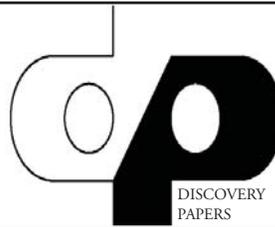


WHAT DOES LOVE LOOK LIKE?

SERIES: LOVE GOD, LOVE PEOPLE



Catalog No. 20140727
Exodus 20:15
5th Message
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July 27, 2014

This summer, we've been studying the Ten Commandments, learning about the most famous moral code in history. However, as I hope we've begun to realize, for us as Christians, these commandments are much more than just a moral code. In fact, they're not even primarily a moral code. They're not an external set of do's and don'ts written on tablets of stone that we're supposed to follow in our own strength and ability. That was what the Old Covenant was all about—following, or at least attempting to follow, external rules and regulations through our own best efforts.

Jesus told us that he did not come to abolish the law but to fulfill the law (Matthew 5:17). He did not come to get rid of the Ten Commandments or the rest of the law's requirements. Rather, he came to fulfill what the law required. He came to live out—to perfectly embody—everything the law demanded. And what did the law demand? What did the law require? Again, Jesus tells us that the two greatest commandments are to love God and to love our neighbor (Matthew 22:36-40). We are to love God with all our heart, soul, mind, and strength, and we are to love our neighbor as ourself. Love God, love people. That is what the law in its most essential form is all about. That is what the law demands. It demands that we perfectly love God and perfectly love our neighbor.

As Christians, we believe that Jesus was the only one ever to do that. He was the only one ever to show us perfectly what love looks. The rest of us—every person who has ever lived—has come up short. Even when we've tried our best, we've failed. We've failed to love God as we should, and we've failed to love other people as we should.

When we place our faith in Jesus, we are forgiven-- forgiven for all of our failures to love. Moreover, when we place our faith in Jesus, Jesus himself comes to dwell within us—"Christ in you, the hope of glory," as Paul tells us in Colossians 1:27. The invisible God—the God of love—enters into us. Even more amazingly, God seeks to live out his life through us. The invisible God seeks to make himself visible through ordinary people like you and me. He seeks to show a lost, broken, and hurting world what love looks like, revealing himself through people like ourselves—people who have given their lives to him.

This is the essence of the New Covenant. The law is no longer external but internal.

Jeremiah 31:33—

For this is the covenant that I will make with the house of Israel after those days, declares the LORD: I will put my law within them, and I will write it on their hearts. And I will be their God, and they shall be my people.

To quote Ray Stedman:

The Old Covenant was about us doing our best for God, while the New Covenant is about God doing his best through us.

As followers of Jesus, the law is now written on our hearts—love is now written on our hearts—and God is in the process of transforming us. He is in the process of changing us so that his life and love are increasingly embodied in our thoughts, feelings, motives, words, actions, and relationships.

The question is what does that look like? What does love look like? What does the love and life of Christ look like embodied in us? Part of the answer is provided by the Ten Commandments. For us as Christians, as I said, the Ten Commandments are not a moral code. They are not a set of external rules and regulations. Rather, they are perhaps best understood as characteristics or indicators of a loving life. They give us an idea, an indication of what love looks like—of what it looks like to love God with all our heart, soul, mind, and strength and to love our neighbor as ourself. The first four commandments show us something about what it looks like to love God, the last six commandments show us something about what it looks like to love our neighbor.

We've spent several weeks learning about the first four commandments—learning about what it looks like to love God. This week we'll be starting the second part of our series—learning about what it looks like to love people. However, quite honestly, because of scheduling issues, we won't be doing the last six commandments in order. Some of our speakers were not available on the

date when their commandment would chronologically have fallen. So ... we're doing the last six commandments a bit out of order.

For example, today, if we were following a strict chronological order, the subject would be the Fifth Commandment—*Honor your mother and your father*. Because of the scheduling issues, however, I'm going to be speaking today about the Eighth Commandment—*You shall not steal*. My apologies if this is a bit confusing.

By the way, all of the last six commandments, except for honor your father and mother, are expressed in negative terms. You shall not murder, you shall not commit adultery, you shall not steal, you shall not bear false witness, you shall not covet. They tell us what loving our neighbor will not look like. They tell us various traits that love will not exhibit.

This is of course helpful, but obviously it only provides a partial picture. It only tells us about the negative side of love. It doesn't tell us about the positive side. It doesn't tell us what love actually does look like. As a result, because I'd like to provide a somewhat fuller picture today, I'm only going to spend the first part of the morning talking about the Eighth Commandment. The second part of the morning, I'd like to talk about the Parable of the Good Samaritan, which shows love's positive side. It shows what love looks like. If this further confuses things, again my apologies.

As for the Eighth Commandment ... it simply says: *You shall not steal* (Exodus 20:15). You shall not take what does not belong to you. You shall not take what belongs to another person in order to make yourself richer and the other person poorer. In modern terms, don't rip people off. It's a very straightforward commandment. Stealing does not characterize love.

However, as I hope we'll see, although the commandment itself is straightforward, stealing can take a wide variety of forms. In fact, stealing can sometimes escape our notice. We may be engaged in stealing and not even recognize it. If this is the case—if we're somehow engaged in stealing—we need to stop, and we need to pray that God would change us.

I suspect virtually everyone here has either stolen something or had something stolen. Theft is rampant in our society and has been rampant throughout history. Martin Luther is reputed to have said, "If they took all the people who were stealing and hung them, they'd run out of rope, and they'd need to start using men's belts to hang them."¹ So ... clearly, theft is not a new problem.

A few years ago, for example, my wife, Brigitte, was on a trip to Germany and used her debit card in an ATM machine. Shortly afterward, someone began using her card—or at least her card number—to purchase gasoline in the Philippines. Her credit card number had been stolen, and, sadly, straightening things out was very time-consuming. Some of you may have had your credit card numbers or identities stolen as well. The current statistics indicate that 15 million Americans have their identities stolen each year, 28.5 per minute, costing around 5.3 billion dollars.

Identity theft, by the way, is not new. In Genesis 27, Jacob stole Esau's birthright—stole his identity. Also, one author, CJ Rapp, maintains that the first identity theft actually took place in the Garden of Eden. Here Satan, through fraud and deception, robbed Adam and Eve of their identity, robbed them of their birthright. So ... identity theft has been around for a long time.

On the upside, one woman seemed to have found a way to make crime work for her—to make stealing work for her. There was apparently a garbage strike in the large city where she lived, and she devised an ingenious strategy for getting rid of her garbage. She would simply put all of her garbage in a box, wrap the box with beautiful wrapping paper, put a ribbon on top, and then put the box on the backseat of her car with the door unlocked. Later each day, when she went to check her car, which was parked on the street, she would always find that the box had been stolen. She had succeeded in getting thieves into hauling away her garbage for her!

As I said, there are many forms that stealing can take—many ways in which people can steal. I don't plan on giving you an exhaustive (and, most likely, exhausting) list. However, I would like to mention a few of the more common forms that stealing can take. Also, although the concept of stealing may be straightforward, I'd like to emphasize that stealing can manifest itself in subtle ways and can find its way into our lives as Christians.

Probably the most pervasive form that stealing takes is the theft of money or property. Let me mention four different areas in which this typically occurs.

Stealing Money and Possessions From Individuals

First, people can steal money and property from individuals. There is burglary, armed robbery, extortion, blackmail, not repaying personal loans, holding back wages from employees, refusing to pay for work

contracted, charging exorbitant interest rates, pyramid schemes, pickpocketing, and purse snatching, just to mention a few.

As for a story from our own family ... some years ago, our oldest daughter, Jessica, was in training for a marathon race—a marathon race to benefit the Leukemia Society. She was standing on State Street, the main street in Santa Barbara, handing out information about the race. Her purse was on the ground right next to her. Suddenly, a woman came up, snatched the purse, and took off. She took off (and here's the key word) running. Like I said, my daughter was training for a marathon race—training to run 26.2 miles—and although she's very petite, she wasn't going to let her purse get stolen. So ... she began running after the woman.

In her attempt to escape, the woman darted into and ran through a crowded restaurant, sprinting out the back kitchen door. Our daughter, yelling "Stop thief! Stop!" darted into and ran through the crowded restaurant, sprinting out the back kitchen door. People in the restaurant sprang into action and joined the race. Other people on the street behind the restaurant saw what was happening and joined the race. In was, at least in retrospect, a marvelous training opportunity.

In the end, perhaps a bit anti-climatically, the woman realized that she was about to be caught, so she dropped the purse and continued running. Our daughter, who didn't want to get into a fight, stopped running, retrieved her purse, and watched the woman disappear down the street. One possible moral of the story: if you're going to snatch someone's purse, don't snatch the purse of someone training for a marathon!

Clearly, more often than not, robberies and attempted robberies are not amusing. They're very distressing. For example, when my father died in 1980, Brigitte, Jessica, and I went to San Diego for the memorial service. When we returned to Berkeley, where we'd recently moved, we discovered that the home where we'd been staying had been broken into. A number of our possessions had been stolen. We'd essentially been robbed while we were attending my father's memorial service, leaving us feeling like we'd been kicked when we were already down.

Stealing Money and Possessions From Companies and Organizations

Second, thieves can also steal money and property from companies and organizations. There's shoplifting, submitting false insurance claims, embezzling, illegally

downloading videos or music, and employee theft of all kinds—padding expense accounts, stealing cash from the register, taking company supplies, taking company merchandise, goofing off on the job.

I'm sure some of you remember the *Seinfeld* episode, "The Nap," where George had a special area, complete with an alarm clock, constructed under his desk at work—an area where he could sleep unobserved. Unfortunately, George's boss, Mr. Steinbrenner, the head of the New York Yankees, showed up during one of George's naps, and, thinking that George was away on a break, decided to wait outside the office. From under the desk, George called his friend Jerry, who in turn called the New York Yankees with a phony bomb threat, hoping that it would cause Mr. Steinbrenner to run away. After various twists and turns, Mr. Steinbrenner found George under the desk, mistakenly concluding that George had learned about the bomb threat through ESP and was simply hiding. At that point, the alarm under the desk went off, and Mr. Steinbrenner, thinking the alarm was connected with the bomb, destroyed the desk with George assisting him.

We laugh at episodes like this, but the truth is, it's usually laughter of identification. We laugh because we've been tempted to sleep on the job ourselves—to essentially rob our employer by getting payment for time when we haven't actually been working.

Here are a few statistics related to stealing from companies and organizations—statistics that I found on the Mars Hill website, where Mark Driscoll gave a sermon last year on the Eighth Commandment.²

Shoplifting:

- U.S. retailers lose about \$35 billion in stolen goods each year, or about \$100 million per day.
- 25% of shoplifters are kids, 75% are adults. 55% of adult shoplifters say they started shoplifting in their teens.
- Shoplifters say they are caught an average of only once in every 48 times they steal.

Employee theft:

- Dishonest employees steal 5.5 times the amount stolen by shoplifters.
- The cost of employee theft to American companies is \$200 billion annually. Employees waste 2.09 hours per 8-hour day.

- Top time-wasting activities:
 - 44.7% – Internet (personal use)
 - 23.4% – Socializing
 - 6.8% – Conducting personal business
 - 3.9% – Spacing out (daydream)
 - 3.1% – Running errands
 - 2.3% – Personal phone calls
 - 1.3% – Applying for other jobs
 - 1% – Planning personal events
 - 1% – Arriving late/leaving early
- Total annual cost to companies: \$759 billion
- 64% of employees visit non-work related websites every day during work hours.
- Responses to, “What websites do you visit if you stray from work?”
 - Facebook 41%
 - LinkedIn 37%
 - Yahoo 31%
 - Google+ 28%
 - CNN 20%
 - YouTube 13%
 - Craigslist 10%

If you want more statistics, I recommend listening to Mark Driscoll’s sermon.³

Stealing Money and Possessions From the Government

Third, people can of course steal from the government, usually in the form of unpaid or underpaid taxes. In 2012, it was estimated that the government was due \$450 billion dollars more than it collected in personal and corporate taxes. Some might argue that the government actually steals from us, perhaps through excessive taxation and waste. Indeed, governmental theft—‘taxation without representation—was one of the primary causes of the American Revolution. As Will Rogers later wryly noted, “Nothing is certain but death and taxes, but at least death doesn’t get worse each time Congress meets.”

Regardless, Jesus told us to render to Caesar the things that are Caesar’s (Mark 12:17), and being robbed clearly doesn’t justify robbing others.

By the way, people sometimes end up feeling guilty about not paying their taxes. I heard about an unsigned letter received by the IRS—an unsigned letter containing a \$100 bill. The letter simply said, “Dear IRS, I cheated on my taxes last year and have been feeling incredibly guilty. If I keep feeling guilty, I’ll send you the rest.”

Stealing Money and Possessions From God

And fourth, people can steal money and property from God. In an ultimate sense, everything belongs to God. As it says in the Psalms, *The earth is the Lord’s and the fullness thereof, the world and those who dwell therein* (Psalm 24:1). We’re merely stewards of God’s possessions. And yet, in a more limited sense, we can in fact steal from the Lord by not handling his possessions in the way he’s told us.

Malachi 3:8-9—

Will man rob God? Yet you are robbing me. But you say, ‘How have we robbed you?’ In your tithes and contributions. ⁹You are cursed with a curse, for you are robbing me, the whole nation of you.

Perhaps the most famous biblical example of stealing from God is found in Chapter 7 of Joshua. Here, the Israelites were specifically commanded not to take any of the spoils from the conquered city of Jericho. All of the spoils were to be devoted to the Lord. However, one man, Achan, secretly stole valuable items from the city and hid them in his tent. As a result, the Israelites lost a major battle—the Battle of Ai—and Achan himself, along with his family (who were apparently aware of the crime) were eventually identified and put to death.

In my own life, when I was a fairly new Christian, I was attending a church in San Diego. At the time, my wife and I had very little money and were saving every penny, hoping to buy a car. As I was sitting in church one Sunday, I had a very strong sense—an undeniable sense—that God wanted me to give \$50 to the church. For us, this was a large amount of money. Moreover, it was an amount of money that would have made the difference between buying or not buying a used Chevy Vega for \$500 that we had learned about the day before. The car was being sold by my father’s bartender, which perhaps should have served as a warning. However, we were eager to get a car, and the deal seemed like a good one.

Unfortunately, after briefly wrestling with the thought of giving the church \$50, I rejected the idea. I reasoned (or rationalized) that I would eventually give the church money when I actually had some. Well ... long story short, we bought the bartender's used Chevy Vega for \$500, and the car died that same night. For those of you who are car buffs, you'll know that the Chevy Vega has been described as "the worst car Detroit ever made," primarily because of its aluminum-block engine—an engine block that cracks (a.k.a. dies) very easily. That's exactly what happened the night we bought the car. Then engine overheated, the block cracked, and the car experienced a rapid and unpleasant demise.

As a footnote to the story ... the next day, I had the car towed to a junkyard where I was given \$50 for the dead vehicle—the exact amount the Lord had asked me to give to the church. I prayed, asked the Lord if he still wanted me to give \$50 to the church, and, bottom line, I gave the money.

Now, the last thing I want this morning is for people to feel like the preacher is twisting their arm to give money. I've been to churches where that's happened, and I've always felt like the preacher was manipulating me, trying to fleece the flock rather than feed the flock. However, the truth remains, God, as an act of worship, asks us to contribute some of the material wealth he has entrusted to us, devoting it to his work on earth. It's something we need to remain prayerful about—how God wants us to use the resources he's placed in our keeping.

Other Types of Stealing

Like I said, the list of what people can steal and how they can steal goes on and on. In addition to stealing money and physical property, people can steal intellectual property—plagiarizing articles, stealing inventions and ideas. They can rob people of their good name through slander and libel. They can steal someone's spouse, like David did when he stole Uriah's wife Bathsheba. They can kidnap individuals and hijack airplanes. They can rob people of time and opportunities. They can rob the most important people in their lives of the affection and attention they deserve. All these forms of theft show a lack of three things.

Lack of Love

First, as I already mentioned, stealing shows a lack of love. If you want to know what love looks like, it doesn't look like stealing. Stealing makes others poorer. It makes them worse off. If we're stealing, we need to stop and

repent. Also, to the best of our ability, we need to make matters right, perhaps asking for forgiveness or restoring what's been stolen.

Lack of Faith

Second, stealing demonstrates a lack of faith. Jesus said in the Sermon on the Mount, *Seek first the kingdom of God and his righteousness, and all these things will be added to you* (Matthew 6:33). If we're sincerely looking to God, faithfully trusting in him, he will provide for our needs, both materially and spiritually. When we steal from others, we are denying God's intention and/or ability to provide for us. When we steal, we are trying to provide for ourselves by redistributing God's possessions without God's permission.

Lack of Understanding

And third, stealing shows a lack of understanding of God's plan. In fact, stealing is fundamentally an attempt to circumvent God's plan. After the Fall, God told Adam, *By the sweat of your face you shall eat bread* (Genesis 3:19). God commanded us to honestly labor, difficult as that may sometimes be. If we have the ability and the opportunity, we are to work. Stealing attempts to shortcut this plan, and, as with all unholy shortcuts, it will not lead anywhere good, regardless of how it might first appear.

To build on this a bit ... Paul says in Ephesians 4:28, *Let the thief no longer steal, but rather let him labor, doing honest work with his own hands, so that he may have something to share with anyone in need.* God's plan is: stop stealing, start working, start giving. Like I said, this is God's basic plan, assuming we're able to work and have the opportunity. For those who are unable to work or lack opportunity, they should be the recipients of the help others are giving.

Well ... the Eighth Commandment is part of the negative side of love. It tells us what love is not. It tells us what love does not look like—what love will refrain from doing.

However, as I said earlier, I also want to talk this morning about love's positive side. Love doesn't merely avoid stealing, it actively seeks to give. It doesn't merely avoid causing harm, it actively seeks to bless. Not only are we to avoid taking what does not belong to us, we are to give what does belong to us. As William Blake said in his poem "The Clod and the Pebble":

*Love seeketh not itself to please,
Nor for itself hath any care,
But for another gives its ease,
And builds a Heaven in Hell's despair.*

Love—selfless, self-sacrificial love—the love that should characterize us as Christians, helps others. It seeks to ‘build a Heaven in Hell’s despair,’ reaching out to the hurting, the broken, the marginalized, the disenfranchised, the downcast, and the mistreated. This is the love that characterized the Good Samaritan, whose story I’d like to briefly look at. If you want to know what love looks like—the positive side of love—this is one of the most beautiful pictures in the Bible.

By way of context ... at this point in Luke’s gospel—Chapter 10—Jesus is beginning to have increasing run-ins with the religious leaders. He’s beginning to have growing debates and disagreements with those in authority. In fact, by Chapter 11, the religious leaders will accuse Jesus of being possessed by Satan—of casting out demons by the power of Satan. Here, in Chapter 10, Jesus tells the “Parable of the Good Samaritan” as part of one of these encounters. Let’s read the entire passage.

Luke 10:25-37—

And behold, a lawyer stood up to put him to the test, saying, “Teacher, what shall I do to inherit eternal life?” ²⁶He said to him, **“What is written in the Law? How do you read it?”** ²⁷And 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.”** ²⁸And he said to him, **“You have answered correctly; do this, and you will live.”**

²⁹But he, desiring to justify himself, said to Jesus, **“And who is my neighbor?”** ³⁰Jesus 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. ³¹Now by chance a priest was going down that road, and when he saw him he passed by on the other side. ³²So likewise a Levite, when he came to the place and saw him, passed by on the other side. ³³But a Samaritan, as he journeyed, came to where he was, and when he saw him, he had compassion. ³⁴He 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. ³⁵And 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.’ ³⁶Which of these three, do you think, proved to be a neighbor to the man who fell among the robbers?” ³⁷He said, **“The one who showed him mercy.”** And Jesus said to him, **“You go, and do likewise.”**

There are of course many things that could be said about this wonderful parable. In fact, I suspect thousands of sermons have been given on these verses. Today, however, I’m primarily hoping to focus on our main question: What does love look like? What is the positive side of love? How does Christ-like love reveal itself? In particular, what do we learn from the “Parable of the Good Samaritan” that can help us to better understand what it looks like to love our neighbor?

As is typical with pastors, I’d like to make three main points. I’d like to call attention to three positive aspects of love—three characteristics of what a loving life looks like. The invisible God who has come to dwell in our hearts is seeking to make himself known through us, and here are three indicators revealing what this means.

First, love gets involved. A man has been robbed—a man has suffered because others have violated the Eighth Commandment, the commandment not to steal. Moreover, the man has been assaulted and left for dead beside the road. The question is: How is love going to respond to this? How is love going to reveal itself in this situation?

As I said, love gets involved. The Good Samaritan, in contrast to the priest and the Levite, does not pass by. He does not ignore the man’s suffering, turning a blind eye and continuing down the road.

Charles Spurgeon, the 19th century British preacher, once said, “I never saw a man fail to help the poor who failed to give at least one admirable excuse.” If we’re looking for excuses not to help those in need—excuses not to get involved with those who need our help—those excuses are easy to come by. We can always come up with reasons to justify walking past suffering people and continuing on our journey.

Recently, when we had a women’s shelter here at PBC—a shelter to help homeless women during

the winter months—I asked the women, “What is the hardest part about being homeless?” Their reply: people stop treating you like a human being. They just treat you like an object to be ignored and passed by; like a lamppost. Nobody wants to get involved, and you end up feeling completely dehumanized.

It’s like the old joke about the homeless man who wasn’t allowed into a church. After being refused entrance, he sat down outside and started crying. Jesus came up to him and asked, “Why are you crying?” The man replied, “I’m crying because they wouldn’t let me into the church.” Jesus responded: “I don’t know what you’re crying about. I’ve been trying to get into that church for 200 years and they won’t let me in!” The joke may be funny, but obviously the truth it conveys is not.

Thankfully, I don’t believe PBC is like the church in the joke. However, both individually and collectively, God may be calling us to become more involved in the lives of those who are suffering. As someone said, “The church is supposed to be a hospital for sinners, not a museum for saints.” The church is supposed to be a place where we become involved in the lives of the wounded and the broken, like the Good Samaritan. It’s not supposed to be a museum where we contemplate relics (and no, I’m not thinking of anyone here in particular!).

Second, love has compassion. If you want to know what love looks like, yes, love gets involved in the lives of those who are suffering. However, it gets involved with compassion. The Good Samaritan saw the man and had compassion for him. The Greek word is *spalgchnizomai*, which has to do with intestines. The Good Samaritan had intestines for the man. Today, we would say the Good Samaritan had a gut-level reaction to the man’s suffering. He was genuinely moved by the man’s pain. Perhaps he himself had once been beaten by robbers. We don’t know. One way or the other, the Good Samaritan had a gut-level reaction—a gut-level feeling of empathy or sympathy—that motivated him to get involved.

I’m sometimes concerned that the modern world has developed compassion fatigue. I’m concerned that we’ve lost our ability to be moved by much of anything—moved at a gut-level that causes us to become involved. We watch the evening news and are continually bombarded with images—often live images—of hurting people: plane crashes, car accidents, war zones, hurricanes, and earthquakes. We know that we’re looking at real people who are really suffering. And yet, perhaps because the information is so relentless, we can be left emotionally numbed and anesthetized. We can watch the world’s heartache, shake our heads sadly, and respond by

simply changing the channel hoping to find something more entertaining.

Jesus said about the last days—about the days prior to his return—*And because lawlessness will be increased, the love of many will grow cold* (Matthew 24:12). Literally, the *agape* of many—the love that is supposed to characterize us as Christians—will grow cold. God help this not to be true of us. God help us not to grow cold, indifferent, unmoved, and compassionless when we encounter the next person beaten up and left for dead beside the road of life.

Obviously, none of us can help everyone. We can’t know about, become moved by, and become involved in everyone’s suffering. Our attitude, however, should be like that of Billy Graham, who once said, “It’s as if the whole world is on fire and I only have one bucket of water, but Lord help me to throw that bucket!” I can’t help everyone, but Lord help me to help someone. Like the Good Samaritan, help me to be moved by the suffering of those whose paths I cross. If I’m not moved—if we’re not moved—we should pray that God will transform us into the kinds of people who are.

The third lesson the parable teaches us is that love spares no expense. The Good Samaritan gets involved, has compassion, and then uses everything at his disposal to help. He’s not lukewarm or half-hearted. He binds up the man’s wounds, pours oil on his skin to soothe it, and pours wine on his skin as an antiseptic. He puts the man on his own donkey, takes him to an inn where he can receive additional help, pays the innkeeper two denarii—the equivalent of two days’ wages—and promises, if need be, to pay even more when he returns.

This week, as I was reading about the Good Samaritan, I found myself feeling very convicted. Yes, I love people. Yes, I get involved in their lives. Yes, I’m moved by their suffering. And yet, truth be known, my responses are often guarded, restrained, and self-protective. Yes, I want to help, but I don’t want to risk very much or jeopardize very much. I want to help, but I tend to play it safe. In reality, the idea of unrestrained giving—of sparing no expense—is far less true of me than I would generally like to admit.

I know of course that we’re not supposed to be enablers. Just because people want something from us doesn’t necessarily mean that we’re supposed to give it to them. Being a Christian doesn’t mean that we’re supposed to be the genie in everyone’s magic lamp, granting their three wishes. Just because someone asks me to buy them a Ferrari, doesn’t necessarily mean that I’m supposed to

do it. Love involves meeting people's needs, which may or may not be the same as their wants.

However, in my own case, the point is, I sometimes rationalize that I'm being wise and discerning—not allowing myself to be conned—when the reality is, I'm simply dressing up my own selfishness to look like something more noble than it is. So yes, we need to be discerning about when to give and when not to give. However, we also need to be willing to spare no expense—willing to be like the Good Samaritan—if that is what God is calling us to do.

The Good Samaritan was 'all in.' He was willing to risk everything in order to help the man lying by the side of the road. As many in the early church believed, the Good Samaritan also pictures Jesus himself, who gave everything in order to help us—the ones robbed, beaten up, and left for dead beside the road of life. As the old hymn says, "Jesus paid it all, all to him I owe. Sin had left a crimson stain; he washed it white as snow."⁴

To bring things around to a conclusion ... Hopefully, our time together this morning has provided at least a partial answer to the question: What does love look like? What does God's love look like when it's revealed through us? Love does not steal. Love gets involved. Love has compassion. Love spares no expense.

Jesus' final words to the lawyer are very brief, *You go, and do likewise*. May we leave here today hearing those same words. "You go, and do likewise."

NOTES

¹Mark Driscoll Quote, *VIII. Do Not Steal*, 11/3/13, <http://marshill.com/media/ten-commandments-set-free-to-live-free/viii-do-not-steal>.

²Driscoll, <http://marshill.com/2013/09/03/commandment-viii>

³Driscoll, <http://marshill.com/media/ten-commandments-set-free-to-live-free/viii-do-not-steal>.

⁴Alex Nifong, Elvina M. Hall, John Thomas Grape, "Jesus Paid It All," 2006 sixsteps Music. CCLI #4689508.