10/12/25 - Luke 10:25-42 - "Learning to Breathe"

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[0:00] Please turn to Luke 10, 25-42. And behold, a lawyer stood up to put him to the test, saying,! Teacher, what shall I do to inherit eternal life?

He said to him, what is written in the law? How do you read it? 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 he said to him, you have answered correctly. Do this and you will live. But he, desiring to justify himself, said to Jesus, and who is my neighbor?
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. Now by chance a priest was going down that road, and when he saw him, he passed by on the other side.
So likewise a Levite, when he came to the place and saw him, passed by on the other side. But a Samaritan, as he journeyed, came to where he was, and when he saw him, he had compassion.
[1:18] 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.
Which of these three do you think proved to be a neighbor to the man who fell among the robbers?
He said to the one who showed him mercy. And Jesus said to him, you go and do likewise.
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.
[2:18] 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.

This is the word of the Lord. Thanks be to God. Praise the Lord for his word and the work that the word does through vessels like us pastors.
And thank you for the kindness and charity that this church offers to us. It is not a burden to shepherd, but definitely a delight.
I love it. I have the best job in the world. Absolutely. I want you to take a deep breath with me and I know this might be weird, but trust me, take a deep breath.
Now exhale. I didn't have to teach you to exhale after that.
[3:25] Your body naturally has the response to exhale. Breathe in, you have to breathe out. Now, imagine trying to live on just one of those. If you only inhale and never exhale, or if you only inhale or exhale and never inhale, either way, you're going to die, eventually faint, possibly before you die.

And just as natural as breathing in and breathing out, inhaling and exhaling, the Christian life is similar to that of spiritual breathing.
We inhale the presence of God's word and his work and the ministry of his word. And through prayer in our lives, we inhale.
And the response of such an investment of inhaling, we exhale the love and the mercy of Christ towards our neighbor.
A natural response that flows from an initiated action to create another chain reaction.
[4:39] Now, some of us might know what it's like to be short of breath spiritually. We're busy loving people, doing good things, and we're serving everyone, right?

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Running on fumes, burning ourselves out, but lightheaded when it comes to prayer. Lightheaded when it comes to communion with Christ.
Now, others might have the opposite problem where they kind of have, they're winded in another way. They're quiet. Those quiet times that are stacked high.
Their reverence for God, sitting in their prayer closet, never to leave. Notes, all through the margins of your Bibles, from sermon notes and everything going on.
But no one across the street has felt the love of Christ that you claim to have received. Here's the good news, church.
[5:44] Jesus doesn't make us choose between lungs. He has created within us a natural response to that which we invest in.

And He teaches us in His Word today to breathe again. To breathe again. To breathe in with His Word and out with His mercy.
Today, Luke places two scenes that are side by side for us this morning. And I don't believe that it's any coincidence. And I believe that you will agree with me by the end of today.
Or at least have a sense of why I'm putting these two scenes together. And He's placing these side by side to help us to recover these rhythms of real devotion, of faith that sits and listens, but also stands and loves.
So I invite you to join me in unpacking these two scenes in two points today. And a sermon that's titled Learning to Breathe.
[6:57] And I'd like to argue the main point that true disciples breathe the life of Christ. First, inhaling His Word and then exhaling His mercy.

I'd also invite you to pray with me as we get into this work. Let's pray. Father, thank You for giving us Your Word.
As I'm fumbling around like a goofball with announcements, Your Word is sure. It is steady. Where this fumbling fool goes to.
To receive insight in how to honor You and live according to Your statutes and to see where I'm not stacking up and where we look upon Your Word.
This is a mirror to see our lives for rightly as they are in deep dependence upon You. We come to You today, Lord, asking for You to speak to us the truth of Your Word.
[8:12] Apply it and contextualize it to our lives. And that we would leave here changed, equipped, empowered, and bold to spread mercy.

And we pray this in Jesus' name. Amen. Amen. Learning to Breathe. So the first scene, very long scene, there's a dominating question over this entire section.
And both scenes have a dominating question. And so we're going to look at this lawyer's question here, which is, in emphasis, what kind of love fulfills God's law?
What kind of love fulfills God's law? And we see that from verse 25 all the way to verse 37. And so this lawyer comes up to Jesus, says, Teacher, what shall I do to inherit eternal life?
Now, in this culture and time period, this would be a really ridiculous question for a lawyer to be asking. It was certainly motivated because lawyers were not necessarily what, like, Abby or any lawyers might be today.
[9:39] Right? Right? These guys were experts in biblical law back in these days. And so being an expert in biblical law, they would be needed by just other people in that day to be able to interpret, to be able to understand, and to apply, and they would explain.

So literally their entire lives were at the disposal of other people. They helped other people to counsel others. Literally their lives were to help people in need.
And so he knew the answer to the question. We should see that as an odd question here. But it says to put him to the test.
Teacher, what must I do to inherit eternal life? In which Jesus puts it right back on the expert lawyer. Well, what is written in the law?
Expert. How do you read it? Expert. Right? You're qualified. In other words, the lawyer knows the Bible really, really well.
[10:53] And he responds with Deuteronomy 6, Leviticus 19, love the Lord your God with all your heart, soul, strength, and mind, and love your neighbor as yourself.

Right? Now, validating the man, Jesus affirms the answer and says, do this and you will live. Or, if you can love God like that perfectly, and your neighbor constantly, you'll have no need for grace.

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There's nothing to inherit. You got it. And the problem and tension of this scene is that no human being can do this perfectly.
No human being can do this perfectly. We would all be doomed if it were left to us to fend for ourselves, to earn, to do something, to inherit eternal life.
Because notice the language here. This is just the emphasis and the whole works-based salvation system.
[12:02] He wants to do something in this verse. Look, he wants to do something to inherit something. Work, return on investments, if you want to use business terms.

But you don't work for an inheritance. No inheritance has ever worked for and labored for. An inheritance is received because you're part of the family.
Being that October is very heavily focused on the Reformation, Protestant Reformation, and I believe Luther has some great insight in some of these uses of the law of God.
He mentions three uses specifically in some of his works. He says regarding the civil use, this is what he labels the curb use, this restrains evil, it maintains order.
And even looking at the founding of the United States, even founders endorsed the functional equivalent of the civil use of the law of God. They called that the natural law.
[13:17] Even atheists who didn't know God saw that it was good. It's how you order society. And so laws are needed to deter and punish wrongdoing and to establish civil peace.

And so that's a function of the law, but there's also other functions of the law. There's a theological function that reveals sin, reveals shortcoming.
And if it's revealing shortcoming, it reveals a standard that we just cannot achieve in our own strength. We can't achieve it.
And so it acts like a mirror, the law of God, in that way. But also that for Christians, there's a didactic, a guiding of the law for every single believer to show us the way to live in righteousness to instruct other believers.
And so right from the start, we see some tension here rising. What the lawyer seems to be asking, what must I do to inherit eternal life? What he's asking seems to be completely an impossibility.
[14:32] What Jesus responds to him is an impossibility. This entire situation is an impossibility. the law is the mirror for our souls.

It reveals what pleases God. Our works don't save. There is nothing that we can do to inherit eternal life. Our works just don't save.
But the lawyer, with his knowledge, with his profession, with his serving others constantly, I believe that he was one who believed that he was secure.
because of what he did. He knows God's law. Check. Knows it really well. And he serves.
His entire life is to serve other people. Check. Done. But obviously this is a longer passage than just a couple verses, right?
[15:31] It continues. The conversation doesn't end there. The lawyer desperate to save his face for asking such a dumb question. And then the question just getting put back on him, he looks like a dummy at this point.

He tries to shrink the circle of what that loving neighbor looks like. He would expect, oh yeah, love our neighbor, our Israelite friends.
Yeah, I do that. He says, who is my neighbor, Jesus? Jesus, in his answer, unlike any Disney movie, it's not in song form, but he shares, Jesus shares in a parable, a story, as if to hold a mirror up to this know-it-all, so that the story could testify of his own spiritual depravity.
He says, a man traveling from Jerusalem to Jericho is beaten. He's left in a ditch, half dead, this traveling man. And three people pass by.
One, being a priest, he passes by, but this priest is too religiously clean to care. Another passes by, a Levite, perfect, perfect guy to help, but a Levite passes by, too busy with ministry, to stop, or even to notice.
[16:59] But, then a Samaritan, a social outcast, a nobody, comes near and has compassion.

This Samaritan touches the wounds, ceremonially unclean, lifts the body, spends his money, and promises to return. And what a shock for this lawyer, because the hero of the story is the one that every lawyer, Jewish lawyer, despised.
Those Samaritans, those half-breeds. Jesus asks, great question, which one of the three proved to be a neighbor?

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What a moment of self-deprecation for this lawyer. love, what a moment of self-deprecation. He couldn't even say, oh, the Samaritan.
He said, the one who showed mercy. He couldn't even say it. Jesus then reinforces, go and do likewise.
[18:18] The dominating question is in the air. What kind love fulfills the law? Well, it's the kind of love that moves toward need, not away from it.

We get that from the story. It's also, it crosses boundaries of race, of class, of convenience, and even cost.
What we learn from this story is that it looks like the heart of God himself and the only initiating action that God himself can fulfill.
Before we rush to sort of just, you've probably heard the sermons, go be like the Samaritan, go help everybody in need, right? Before we rush out and just label as we're the hero of the story, we have to pause for a minute and critically ask where we are actually in this story.
You want to know where I believe we are? I believe that we are half dead in the ditch, in need of mercy.
[19:34] Why? Because until we realize that we are the ones in the ditch, before we realize that we'll never be able to love like the one who rescued us from the ditch.

It comes to grips with our true condition and our helpless estate that we needed a true Samaritan to reach out to us, to bind up our wounds, to lift us up in order to revive us.
And we see that true Samaritan in Jesus Christ. The one who crossed heaven to save, who found us beaten by sin, who bound up our wounds with his mercy, and who paid our debt, and guess what?
He also promised to return as well. Not to mention, he was a social outcast as well.
Now it's worth mentioning that this passage sometimes gets hijacked. People will say, see, look, Christianity is all about doing good, feeding the poor and fixing the systems.
[20:51] That's what Christianity is. There's numerous sermons that reinforce this of moralism and things like that. And that's not saying that we shouldn't care deeply for our neighbor.

I don't think that Jesus is ever insinuating that. We should care deeply for our neighbor. We should care about justice. We should care about compassion. Scripture commands it for every single Christian, but the good Samaritan is not Christ's blueprint for social reform.
This is not to be taken out of its context as if it needs to be the new reform policy in any governmental institution, but it's a mirror.
Look how Jesus uses it as a mirror for the spiritually depraved to expose their pride.
That you cannot do anything. The lawyer and all of us were once found in the ditch, half dead.
Jesus is not teaching self-salvation through charity.
[22:06] So we see that Jesus is teaching that apart from divine mercy, from somebody reaching out, that somebody being Christ, we have nothing to give.

We have nothing to pour out to others. A social gospel that stops at the road saying, be like the Samaritan, sin is not the gospel.
But the biblical gospel says, keep going down the road a little more to Calvary. It says, you are the dying man, so behold your Savior, of whom you've received mercy.
mercy. Our good works matter. Our good works matter, but only as evidence, never as earning.
So church, don't self-justify yourself by comparing compassion to others. Don't step around needs because mercy would cost too much, but instead church, overflow mercy to the unloving, because apart from Jesus Christ, we have not a single reason to boast.
[23:23] True righteousness isn't proven by merely knowing God's law as this lawyer did. True righteousness isn't merely about knowing, but it's by showing God's heart.

It's an inhale and an exhale. That's the heart of mercy. Both inhaling and exhaling are essential functions.
Christians. And now Luke turns the page from the open road to a quiet home. If the first scene warns us about hearing, like the lawyer, hearing without doing, sort of narrowing that circle of obedience, defining whose neighbor is and who he wants to help, this next one warns us about doing without hearing.
And here we have Martha's question, completely opposite. Martha's question is, Lord, do you not care? And so in this scene, we see Jesus, he enters a village called Bethany.

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Bethany's a great name, isn't it? Wonderful name. staying off the couch tonight. And so he arrives at this wonderful village, and Martha opens her home.
[24:54] And I think it's worth, like, picturing this scene for a moment. You got this entourage of stinky men, fishermen, belligerent men, rough men, come into this woman's house, all crammed up in her living room.

I don't know how big the house was, but you could probably smell the bread burning in the kitchen. You could probably hear the water boiling. You could probably obviously see Martha's sanity slipping.
Amen. How about that? I think our sanity would slip. And so with all this entourage in her living room, her sister Mary is sitting at the feet of Jesus, listening to every word.
Now, at first, this is beautiful. You see Martha, it's kind of like dividing and conquering. Martha's out in the kitchen getting everything ready, just hospitality. It reminds me of some church members here that have just this gift of hospitality who just want to honor you as their guests, and she's in the kitchen, busy, and you see this functioning beauty of service and fellowship, soon, frustration boils over.
Martha bursts in the room, sanity has slipped. Lord, don't you care that my sister has left me to do all the work alone?
[26:45] Tell her to help me. Mary's not at work, I am. Lord, don't you care?

I love how this translated in Luke's gospel. You could almost feel the exhaustion. Don't you care? The same cry echoes in the hearts when life feels unfair, or ministry efforts go unnoticed. Those seasons where it seems like Jesus is not paying attention to your trouble, to your exhaustion, to your situation.
Now, there are many problems that came into the world after the fall. And one of them is that men are terrible comforters.
We treat emotions like plumbing problems, Carmen. she says, I'm just overwhelmed, and he says, well, don't be.
[28:03] I mean, that's your knight in shiny armor. She comes in the room, I'm exhausted. Well, stop it.

It's that easy. Stop it. Like, that's it. Problem solved. Your knight in shiny armor really came through for that one. The same guy who uses YouTube videos to change a faucet feels like he could fix things in just one sentence.
No amen. I mean, somewhere between Genesis, somewhere in Genesis, Eve got sorrow and Adam just got confusion, church.
And ever since then, men have been trying to comfort women with the emotional depth of a screwdriver. I mean, this is reality. This is reality.
But Jesus, with Martha being overwhelmed in this situation, Jesus answers with tender love, not a rebuke, not a superficial stop it, get back in the kitchen.
[29:18] He says, Martha, Martha. You can almost hear humor in this. You are anxious and troubled about many things.

But one thing is necessary. Mary has chosen the better portion, the good portion, and it will not be taken away from her.
Beyond what meets the eyes, Martha was very busy, but so was Mary. Mary was inhaling. Martha was exhaling. Hearing the word of Christ, even though it might seem like attending church, sermon after sermon, house church after house church, women's study after women's study, even though this might be viewed as passivity, it is priority.
This is how we choose the good portion, the better portion, in order to receive mercy so we can pour out mercy.
[30:39] It is essential to commune with Christ through his word. Hebrews 10 talks about that. Don't neglect meeting together. That has become a pattern for some.

It's essential. Now, service is noble, but without scripture, without stillness, with just work, it becomes driven instead of devoted.
Merely driven, merely duty, no delight. I've seen lots of ministry leaders, even in my time here, burn out because they were just exhaling.
It's sad. It was not perceived as Mary was being lazy, but Mary was actually focused on the good portion, Christ's word.

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She's not rejecting ministry, she's anchoring ministry in worship. After she gets up from Christ's feet, she is going to be equipped for service, to pour out mercy.
[31:46] She's not rejecting ministry, she's anchoring it in worship. And while Martha welcomed Jesus into her home, Mary was welcoming Jesus into her heart at his feet.

And church, too often this scene gets twisted and people will say, see, the contemplative life is better than an active life. So let's all go into our monasteries, go into a hole in the mountain, become monks, right?
To a contemplative life. That the church's job is to just sit and pray. That is the job of the true Christian. But how shallow we've become if we think that the goal of our faith is just to sit forever. As if that's going to give us a well done, my good and faithful servants when we come face to face with the Lord Almighty. Jesus isn't dismissing service, he's actually just defining service's source. The source of service begins at the feet of Christ. He's the source. The goal is not inactivity, but spirit-filled activity that flows from his word.
[33:10] I like to look at the Lord's day as being a day where the church huddles, the church refuels, the church gets engaged. We have a members meeting after the church service.

We engage in what God is doing in the next season, and we rejoice in what he's done over the previous season. These are huddles. These are not distractions.
These are priorities for the church. Without the word, our action, or our social action, becomes a social gospel.
Good works detach from the good news. Just Martha, Martha, Martha, with nothing else, no depth, just service. There's a lot of people out there that believe that they're saved because of all the work that they do.
kindness without conversion, compassion without Christ. And while it may feed the stomach of the hungry, it will starve the soul of the depraved.
[34:18] And church, Jesus is calling us back. Before you serve, sit at the feet of Christ. Before you serve, husbands, before you expect to serve and lead your family, sit at the feet of Christ.

Wives, there's hope for your marriage. Sit at the feet of Christ. Receive his mercy. Children, sit at the feet of Christ.
And honor your parents. Before we serve, sit at the feet of Christ. Only gospel-rooted hearts can offer gospel-shaped ministry and mercy.
So the Good Samaritan, thinking back to the Good Samaritan, the Good Samaritan shows love in action. Mary shows love in devotion.
And together they reveal something true. True devotion. True devotion that listens and then loves. Listens not only just hears, but listens deeply and loves widely.
[35:32] They go hand in hand, just as inhaling and exhaling. True devotion is not busy service, but with quiet devotion to Christ.

So Luke, I don't believe that it's any mistake that Luke placed these back to back. While you may have heard a sermon on the Good Samaritan, I could probably preach one sermon on the Good Samaritan, another on Martha.
What I'd like us to see is a bigger picture of Scripture. Because I don't think that he placed these stories back to back on accident. I believe that he's teaching us today to reject both counterfeits. To reject the gospel of moralism. like, just be the Samaritan. Love people and you'll live. There's a lot of people going to hell that are holding that banner.
Or maybe the gospel of intellectualism. Just be like Mary. Sit. Listen. Learn. But never act.
[36:45] There's a lot of people that know a lot about God that are going to be in hell. Both fall short because they stop short of Jesus Christ. The gospel of moralism, the gospel of intellectualism, they both stop short of Jesus Christ.

And our need for the gospel. Our need to be filled. The real gospel says something far better. Sit before you serve, receive before you reach.
And in a simple order, be filled, be faithful, and be fruitful. In that exact order, be filled, be faithful, and be fruitful.
The lawyer loved with his mind, but without mercy. Martha loved with her strength, but without stillness. And Jesus loved with his whole life.
His whole life he loved. love with love with God. Just as God's law says, love the Lord your God with all your heart, all your soul, with all your strength, with all your mind, and love your neighbor as

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yourself.
[38:01] Jesus did this perfectly, fully, sacrificially, and that's the reason we can love at all, is because of what Christ has done for us.

how the Holy Spirit has given us a new nature, has sealed us, the promise of salvation and inheritance. He is the true Samaritan who found us in the ditch of sin.
He's the better portion who invites us to sit at his feet. The one who both rescues and renews, who pours in and sends out.
This is Jesus. And now through the Spirit, we can finally breathe again. Inhaling his word, exhaling his mercy, inhaling grace and communion, exhaling love and compassion.
This is the rhythm of the redeemed. You know how to breathe. You know how to if not, I hope today you might learn how.
[39:17] Because true disciples breathe in the life of Christ, first inhaling his word, and then exhaling his mercy. Let's be true disciples in Steel Valley.

Let's pray. through

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