

BEST YEAR EVER

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SCRIPTURE: Luke 10: **serve more.** SMALL GROUPS START THIS WEEK!

Artists have the ability to work different materials into something beautiful. What I specifically love about Wade's style is the eclectic nature. He can bring together a bunch of different stuff and make it into a cohesive art piece.

<Show close up>

It's kinda like the legos we talked about last week. Without the architect there is nothing built. Without the artist, there is no art.

God is the artist. We are his medium. And in his hands we can become a beautiful work of art!

I love what CS Lewis says about this idea.

CS Lewis

"Remember (God) is the artist and you are only the picture. You can't see it. So quietly submit to be painted"

The paint doesn't get to decide how it will be used only the artist.

Ephesians 2:10

¹⁰For we are God's handiwork, created in Christ Jesus to do good works, which God prepared in advance for us to do.

Think about your life in the hands of a skilled artist, what beauty is being made through you?

What beautiful piece of art is being made through all of us as we are shaped into what God the creator... the artist wants us to be?

For this year to be....

The BEST YEAR EVER

We must learn to let God make us into the art that He sees in us and then let him work through us. We are his handiwork. Created to do good works.

That brings us back to something we talked about a couple weeks ago...

Making a difference.

1 Peter 4:10-11

¹⁰Each of you should **use whatever gift you have received to serve others**, as faithful stewards of God's grace in its various forms.

Whatever handiwork God has created in you was not put in you for you, but to serve others.

¹¹If anyone **speaks**, they should do so **as one who speaks the very words of God**. If anyone **serves**, they should do so **with the strength God provides**, so **that in all things God may be praised** through Jesus Christ. To him be the glory and the power for ever and ever.

And when we serve others... God is made to look good.

You see I think that sometimes we get it wrong. We are looking for God to do something in us so that we feel *special* or *get noticed*...

when really **God wants to do something through us so that others are served and He is noticed.**

It is so hard in this world when most organizations and even people are all about self-promotion.

But notice this... Peter doesn't say no-one should get noticed, he says that God should be noticed.

Best Year Ever.

SERVE MORE.

To explore this, let's look at a story Jesus told, recorded in the gospel of Luke.

Luke 10:25-29

²⁵On one occasion an expert in the law stood up to test Jesus. "Teacher," he asked, "what must I do to inherit eternal life?"

²⁶"What is written in the Law?" he replied. "How do you read it?"

²⁷He answered, "'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, 'Love your neighbor as yourself.'"

²⁸"You have answered correctly," Jesus replied. "Do this and you will live."

²⁹But he wanted to justify himself, so he asked Jesus, "And who is my neighbor?"

an expert in the law stood up to test Jesus. The greek indicates that it was more than a question, it's a potential trap.

his question is reasonable and important, but not easy with hundreds of OT laws and thousands of oral traditions, how is one to know which are essential for gaining eternal life?

Jesus invites this expert to give his own professional opinion

his answer is excellent, as a matter of fact it is exactly what Jesus would say when asked about the greatest commandment...

Matthew 22:37-40

³⁷Jesus replied: " 'Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind.' ³⁸This is the first and greatest commandment. ³⁹And the second is like it: 'Love your neighbor as yourself.' ⁴⁰All the Law and the Prophets hang on these two commandments."

this first and greatest commandment is called the shema, it is found in Deuteronomy 6:5 - *Love God with three things, **heart, soul, and everything***

the second commandment is found in Leviticus 19:18 and is crucial to understanding the first. How can we show love to God?

Through rituals, church attendance, reading our Bibles, giving of money?

The only practical way we can demonstrate love to God is by loving our neighbor.

1 John 4:20-21

²⁰Whoever claims to love God yet hates a brother or sister is a liar. For whoever does not love their brother and sister, whom they have seen, cannot love God, whom they have not seen.

²¹And he has given us this command: Anyone who loves God must also love their brother and sister.

Jesus congratulates the expert, but then gives him a gentle nudge, "do this and you will live."

Jesus is saying, "your answer is excellent, but your behavior needs improvement."

Instead of repenting what does this expert do? He tries to justify himself. But the only way to justify oneself is to diminish the demands of the law.

Since he cannot live up to the law, he must cut it down to his size.

The expert thinks... "if I rationalize, justify, modify, or explain away the demands of the law, then maybe I have a chance. If I can just narrow the field enough, then I can claim to love my neighbor."

So the expert gives this question, "Who is my neighbor?"

Jesus gives this parable as his answer.

Luke 10:37

³⁰In reply Jesus said: "A man was going down from Jerusalem to Jericho, when he was attacked by robbers. They stripped him of his clothes, beat him and went away, leaving him half

dead. ³¹A priest happened to be going down the same road, and when he saw the man, he passed by on the other side. ³²So too, a Levite, when he came to the place and saw him, passed by on the other side. ³³But a Samaritan, as he traveled, came where the man was; and when he saw him, he took pity on him. ³⁴He went to him and bandaged his wounds, pouring on oil and wine. Then he put the man on his own donkey, brought him to an inn and took care of him. ³⁵The next day he took out two denarii and gave them to the innkeeper. 'Look after him,' he said, 'and when I return, I will reimburse you for any extra expense you may have.'

³⁶ "Which of these three do you think was a neighbor to the man who fell into the hands of robbers?"

³⁷The expert in the law replied, "The one who had mercy on him." Jesus told him, "Go and do likewise."

Jesus takes up the debate with the expert.

The road between Jerusalem and Jericho was very dangerous. It was nicknamed '*Adummim*' which means '***The pass of blood.***'

A man makes his way through the pass of blood and is attacked by a robber. The assailant steals from the man and leaves him for dead.

Eventually, a few people come by that way...

The first to pass by were both clergymen. They were both jewish priests and part of the religious establishment.

The primary job of priests was to officiate at the temple sacrifices. Levites helped maintain the temple and its services.

In their defense, according to the OT Law if they were to come in contact with a dead body, they would have to go through a series of ceremonial cleansing and take a leave of absence from their jobs at the temple.

So each of them pass by on the other side of the road and leave the man in his misery.

The third one to pass was a Samaritan. Samaritans were the hated half-Jews whose rivalry and antagonism was often violent and sometimes deadly.

But this unclean Samaritan took pity on the victim. Seeing the man bloodied and beaten he broke down the walls of his deep-seated prejudice. There was no natural affinity between these two, only a need.

He bandaged his wounds, poured wine on them as a disinfectant, he poured his own oil on them to soothe the pain, he put the man on his donkey, spent his own money for the man's lodging and food.

It was not that he liked the man, but the man had a need.

He loved in deed. He loved in action.

Jesus understood this world. There are three kinds of people in this world... Three philosophies of life...

THE THIEVES SAY....

"WHAT'S YOURS IS MINE!"

- *Some people are takers*
- *Some people will simply drain you - steal your time. your energy. your joy.*

THE RELIGIOUS SAY...

“WHAT’S MINE IS MINE!”

- *Some people are keepers.*
- *Some people just do not engage - can't pull any life from them*

THE SAMARITAN SAYS,
“WHAT IS MINE IS YOURS!”

- *Some people are givers.*
- *Some people are like a breath of fresh air - always giving, sacrificing, serving.*

The expert concentrated on the object of love (God and neighbor - love God, love your neighbor). but Jesus concentrates on the subject of love (the love-giver, the Samaritan)

Which is easier? To talk about how much we love God and his attributes and how we should love our neighbor, or to become a love-giver? In order to be a love-giver it takes personal commitment.

The parable is not just an answer to the expert's question, "Who is my neighbor?" it is also the answer to his first question, "What must I do to be saved?"

Remember how the interaction started?

Luke 10:25-26

²⁵On one occasion an expert in the law stood up to test Jesus. "Teacher," he asked, "what must I do to inherit eternal life?"

²⁶ "What is written in the Law?" he replied. "How do you read it?"

The original question was about eternal life.

And I think here's Jesus point... you can know the right answers and still not inherit eternal life. How? If you do not do what you know is right.

We can have all the right answers and still not inherit eternal life. If we don't live those out in our own lives.

The expert knew all the right answers, even had the exact same answer as Jesus, but he learned that day that just having the right answer does not mean you are doing right.

You can't just have the right answers, you have to go do it. Jesus said, "go and show mercy."

SGL Questions:

1. God is the artist, we are His masterpiece. What is your most favorite way to create? What is your most favorite thing you created?
2. God created us to do good works. When are the times in your life when you feel that your are doing what God created you for?
3. 1peter 4:10-11 - what is the purpose of serving? Who do we serve?
4. Read Luke 10: 23-25 - what are somethings we can take away from this?
5. Read Luke 10: 30-37 - what is the difference in loving in word and loving in deed?
6. What are some excuses we use to justify not using our abilities and resources to serve someone?
7. Discuss some ways people may be able to get plugged in and serve at TRC?