularly help others and bring them before God. When he saw a man lying naked on the roadside in the wilderness—uncertain whether he was dead or alive—he faced a dilemma.

If a priest touched something unclean, he would become unclean himself. A dead body was unclean; even a Gentile was considered unclean. He did not even know who that man was. If he were accidentally defiled, he would have to undergo purification for seven days before he could resume his service in the temple. So he had what seemed to be a very reasonable excuse: he was unwilling to approach something unclean. Therefore, he passed by on the other side.

Verse 32: “Likewise a Levite, when he arrived at the place, came and looked, and passed by on the other side.”

A Levite was one who carried out various practical services in the temple. His reasoning was likely the same as the priest’s—he also was unwilling to risk being defiled by something unclean. Therefore, he was unable to help the man who lay naked and half dead by the roadside.

Verse 33: “But a certain Samaritan, as he journeyed, came where he was. And when he saw him, he had compassion.”

Samaria had originally been the capital of the northern kingdom of Israel. After the northern kingdom was conquered by the Assyrians, the Israelites were deported to various places, and many Gentiles were brought into Samaria. By the time of Jesus, the people of Samaria were of mixed ancestry and their faith was considered impure. Therefore, the Israelites looked down on the Samaritans. Yet it so happened that a Samaritan came to that place. When he saw the man’s condition, he was moved with compassion. The priest could not help him; the Levite could not help him. But this Samaritan—despised by others—was the one who was stirred with mercy.

Verse 34: “So he went to him and bandaged his wounds, pouring on oil and wine; and he set him on his own animal, brought him to an inn, and took care of him.”

Wine could be used to disinfect, and oil could be applied to soothe and dress the wounds. So he first treated the man’s physical injuries. Then he bandaged him, lifted him onto his own animal, and brought him to an inn to take care of him—the inn being the lodging place of that time. He not only met his immediate needs, but also brought him to the inn and settled him there properly.

Verse 35: “On the next day, when he departed, he took out two denarii, gave them to the innkeeper, and said to him, ‘Take care of him; and whatever more you spend, when I come again, I will repay you.’”

A denarius was the daily wage at that time, and two denarii would roughly cover a month’s stay at a modest inn. Then he handed the man over to the innkeeper, saying, “Take care of him, and whatever more you spend, I will repay you when I return.”

Not only did he settle the man so that he could stay for a while, but he also instructed the innkeeper to continue caring for him until he was fully restored. If the expenses were not enough, he promised to repay the difference upon his return. After Jesus finished telling this story, He turned back and asked the lawyer.

Verse 36: “So which of these three do you think was neighbor to him who fell among the thieves?”

“Was it the priest? Was it the Levite? Or was it the Samaritan?”

Verse 37: “And he said, ‘He who showed mercy on him.’ Then Jesus said to him, ‘Go and do likewise.’”

At that moment, he answered, “The one who showed him mercy.” He didn’t even want to mention the word “Samaritan,” only saying, “the one who had mercy on him.” Jesus said, “Go and do likewise.” From the beginning, he had asked, “What shall I do?” Jesus used this story to clearly show him what to do, and then said, “Go and do it.”

On the surface, this story tells us: you are to show mercy; you are to be a good Samaritan to others. When you see someone in need, you should help them—this is how you become a good neighbor to others.

As I mentioned at the start, today we are interpreting this literally. In one sense, God, through this passage and through the challenge posed by the lawyer, answered him: you are to be a person who shows mercy to others, and in doing so, you become a good neighbor.

Let us pray together: Lord, thank You. Through the lawyer's question, You show us that we must first love You—with all our heart, soul, strength, and mind. Then You remind us to love our neighbor as ourselves. How do we love our neighbor? By showing mercy to others. When others are in need, help us to set aside ourselves and attend to their needs. Lord, bless my life today. If there are relatives, friends, or family around me who have any needs, help me to be a person full of mercy and a person who helps others. Bless my life today. We pray in the holy name of Jesus Christ. Amen!