

I don't know that there are eighteen verses in the Scriptures that so comprehensively hold all that I hope for us as the Village church, all that I hope for us in regards to Dallas and all that I hope for us in regards to the rest of the world. I don't know that there's a more comprehensive eighteen verses in the Scriptures that hold what I pray for, what I hope for for you and and for me and why I'm willing to spend the next 30-35 years of my life warring with you for this. So let's look at the text. Luke 10, starting in verse 25, "And behold, a lawyer stood up to put him to the test, saying,..." Let's stop here already. To stand up when you speak to someone in this culture is a sign of great honor and respect. So to stand up and address Jesus, would be a way of honoring Him. But he stood up and honored Him in order to put Him to the test. Already we have a man whose heart and actions are far from one another. Let's look at what he does here. "...saying, 'Teacher, what shall I do to inherit eternal life?' [Jesus] said to him, 'What is written in the Law? How do you read it?'" So He just asked a lawyer about the law. He asked him about what he's an expert on. Listen to what the lawyer answered. "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.'" And [Jesus] said to him, "You have answered correctly; do this, and you will live." There's two different types of life happening here. The first is eternal life, which is the question, and the other is you'll live while you're here, while you're breathing, while you're on earth. Full life will be had here. So Jesus is saying, "You have judged correctly when you said, 'Love the Lord your God with all your heart, with all your soul, with all your strength with all your mind and love your neighbor as yourself.'" There are two commands put in the one. The one is about progressive sanctification. Grow in, be always growing in your love for God when it comes to your heart – the things you truly value, your soul – who you really are and your mind. I really am all for entertainment. I love to laugh, I love to have my imagination captured. But at some point, entertainment is absolutely destroying our capacity to think and to think clearly. So if night after night after night for you looks like television, television, television, Netflix, then I'm telling you that there is no ongoing robust dialogue going on between you and your television. The Bible tells you to love the Lord with all your mind. So there has to be some point where we are exercising our mind when it comes to godliness and the things of God. And I think it has to go well beyond six minutes in a daily devotional in the morning. Now, I think we can agree that we're not all going to be Jonathan Edwards. So at some point, there has to be the growing of the Christian mind. I do not think it's okay in this setting, in this culture for you to be, 15-25 years later, still as confused doctrinally as you were when you first got saved, but that's unbelievably common. So love the Lord with all your soul, your heart, your mind and your strength. Love the Lord with all your strength, that there is a ferocity in you when it comes to things of God.

There's that, and then there's, "Love your neighbor as yourself." So the story should end here, but it doesn't. Let's go. "But [the lawyer], desiring to justify himself, said to Jesus, 'And who is my neighbor?'" Experts in the moral law always feel comfortable about their lives because they live their lives in such a way without ever looking at the root issues in their heart. They feel they can look at the external actions in their life and be better than everyone else. So in order to justify himself, he asked this question. "Who's my neighbor." Because he thinks Jesus' response is going to go, "Your friends, your family, Israel, those are your neighbors." Because then he could say, "I do all those things. Not only do I love the Lord my God with all my soul, heart, mind and strength, but I love my neighbor too." And then the crowd is supposed to go, "Oh, this guy is good." That's what he wants. It says he's seeking to justify himself, he's seeking to have attention lavished on him and he's seeking to make this about himself. "Who's my neighbor? Who would you say is my neighbor, Jesus? Here cousin Billy Bob, have a sandwich. Go ahead Jesus. I'm sorry. Oh, here's some cash for you, friend Jimmy. Go ahead, Jesus. I'm just taking care of my neighbors. Please continue." And Jesus is just going to derail the

thing. "Jesus replied, "A man was going down from Jerusalem to Jericho,..." This is an actual road. It's about seventeen miles long, and the road literally drops about 3,000 feet along that seventeen mile stretch. So when it says he's going down from Jerusalem to Jericho, it really does go down. So he's on this road, not a good road to be on. A lot of shady stuff happens on this road, and it's going to happen here. "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." Now the way we identify who is one of us and who is not one of us is by clothing and by dialect. That's how we do it. It doesn't matter where; groupthink happens everywhere. We dress the same and we eventually talk the same. It's how we have historically identified our neighbors. But our boy is naked and unconscious, which means we won't be able to identify him. Let's keep going, "Now by chance a priest was going down that road, and when he saw him he passed by on the other side." I think the knee-jerk reaction is to be very hard on the priest. First of all, let me set it up socially. The priest is not walking by. He's upper level in regards to socioeconomic status. He would have been riding by. Secondly, I want to be more merciful to this guy than most have been historically. Let me try to explain. The priest is on his way back from his two week stint at the temple. If he gets even within 4 cubits (6 feet) of this guy, he is ritualistically unclean. So he can't even get close to this guy to see if he is okay according to religious law. If he gets within 6 feet of him or touches him, he will be deemed by the law ritualistically unclean and he will have to go back to Jerusalem and begin the rights of purification, which are going to require him to purchase a red heifer and turn that thing into ash. It will take at least seven days. He will then have to stand at the Eastern Gate with everyone else who has sinned against God until another priest who, along the same lines as him, purified him. So he would be filled with shame, filled with guilt, out a whole bunch of money, unable to take the tithes and offerings and food. Which means not only will he suffer, but his family will suffer if he helps this man. This is not an easy predicament. Be very careful not to judge the priest too harshly. I remember when we first saw *Saving Private Ryan* years ago where the guy is at the end of the hallway crying while his friend is getting stabbed. And everybody I know was going, "Oh, what a pansy. That's not what I would have done. I would have killed that guy with my bare hands." And it's so easy to just know what you would do in a situation. But I'm telling you, if the priest helps this man, he is an outcast, he is unable to take care of his family for a few weeks. He's going to have to purchase cattle, slaughter it, to through the ritualistic rites and probably be taken out of the priestly rotation for a season. It's an unbelievably costly thing for him to engage this man. His religion keeps him from engaging. So he sees him and goes along side of him and won't help.

So let's look at the next person to come along. "So likewise a Levite, when he came to the place and saw him, passed by on the other side." A Levite is like a junior varsity priest, except he's never getting bumped to varsity. The Levites assisted the priests in the temple but were in no way economically near what the priests made. So the Levite was a much more humble person in regards to what they made. The Levite is absolutely walking. And the thing about a road that goes for seventeen miles straight down is you could be 3-4 miles ahead and still see. So the Levite who serves the priest, who doesn't have a lot of money, who is all by himself, passes by the man, bound by the same ritualistic law, already saw the priest pass by and I think must have thought, "If the priest wouldn't touch him, I most certainly shouldn't. Besides, where am I going to get the ability to help this guy? I don't roll like the priest does. I don't have the kind of capital the priest does. I don't have the kind of space and money the priest does. I've got to take care of my own family." So the Levite rushes past by also.

And here's where the story would have turned scandalous. "But a Samaritan, as he journeyed, came to where he was, and when he saw him, he had compassion." It's real important that you see that that's the driving force behind this, because let's talk about the Samaritans. The Samaritans were half- breeds: half Jews and half Samaritans. When Israel was in captivity, they were men or women who married their captors and had children. In this century, the Jews believed that if you had anything to do with a Samaritan...let's just say it's in the Mishnah that if you ate the bread of a Samaritan is equal to eating the flesh of a swine. There were actually prayers in the synagogue during this period that asked God not to give forgiveness or grace to the Samaritans. That's a pretty strong level of hatred, isn't it? "God please forgive us...but

not that guy. Don't forgive him. Spend all Your forgiveness on me." So you can see that there's not a lot of love between these two ethnic groups. Now the Samaritan is not a gentile. He is bound by the same ritualistic laws as the Levite and the priest. But the Samaritan is moved with compassion. "He went to him and bound up his wounds, pouring on oil and wine. Then he set him on his own animal and brought him to an inn and took care of him. And the next day he took out two denarii and gave them to the innkeeper, saying, 'Take care of him, and whatever more you spend, I will repay you when I come back.'" Now there's all these cultural things going on here. In this time period, there was a series of laws that were blood vengeance laws. What that meant is, if you robbed me or hurt me, then according to law I could not only hurt you, but hurt everyone around you. So if you wounded me, I don't just take that out on you, but I can take that out on your friends, I can take that out on your family. Remember the Old Testament where a guy would steal something and put it under his thing and the answer was not only killing him, but killing his whole family and all his animals? You've got this idea that blood vengeance can be put out on other people. So when the Samaritan gets off his animal and helps this man, befriends this man, shows compassion to this man, he has now put himself in a circle where the same men who jumped, robbed and left this man for dead can now attack him. And he doesn't hide from this risk. He puts him on his animal, goes to the inn, checks him in, lets his face be seen, stays the night and takes care of his wounds. And since if this guy wakes up the next day and leaves without paying the innkeeper he goes to jail, he pays two denarii and says, "If this guy gets up and leaves before I get back, don't have him arrested. I'll be back. I'm good for it. Here's two denarii, and I'll pay you whatever more I need to pay." He lets himself be seen. He lets himself be known. He assumes the risk.

Now, look at what Jesus is going to do here. "Which of these three, do you think, proved to be a neighbor to the man who fell among the robbers?" He said, "The one who showed him mercy." And Jesus said to him, "You go, and do likewise." Okay, "What must I do to inherit eternal life?" Love the Lord with all your heart, with all your soul, with all your strength, with all your mind." Progressive sanctification, a pressing in to Jesus Christ, a ferocity about your relationship with Him, a seriousness about your walk with Him. He's not a hobby. He's not, "Okay, I'm just going to live this way." He is a pursuit. "And love your neighbor as yourself." Who's my neighbor? Anyone in need of compassion, anyone in need of mercy, regardless of ethnic background, regardless of socioeconomic status. Anyone in need of compassion and mercy. "Go and do likewise," He said. There's a lot of weight in this story. I know it may sound simple to you, but living this out is unbelievably difficult. Did you see what just happened here? A priest had legitimate reasons for not engaging someone who deserved compassion and mercy. If he touched him, he was going to be looked at a certain way. If he touched him, there could be trouble for his family. If he got near him, there would be a loss of status among his countrymen. The Levite didn't have enough money to help. He was a lower caste. He didn't have time to help. There are all these legitimate reasons to not do this. This is not an easy thing. In fact, if we were honest, most of us would say we were failing on one end here. It's been my experience that people like to pick one of these. There are those who are the progressive sanctification types. They have Wayne Grudem's Systematic Theology on their coffee table. They read it to their two year olds. They want to talk Edwards, they want to talk theology. They want to clean up their moral acts. And then there tends to be this group over here who are like, "Let's engage the poor, let's engage the needy, let's go on mission." But Jesus combines them. He says you don't do one without the other. If you do one without the other, it goes wrong. It mutates. It gets off. If all you've got is good doctrine that doesn't change the way we live and see humanity, then you've got a manual that you have no intention of using. And then if all you are is a humanitarian, that's not the gospel. And in the end, you take care of felt needs without taking care of the greater needs that lie as the foundational element of the felt needs to begin with. So both of these are fiercely important, and they drive everything we do here. From Group Connect to Recovery to home groups to Saturday morning seminars to Friday evening Culture and Theology, everything that we do here is to grow you in your love for God in your heart, in your mind, in your soul, with your strength. And then loving your neighbor, it's why we head downtown. It's why we have a mentoring program. It's why we're pleading with you to engage your neighborhoods. It's why the Smiths are headed to Zambia, why the Mendonzas are headed to Kenya, why the Brimages are headed to Guatemala. It's why Ichthus Ministries is raising funds for an orphanage tomorrow night. This is what's going on here. Love the Lord your God with all your heart, mind and soul, and

then love your neighbor as yourself. But if we were honest, we would lean a way. We would lean a way almost entirely at the expense of the other. So the more heady, theological types tend to drive past the homeless and go, "Hmm, we need to do something about that" and never does anything. Or this side tends to do all of this, but if you talk to them about truths that are in Scripture, if you talk to them about ultimatums that Christ lays out, they'll tell you that's cold, dead doctrine. But Jesus says, "How do you inherit eternal life? Both. There must be a ferocity around both."

So what do we do about our failures here? Can we confess that we're failures here at some level? I mean I err over here. I'm just a studier and a thinker and a writer. I could do that all day long at the expense of really engaging people. I've got to watch that, I've got to build protection against that, I've got to be held accountable. There was even just a couple of weeks ago where I left the Highland Village campus and there was a guy sitting under the tree. It was like 103°F out that day. I got in my car and was like, "Oh, I need to make sure if he's alright." But then I went, "Oh, I've got to get home." And I left the parking lot and started heading home. I was like, "Ugh! Turn around" So I went back.

I just couldn't get out of my head, "Some have entertained angels and didn't know it." I was like, "It's an angel. I know it. Because I'm not wanting to do this, I guarantee you it's an angel." So I turn back around and pull up and go, "Hey man, are you okay?" "Yeah, I'm great. I'm fine." "You sure?" "Yeah." "Alright. See you later." I tend to err over here. And then there are those who err over here. You'll do anything we ask you to do in regards to Transform, going on short-term trips, but you won't dig in and try to understand salvation, try to understand doctrine, try to understand the Scriptures. That's cold and dead to you, despite the fact that it drives the very action that you're living for. So what do we do? Let's look at this last story. "Now as they went on their way, Jesus entered a village. And a woman named Martha welcomed him into her house. And she had a sister called Mary, who sat at the Lord's feet and listened to his teaching. But Martha was distracted with much serving. And she went up to him and said, "Lord, do you not care that my sister has left me to serve alone? Tell her then to help me." But the Lord answered her, "Martha, Martha, you are anxious and troubled about many things, but one thing is necessary. Mary has chosen the good portion, which will not be taken away from her." The Flower Mound campus, this thing that we're trying to do, do you know why we did that finally? Because we could have added another service. We could add a 1:30 in the afternoon. We could switch Sunday morning to 8:00, 10:00 and noon. Do you know what happened? Through a lot of prayer and a lot of seeking, you and us, elders and everyone, we felt like this move would get us more of Jesus. That's what it's going to get us, more of Jesus. And we prayed, came together. 500- 600 of you came and prayed, "If we get more of You, we want it. If we don't get more of You, then kill this thing. If this distracts us, if this takes us away from You, if this starts getting all of our attention on us, then ruin this thing. But if we get more of You, if we get to sit at Your feet, if we get to watch Your power, if we get to see Your might, if we get to watch You transform lives, then we want this, we want this, we want this." This is what drives us, sitting at the feet of Christ, knowing Him, loving Him, diving deeper into Him. And then that leads to service, that leads to us getting out there, that leads to transformed hearts, transformed lives, transformed minds.

So we've got these 30 years, don't we? Because here's my commitment. I'm not climbing some ladder. This is where we've been called. God can change that, He can show up audibly through something burning, but after a lot of prayer, we felt like this is where He's got us to war for this with you, to think eternally, that with our 30 years we would spend our minds, that we would spend our talents, that we would spend our minds and pour into our children and one another in such a way that when all is said and done we love the Lord our God with all our mind and with all our soul and with all our strength. And maybe we're never going to be known as spiritual giants. Maybe we'll always look a little immature. Maybe we'll always have our difficulties. But the command isn't to become some kind of crazy elite. It's that with all we've been given we might love Him. You don't have to be a superstar, you just have to be you chasing Him. And then that might lead us to live in such a way that we would engage this place with a great deal of compassion and mercy, engage this city, engage our neighborhood, walk in these schools, love these people. This is what we're trying to do. This is what we're after. Everything else is going to burn up. I just think that if we could get into our heads eternity, if we could get into our

heads how big God is, what He's accomplished, marriage is easier, life is easier, it frees up the stress and anxiety that you have in your money and your house and your stuff and your cars and your retirement and your kids. All that dries up and you get to lay it at the Lord's feet and open hands. This is what we're after, this is what we're fighting for. This is the angst in me for you, for me and for this place. And so right now in '08, it has us working on groups, to make them stronger and working on communicating what church is better for you and trying to get into a building. A building is just a necessary tool. We're not trying to build some altar to our success. It's an Albertson's. A hundred years from now, there might be some people who drive by some of the churches here and they're going to be like, "Wow, what happened there. Look at that thing. Wow." That ain't happening at our Albertson's. Eight years from now, people are going to be driving going, "There's a story there." But maybe even our kids or grandkids will have a lineage of faith, a lineage of zeal, a lineage of passion because we loved the Lord our God with all our heart, soul, mind and strength and we engaged our neighbor at cost to how we're viewed socially, at cost to us financially, at cost to us in our safety, that we might live free. It's going to take 30 years, and we'll come up short. That's why grace is so awesome.

Let's pray. "Father, I thank You for these men and women. And I thank You for just a chance to open up Your word and my hope is be read by them. That's my hope, not that we would read them but that they would read us, that they would show us and expose to us where we have thought more of ourselves than You, where we have stopped seeing from an eternal vantage point and have just kind of consumed what is today. So teach us and show us what it's like to love our neighbor. And teach us and show us what it's like to pursue You. Because I think it will look different for each of us. Help us, Father. It's for Your beautiful name. Amen."

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