

Sun., Sept. 20:

Message Series: Messy: Loving Others Isn't Easy

Message Series Theme Verse: "Love your neighbor as yourself. I am the Lord." -Leviticus 19:18b

Memory Verse: "Love each other, for the one who loves another has fulfilled the law." -Romans 13:8b

Message: "Messy Love: Loving Others Isn't Easy! Messy Mercy."

Scripture: Luke 10:25-37

Blurb: The story of the Good Samaritan may be familiar, but it pushes us into loving like we normally ignore. Love is messy. This week we see that godly love means messy mercy. Come for a familiar story, but beware: messy mercy means doing something about what you know!

Out door worship.

Offering boxes available as people leave.

Parking spaces designated for drive in worshipers.

Bulletin insert of the Grow Groups Brochure

Sign up sheets for meals at St. Andrew's Shelter

OPENING MUSIC: *Your Love Defends Me* -Sanctify

WELCOME -Pastor David

MEMORY VERSE -Pastor David

"Love each other, for the one who loves another has fulfilled the law." -Romans 13:8b

WORSHIP MUSIC SET -Sanctify

Love Is a Mess

More Like Jesus

Where Charity and Love Prevail

Worship Prayer -Pastor Andrew

GROW MOMENT: Grow Groups starting in Oct. Sign up! -Cassi

SERVE MOMENT: St. Andrew's Homeless Shelter Food Train -Cassi

PRAYERS: THE APOSTLES' CREED AS A PRAYER -Pastor David

Pastor: Do you pray to God the Father?

All: I pray to God the Father Almighty, Maker of heaven and earth.

Time of prayer.

Pastor: Do you pray to God the Son?

All: I pray to Jesus Christ His only Son our Lord: Who was conceived by the Holy Spirit, Born of the Virgin Mary, Suffered under Pontius Pilate, Was crucified, dead, and buried; The third day He arose from the dead; He ascended into heaven, And sits at the right hand of God the Father Almighty; From there He shall come to judge the quick and the dead.

Time of prayer.

Pastor: Do you pray to God the Holy Spirit?

All: I pray to the Holy Spirit, who empowers The holy catholic church, The communion of saints, The forgiveness of sins, The resurrection of the body, And the life everlasting.

Time of prayer.

Pastor: Amen.

GENERATIONAL BRIDGE -Pastor Andrew

MESSAGE: Messy: Loving Others Isn't Easy #2: Messy Mercy -Pastor David

(Drawing upon a sermon by the same title by Pastor Scott Carroll, Outbreak Church.)

Messy: Loving Others Isn't Easy. Messy Mercy. Romans 13:8, "Owe no one anything, except love each other, for the one who loves another has fulfilled the law."

Do you like Chick-fil-A? Yeah! It's amazing! Yummy chicken sandwiches! Besides excellent quality food, the chain takes even greater pride in excellent quality service. One of the core pieces of their customer service philosophy is training each of their employees to respond to customers using the phrase, "My pleasure." Have you ever noticed? This may just seem to be nuanced wording, but their goal is for their employees to actually say it honestly...to mean it! According to Chick-fil-A, that means *investing* in the customer.

Four times the Bible records "love your neighbor as yourself." Godly love is messy! It messes with each part of our lives, and it calls us to go into the messes in our lives and our world. And it's messy because it is just so hard. Love calls us to invest ourselves in others.

Love is a choice. It's not a feeling or emotion. You don't fall in and out of godly love. It is not earned or deserved. Love is a decision to keep doing what you need to do even when the other person becomes unlovable. This messy, godly love is the alternative way that God calls His people to live in a culture that is based on selfishness. We respond to the world, "My pleasure."

There are two commandments about love in the Bible. The first is to love the Lord your God with all your heart, soul, and strength. The second is to love your neighbor as yourself.

The first time it appears is right in the middle of the Law God gave to His people from the top of Mt. Sinai. And it comes as a summary of living holiness through forgiving others.

The next time we see it is in the New Testament. But it is quoting this first verse. It comes when Jesus is talking with a religious lawyer, and Jesus tells the Parable of the Good Samaritan.

Turn to Luke 10. My guess is that you may know this parable. You've heard it. That's okay. Be ready to hear a challenge here today because God has a new insight, or a new application for you, that you didn't have before. That's the cool thing about Scripture. You may know it, but each time the Holy Spirit will inspire its reading and bring out something new, or something applicable for you right now. So, make a point to engage. Knowing it is not enough. We'll come back to that.

So, in Luke 10, we see Jesus during His third year of public ministry. His popularity is starting to fade, and the Jewish leaders and authorities are starting to challenge Him more. Jesus had been preaching about how God wants people to love Him and others, and to worry less about all the

legalism of the Jewish religion. So, the Jewish experts go after Jesus, trying to find some way He violates the Law. So, sure enough, one day an expert in the Jewish law, challenged Jesus.

Let's pick it up in Luke 10:25. "A legal expert stood up to test Jesus. [So, this is not an genuine question.] 'Teacher,' he said, 'what must I do to gain eternal life?'"

Jesus plays to the man's expertise and puts the question back on him. Now, Jesus isn't trying to get out of a trap. That's what I would do. But Jesus uses this opportunity to try to reach the man. Verse 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.'" So, the expert pulls out the two greatest commandments. Anyone trained in the Jewish Law should be able to do this. This is not a new or surprising answer.

"28 Jesus said to him, 'You have answered correctly. Do this and you will live.'" So, notice here that for Jesus, it's not *knowing* the truth that saves. It's *doing* it...living it! Knowing you should love God and others isn't the key. Knowing the Parable of the Good Samaritan isn't the key. Jesus says, "Yep. Go do it."

"29 But the legal expert wanted to prove that he was right, so he said to Jesus, 'And who is my neighbor?'" He brings up the problem of application. Yes, we all agree we are supposed to love others. But the key issue is *how* to do that. "Not so fast, Jesus! What does this look like? How do you say we should do this?" Now, the expert was listening for a trap, but luckily for us, Jesus gives an answer that can really help us a lot! So, write down the question at the top of your note sheet: "Who is my neighbor?" Got that?

Verse 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.'" It was 17 miles from Jericho to Jerusalem, and Jericho was 3700 feet lower in elevation. Jerusalem is built on high hills, so you literally "go down" from Jerusalem to Jericho. It was a windy road through all kinds of arid, rocky hills and formations. Lots of places for thieves to hide out.

So, at the start, Jesus' listeners see themselves as the traveler. They are honest, good people who end up in trouble. The thieves, plural, don't just rob him: they also beat him up, so badly, that if left there, he would die. So, listener, imagine you're lying there in misery, and through your one open, but swollen eye, you see coming down the road, toward you, Pastor...Andrew! Hey, I'm telling this story, so I can't be in it! How convenient!

Verse 31, "'Now it just so happened that a priest was also going down the same road. [Maybe his name was Andrew. It could be possible.] When he saw the injured man, he crossed over to the other side of the road and went on his way.'" Now, here we see Jesus' anger at the Jewish Law. The Law stated that although we are to love others and always help them whenever needed, there were other parts of the law that said that a priest had to be ceremonially clean to serve at the temple. That meant not touching bodily fluids, like blood. If he helped this man, he would be disqualified from serving at the temple for seven days. So, the priest, who knew the laws well, chose his work for God in the temple *over* his work for God helping others in need. He was so busy being a good religious person that he couldn't get his hands dirty helping others. You're making this application, right?

Verse 32, "'Likewise, a Levite came by that spot, went and saw the injured man, and crossed over to the other side of the road and continued on his way.'" A Levite was a person from the tribe of Levi, and they were all religious workers. They were trained in the law and the work of the temple. Perhaps he worked with youth, and his name was Cassi. Well, since he was a man, perhaps it was Cassidy. Well, we know that he was a minister, and that he had training. He had knowledge. After all, as a *Levite* he was an expert in *Leviticus*.

So far, Jesus is beating up pretty hard on the paid religious professionals. The expert Jesus was talking to was getting very uncomfortable, but the rest of the people were loving this. They were getting His points: 1. Religious work doesn't make you religious, right? All form and no content. All talk and no walk. All cover and no book. All hat and no cattle. You get it. And secondly, 2. Being religious doesn't mean you're righteous. You may *say* you love God, but you really can't love God unless you also love those God loves. And that love looks like action...doing something.

Now, the smiling crowd eagerly anticipate who comes next: an ordinary, regular guy walking down the street...just like one of them. They're the hero. Ooo, this is going to be good!

Jesus continues. Verse 33, "A Samaritan, who was on a journey, came to where the man was. But when he saw him, he was moved with compassion."

Can you hear the *eeaaarrrrch* sounds of tires screeching in their minds? The Samaritans were the people from the country to the north of Jerusalem. They used to be Jews, but when the Assyrians conquered the northern kingdom of Israel in 722 B.C., the Assyrians took 20,000 Jews from there and settled them elsewhere, and then took 20,000 others from elsewhere and settled them in Israel. So, over the next 700 years, the people intermarried and were not longer pure. They adopted parts of other religions, and even set up their own religious center at Mt. Gerizim to replace Jerusalem. So, to the Jews, they were impure pagan traitors. And the Samaritans returned the hatred to the Jews, too. They couldn't stand each other.

Verse 34. "The Samaritan [I don't know...*perhaps* his name was David?] 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.'"

Pause there a minute. Let's take a look back at these four characters. Remember the question? Who is my neighbor, right?

Well, first there are the thieves. Their neighbor is someone they could treat as an object, to see as an opportunity to take, to use and take advantage of. It's all about the thieves. This is not loving, right?

Next is Priest Andrew. His neighbor is someone he has to keep at arm's length, to avoid, in order to stay holy and to be able to keep doing what makes him look religious. It's about the priest. That's not loving either, is it?

Then comes Levite Cassi. His neighbor is a curiosity. The literal translation for him says that he went over and looked, and then crossed over on the other side. He was rubber necking! He wanted to know what was going on; he was nosy. He wanted to see how all the homeless people lived. But he also chose not to get involved. Instead, he pulled out his cell phone and texted his friends, "You know what I just saw? Wow, we need better protection on this road! I've had enough of this! Let's get a petition going to send to our council." Still about the Levite. Not loving, is it?

Finally comes Samaritan David. He looks weird, talks different. He's strange and doesn't belong. He's hated and he's a hater. He's not even the right religion. Maybe he has a different skin color. But, this guy, he may not worship God rightly, but he actually lives out God's command to love. He gets it right! This is hard for everyone listening to Jesus to hear. At first they identified with the man who was beaten. Now they need to try to identify with the foreigner.

The racial overtones in this story strike us today, don't they? This most beloved parable of Jesus turns on racism. Samaritans were racially impure, inferior. They were foreigners, different, weird. They had the wrong skin color, dressed differently, spoke with a thick accent. We don't like them. They are not one of us. They need to go back to where they belong.

Tell me, church, you who think you know this parable: have you thought about it this summer? With all the racial protests going on, has it come to mind? Why not? Somehow, this story we know so well, we've stripped it of its racial corrective, and we've made it about being good people.

Can you hear this parable in a new way today? Can you hear the challenge to the racism within us? Who is our Samaritan? Now, I hope that no one here actively says that Black lives don't matter, or that Native people need to go back to the reservation where they belong. But when we see a Hmong person on the street, do we look around nervously? When we see a Somolian coming toward us, do we lock our car doors, or put our hand on our wallets, or cross over to the other side of the street? When we see a Middle Eastern woman, do we glare at her for her clothes? When stories are told, is there a kind of person, when they enter the story, that we have a subtle negative shift in our minds?

In this parable, the man walking on the road was doing just fine at first. But, it was when he ran into trouble that he was no longer self-sufficient. So often we think we are just fine on our own. We can take care of ourselves. But when we run into trouble, overpowering trouble, that beats us up, only then do we realize how much we need help. And many times, God sends help in the least likely way, or through the least likely folks. Will we receive the other as God's angels? Will we extend help to others, regardless of what they look like, because we have already received help. We love, we forgive, we help, because we have first been loved, been forgiven, been helped.

Love is messy! We need to let Jesus, as we hear Him tell this parable to us, reshape the racism in us. We need to ask Him to help us make the different person the hero. We need to see that their lives matter, and truly treat them as people who may get God's love right, better than we do.

Speaking of getting it right, let's finish the story. Jesus finishes the story and then puts the question back on him again. Verse 36, "What do you think? Which one of these three was a neighbor to the man who encountered thieves?"

The expert's question originally was, "Who is my neighbor?" He was trying to get Jesus to say who was and who wasn't my neighbor. That way, I get to choose whom I love. Who is worthy, who is "in," who is *the target* of my love?

But Jesus turns it around and asks, Who is *doing the targeting* with love? Who *was* a neighbor? Who behaved like a neighbor? Who showed love?

The real issue is not who we choose to love...people we deem worthy, or appreciative, or who look like us, or who we like. That's keeping it about us. And that's the way the world operates. Jesus' way, living out the law to love your neighbor as yourself, living the alternative way Jesus calls us to live in our broken world, makes it about them. Who needs love? Where is the need?

"Which of these three was a neighbor?" Verse 37, "Then the legal expert answered Jesus, 'The one who demonstrated mercy toward him.'"

"Jesus told him, 'Go and do likewise.'"

I find great hope here, for the expert didn't identify the helper as a Samaritan. His label of "country," or "religion," or "skin color" no longer mattered. Which one? The one who lived out God's command to love others. Love is messy mercy.

Four quick takeaways. Notice that: 1. Love showed compassion. Unlike the priest and Levite, the Samaritan left his comfort zone, his own schedule, his own needs, and attended the needs of the other. 2. Love made contact. He walked to the man, and touched him. He got personally involved. He got messy. He also exposed himself to vulnerability. He tarried where thieves hunt! 3. Love gave care. He did what he saw he could do. And 4. Love paid the cost. Not just money...that's easy. We do *that*, don't we. But how about time? Schedule? Reputation?

So, can you envision the application here? The Holy Spirit has already been talking to you.

But as I've wrestled with this, I kept hearing the Holy Spirit make the connection of what we know to what we do. We know we are to love our neighbors. But we keep them at arm's length. We see them, but we are too busy to really stop and make contact, or have our lives disrupted. We want clean love, that doesn't mess with our lives. But mercy, as Jesus shares in this story, means we get messy. Christians who love don't lead clean, organized, undisrupted lives. Love without sacrifice is not love. Look at Jesus! Talk about getting messed up! It cost Him His life!

Godly love comes out in messy mercy. It requires action. It means getting involved. Are you so preoccupied with your life, with your own mess, with your schedule, that you have no capacity to get messy for and with others? Do you *know*, but don't *do*? None of us believes in racism. But do we do anything about it?

The hardest turn in this story is to move from identifying with the man who was beaten, to the Samaritan, and then, when the reality sets in, to the expert of the law speaking with Jesus. That's who we most often are, right? We know the Law. We believe. Perhaps we are even faithful in our religious practices. But do we live out the love that God cares about most?

Jesus turns to us and says, "Go and do the same!"

Love the person in front of you the best you can.

Pastor and speaker Andy Stanley has a phrase I want you to write down, and use it to guide your week ahead. "Do for one what you wish you could do for everyone." What we wish we could do for everyone is what we *know*. But it stays there until we *do* something about it. We can't do it for everyone, but that's not an excuse to not do it at all. Do it for one. Pick one. See one. Help one.

Kids, I want you to know that you help us all follow Jesus. When someone asks you for help, to do something like take someone a drink or open a door, you are so eager to help! You smile and are excited to do it! Keep being helpful! Keep doing what you can. You show us how it's fun!

May the Holy Spirit work in and through us, so that we will see people in front of us differently, and we will be able to honestly respond, saying, "My pleasure."

Amen.

CLOSING SONG: *Fill My Heart* -Sanctify

ANNOUNCEMENTS -Pastor David

In Fellowship Hall: Hope Moves - Human Trafficking

Church De-clutter day items: take home what are yours!

Rummage sale

Next week's message: Messy: Love Is Selfless. Outdoor worship! Bring a chair and jacket.

Grow Group sign up

St. Andrew's Shelter food train signup

OFFERING: -Pastor David

Please leave your offerings in the box as you leave.

MEMORY VERSE -Pastor David

"Love each other, for the one who loves another has fulfilled the law." -Romans 13:8b

BENEDICTION -Pastor David

CLOSING MUSIC -Sanctify