

Think You Have It All Figured Out?

Sunday, July 14 at 9:00 † Monday, July 15 at 7 PM

Fifth Sunday after Pentecost / Sixth Sunday after Trinity – 2019

Introduction: Dear friends in Christ:

- Are you good?
- Are you good enough?
- Is your combination of *avoiding bad* and *doing good* holding the gate of heaven open for you?

If yes, *great!* Then, going forward...

- ✓ Just keep on loving God with ALL of your heart, soul, strength, and mind!
- ✓ Just keep on loving your neighbor as yourself... *and you will be fine!*

The lawyer in today's gospel reading *thought* he had the way to heaven figured out, he just needed a little clarification on the identity of his neighbor; *then he would do what needed to be done in order to earn eternal life!* Let's get into the text:

1. **Do This and You Will Live Forever:** ²⁵ And behold, a lawyer [skilled in the law of Moses] stood up to put [Jesus] to the test, saying, "Teacher, what shall I do to inherit eternal life?" ²⁶ [Jesus] said to [the lawyer], "What is written in the Law [of Moses]? How do you read it?"

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 [Jesus] said to [the lawyer], “You have answered correctly; do this, and you will live.”** // On one hand, the man was testing Jesus – *hoping to challenge Him*, but, on the other hand, *he seemed to have a genuine concern about his own eternal life!*

- a. With a question: The lawyer said, “**What shall I do...?**” Then Jesus replied, “**What is written...?**” So Jesus asked him, What do the Scriptures tell us we should do? When we respond to a question with a question, *we discover what people know and we get them thinking!*
- b. Love for God: That means “**we know the true God in all his greatness and grace, and that we accordingly turn to him with all our being**” (Lenski, 598). What are the details? They involve our heart, soul, strength, and mind; ♣our **heart** is deep in the center of who we are, ♣our **soul** is our life, ♣our **strength** is our God-given energy, and ♣our **mind** includes our thoughts, ideas, and beliefs. And don’t miss the fact that we are to love God with **ALL of our heart, ALL of our soul, ALL of our strength, and ALL of our mind!**
- c. Love for neighbor: We love him only to the extent that we love ourselves. ♣When I am hungry, *my love for myself moves me to find food*; ♣when I am cold, *my love for myself moves me to find warmth*; ♣when I am hurting, *my love for myself moves me to find comfort*. Make sense?

d. Summary: Jesus said to the lawyer, “**do this, and you will live.**” So keep FULLY loving God and keep loving your neighbor AS YOURSELF; do so without a single failure; *then you will live!* Jesus wanted the man to know that no one can perfectly love God and neighbor, so no one can earn heaven by keeping the law (Ja. 2:10; Ga. 3:10).

2. **Identifying Our Neighbor**: ²⁹ **But [the lawyer], desiring to justify himself, said to Jesus, “And who is my neighbor?”** [*and thinking... not a Gentile or a Samaritan.*] 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.** // The 16 mile trip from Jerusalem to Jericho was on a winding and robber-infested road. The traveling man received a thorough mugging – *his possessions taken, his clothing taken, and his health taken!!!* The man was helpless to help himself; he was dependent upon someone loving him, *thus someone taking sacrificial action to help him according to his needs.*
- a. Priest – *a Jew who served God in the temple*: ³¹ **Now by chance a priest was going down that road, and when he saw him he passed by on the other side.** // He was probably returning home after serving in the temple; when he saw the man in need, he stayed as far away from him as possible and no one knew – *except God!*
- b. Levite – *a temple worker*: ³² **So likewise a Levite, when he came to the place and saw him, passed by on the other side.** // The Levite did the same as the priest, and both probably “**had their excuses: robbers were near... the man was too far gone... To be found near the man might cast suspicion on them**” (Lenski, 605).

c. Samaritan – a person who was generally hated by Jews: ³³ **But a Samaritan, as he journeyed, came to where he was, and when he saw him, he had compassion** [*so he felt sympathy, took pity*]. ³⁴ **He went to him and bound up his wounds, pouring on oil and wine** [*things typically carried by a well-equipped traveler*]. **Then he set him on his own animal** [*so he walked while the stranger rode*] **and brought him to an inn and took care of him.** ³⁵ **And the next day he took out two denarii** [*enough to cover TWO MONTHS of food and lodging*] **and gave them to the innkeeper, saying, ‘Take care of him, and whatever more you spend, I will repay you when I come back.’** // Wow! If I was the man who had been robbed and beaten, I would want to be loved by that Samaritan!

3. **Identifying Our Neighbor**: Then Jesus asked the lawyer: ³⁶ **Which of these three** [*the priest, the Levite, or the Samaritan*], **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.”** // Jesus wanted the man to think: Wait a minute... I have passed by many needy people in my life, *so what about those sins?* Once he knew he could not earn eternal life; *then he would finally be open to* ♦*God’s undeserved love and* ♦*the finished work of Jesus!*

This Week’s Challenge: Ask yourself: Why will God welcome me into heaven?

Let Us Pray: Dear Father in heaven, since we are all helpless sinners, *You did everything necessary to gift us with eternal life through Jesus;* keep us trusting in Jesus for eternal life!