

Introduction: Pg. ____

I'm excited to wrap-up our series this morning by thinking about how we can be a church...

“For the City: IN YOUR NEIGHBORHOOD”
Luke 10:25-37

When we were preparing to move to Boston to start Redemption Hill, I spent hours and hours studying the different neighborhoods in Boston proper, as well as the cities surrounding the city. Medford itself is made up of several distinct neighborhoods.

Traditionally people have identified: West Medford, the Heights, Wellington, Lawrence Estates, the Hillside, and South Medford. That doesn't include all of the various Squares and unique sections that make up each neighborhood. I love to spend time in each of our neighborhoods whether I'm hanging with friends or grabbing a Dunks.

FCF: While each neighborhood has it's own identity, each neighborhood has plenty of similarities as well. Sure people want safe streets, good schools, and their streets plowed in the winter, but there is a more fundamental aspect woven into the fabric of every neighborhood. Your neighborhood and mine is filled with needy people and needed people. And by the way, each of us fit into both camps. We are all needy, and we are all needed!

I want to set forth a really shocking proposal today as we think about being a church for the city. When Jesus said “Love your neighbor” that includes your actual NEIGHBORHOOD. Got it?

The Point: Love your neighbor IN YOUR NEIGHBORHOOD.

This morning we are going to consider what I believe to be the most powerful story on being a good neighbor ever recorded: The Parable of the Good Samaritan

Read 10:25-28.

- A lawyer poses the greatest question anyone could ever ask: “What must I do to inherit eternal life?” But he does so, not sincerely, but to “put Jesus to test.”
- So Jesus says, “You tell me. You're an expert in the law of the Old Testament.” And he answers by quoting Deut 6:5 & Leviticus 19:18. “You shall love the Lord your God . . . and love your neighbor as yourself.”
- Jesus says: “You are absolutely right!” And we'd expect the conversation to end, But...
- The lawyer wanted to justify his current attempts to love his neighbor, which was a tight circle of people like him, so he asked a follow-up question: “And who is my neighbor?”

T: Jesus, in his typical, smooth operating style redefines his question, and in the process, reorients us to the depth of the 2nd Greatest Commandment. Let's read vv.30-37

I. Love your neighbor by being a neighbor to anyone.

- Most of the time we reduce the story of the Good Samaritan to performing a good deed or helping a stranger in need, but Jesus goes much deeper than that.
- The heart of the parable is found in verses 36-37: Jesus asks the lawyer, “Which of these three, do you think, *proved to be a neighbor* to the man who fell among the robbers? [The lawyer] said, “The one who showed him mercy.” And Jesus said, “You go, and do likewise.”

- Jesus says, we are to...

Be a neighbor to anyone.

- As we hear this parable, we naturally expect the priest and Levite to be the first to come to the rescue. Why? They knew the law and worked in the temple. That they insulated themselves from the needs of others would have been surprising, but what he says next is absolutely shocking.
- Jesus holds up the most unlikely of heroes, a Samaritan. Samaritans were despised and looked down upon by Jews as ethnically and religiously inferior.
- Jesus heightens the effect of the story by having the person who would not even be considered a neighbor, actually being a neighbor to teach the Jews who their neighbors really were. Got it?
- Who was *their* neighbor? Who is *our* neighbor? “ANYONE in need!”
- Skin tone and cultural differences DO NOT MATTER. Jesus calls us to eradicate the category of “nonneighbor.”
- The Lawyer was looking to limit love. Jesus shows us how to love without limits.
- What about you: **Do you limit your love? Or do you love without limits?**
- Be a neighbor to anyone *and . . .*

Be a neighbor to anyone by showing mercy

Showing mercy involves giving of oneself in order to help someone in need. We see at least eight specific ways in this story:

1. He saw him (33).

- The Good Samaritan was simply going about his business and he saw a need. Let me state the obvious for us this morning. We will never see what we never see.
- If it has been a while since we have risen to meet the need of someone else, it may be a sign we have become too self-focused. Mercy begins with taking our eyes off of ourselves. Be great by being small and serving all.
- He saw him, and then

2. He had compassion (33).

- Compassion “implies a deep feeling of sympathy” or pity that drives us to action. (Liefeld)
- When you see needs around you, is your heart stirred?
- Does your heart ever break over the suffering of those around you?

3. He went to him (34).

- Love takes the first step. People in need, need people to go to them.
- We meet *in here* on Sunday mornings for an hour plus, so that we can be *out there* the other 143 hours in a week loving people where life exists. Who needs sleep? Here’s to insomnia in 2016!
- He saw him, had compassion, went to him, and...

4. He met his physical needs (34). The man was beaten and bleeding, and in desperate need of medical care, so the Samaritan poured oil and wine on his wounds (means of disinfectant and comfort) and then bandaged him up. Note also how...

5. He used his own resources (34). and put them to work for the one in need. True love, merciful love *is not* preoccupied how much it is going to cost. Love always costs us something. But the rewards are always greater than the cost.

6. He provided shelter and additional care (34). He took him to the inn and cared for him. Then . . .

7. He gave financially (35). He paid for his stay and provided extra money for him to recover. Finally,

8. He went the extra mile (35). That’s what mercy does. That’s what loving our neighbor looks like.

This man nobody expected destroyed his schedule, risked his own safety, and sacrificed his own resources to help a complete stranger.

Trans: He was a neighbor and Jesus says "Go and do likewise." He's saying the same to us today. So Jesus argues from the lesser to greater. Today, I want to argue from the greater to the lesser.

II. Love your neighbor by being a neighbor to your ACTUAL neighbors.

- Why do we take the 2nd Greatest Commandment and focus on anyone out there, but consistently pass by our actual neighbors in our neighborhood?!
- Most of us would have to confess that we stink at being good neighbors!
- This is not easy in our culture. "Everyone is so busy. Not enough time. We only have so many relationships. They get on my nerves." I get all that.
- I'm just hearing Jesus say: "Love your NEIGHBOR as yourself" which includes our Neighborrrrrrs in our NEIGHBORhood. You ready to have some fun today?

Did you know God wants you in your neighborhood? Acts 17:26 says: "**And he made from one man every nation of mankind to live on all the face of the earth, having determined allotted periods and the boundaries of their dwelling place**"

I know you got on Craigslist and found that apartment. I know your family has lived on the same street for 85 years. I know you just got a job and are looking to find a place in Medford (Don't forget about that 2020 Vision)... But God is over all of that!

In our time remaining, I am going to draw heavily from a book {PIC} called *The Art of Neighboring*. Here's what I want you to do: Take the back of your worship guide, and I want you to follow the concept of this **BLOCK MAP {PIC}**.

The goal with this simple tool is to *"move the 2nd Greatest Commandment back to your street."*

They provide 8 boxes; this morning, I want you to start by drawing four boxes. In each box, I want you to write a 1, 2, & 3. These are what I'm going to call the three levels of neighboring.

Level 1 - Write Their Name!

- Being a good neighbor starts by knowing our neighbor's name. It's hard to love to people we don't know!!
- This is not always walk in the park. Neighbors range from ultra-relational to ultra-reclusive.
- So you might say: "Well, my neighbor is reclusive." How do you know they're not thinking the same thing about you?!
- "But I've tried to say what's up?" Maybe they didn't hear you!
- It took me 3 years to learn one of my neighbor's names. I get it, but with a little intentionality and a lot of love, this is honestly just not that hard.
- How many of you can name your four closest neighbors? Eight closest neighbors?
- (This moves us from **Stranger to No Longer Stranger**)

Level 2 - Jot down some **Simple information** you've gathered from a conversation.

- This is basically census info: where are you from, a little bit about your family, what kind of work they do.
- Their front door is painted blue doesn't count. Sorry!
- (This moves us from **No Longer Stranger to Acquaintance**) you know, like a lot of your Facebook friends, but we're making progress!

Level 3 is - Below the surface:

- What do you know about their hopes & dreams?
- What challenges do they face? What are their fears?
- What do they think about social issues? Spiritual issues?
- (This moves us from **Acquaintance** to [a real] **Relationship**.)

The authors say they've found: about **10%** of people know the names of all eight of their neighbors (**level 1**), about **3%** know basic info (**Level 2**), and **< 1%** hit **Level 3**.

As you look at your block map: how would you classify each person: Stranger? Acquaintance? Friend?

Here's the good news: Anyone can be a good neighbor! We can all take steps.

Let me give you **Four Ways to Level-Up Your Love for Your Neighbors**.

1. Be Personable.

- Strike up a Conversation and be a good listener! You say: "I don't know how." Let me help.
- A normal greeting usually works:
 - Hey, How's it going?
 - What's your name again? Play that card... They'll be relieved you asked.
- Or talk about the weather: Beautiful day, eh? Finally got some sun & warm weather!
- Or this is even better... This one will move you from Level 0 to Level 2 with the quickness. Take a genuine interest in something they care about:
 - Hey, I saw you working on your bike the other day? How long have you had it?
 - I saw your family over the other day. How was your visit?
 - How's your kid liking t-ball?
- You don't have to stalk your neighbors. You just have to live your life and care.

2. Play

- **in your neighborhood**
 - Strategically hang out in the front of your home, unless your neighbors are chillin' out back. :)
 - Go for walks... (walk your dog, walk your children - I mean go for a walk with your children!)
 - Go to your local park instead of the nicer one across town.
- **& With your neighbors**
 - Here's the principle: "**Do what you do, do it with others; do what others do, do it with them.**"
 - Host a game night, or yard games in the afternoon.
 - Watch a game or a tv series "Everyone is watching."
 - Be cool... get a trampoline or a sweet fire pit. Be cool... &
 - Be creative... create a "Under 4 foot Olympics" and invite all the kids over for games, snacks and prizes...
 - Be personable, play, and

1. Party

- Do you eat? Do it with them! Do they eat? Do it with them!
- If you have to, invite yourself over! Just be smooth about it! Man, the grill was smelling good, what you making us this week? You see your neighbor coming home from the grocery... Let me help you with those! What's for dinner?! Ok, not very smooth...

- The better way is to invite people over. Open your home and be hospitable!
- Is your home a place where relationships are formed? Is your home a place of hospitality?
- Jeff Vanderstelt says: "I think the church has been taught to idolize their home, their family and themselves. The rampant individualistic approach says: "but that's my house." No, that's God's house."

2. Provide & Receive Help

- Provide Help:
 - There are needs all around us.
 - Shovel some Snow. Sweep a sidewalk. Rake some leaves.
 - Create a neighborhood contact list for safety and emergencies.
 - Organize a coat, mittens and hat drive in the winter with your neighbors.
 - Some are bigger Life needs.
 - Health needs, hardships, you fill in the blank. See the need, have compassion, move toward them, be willing to sacrifice some time and even some spare change, to extend the love of Christ.
 - But we shouldn't just extend it. We should also...
- Receive help:
 - Receiving help has helped us build friendships with our neighbors faster than anything.
 - Out of eggs? 3 minutes next door is better than 30 minutes to the store. Bang.
 - Your neighbor has a snow blower (like mine)? Thank you! You are the stinkin' man!
 - Our daughter started kindergarten, we still had a newborn. That meant one of our neighbors took Parker to school most mornings. She's now our closest friend in the neighborhood.

T: Be personable. Play. Party. Provide and Receive Help.

Conclusion:

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Let me say this: We are not trying to "Level-up" to fill out a chart. We love our neighbors, because we care and because Christ motivates us to love anyone, especially the people who live 50 feet away from us.

And as we do, our hope is to shine the light of Christ through how we act and what we share.

This is where the distinction between ulterior motives and ultimate motives is so helpful.

- Ulterior motives is when we do something for a concealed reason. = I get your name so I can share about the name of Christ. I shovel your snow, so that I can tell you that Jesus can wash your sins away as white as snow. No!! We shovel snow because that is nice, because we would really appreciate it if they did that for us. Period.
- At the same time, as a Christian, my ultimate motives are driven by what is ultimate to me. So it would actually be insincere to build a friendship and never talk about how Jesus makes me a better parent, husband, worker, and neighbor.
- It's just that a real Christian says: "I'm going to keep caring about you, playing with you, partying with you, and serving you whether you see the world as I see it and receive the gift of God's love in Christ or not.

What if we did this? Would Medford look different?

“What would it be like if we were to make a commitment to take the next step with each of our immediate neighbors [over the summer]?”

What motivates love for neighbor? Being filled with love for God. How are we filled with love for God? We receive the love of God.

I want to pause and invite you to start where everything should start: with God’s help. We call on God’s help through prayer.