

**Anglican Church Noosa**  
**CONFRONTING JESUS the TEACHER**

Luke 10:25-37 and 16:19-31

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If I were to do a survey in the street and ask people the question what do you know about Jesus? I suspect the most common answer would be, "He was a great Teacher".

Even today, many people would say they have heard of the parable of the Good Samaritan. They may not be able to get all the details of the story correct but they know a Samaritan is someone who does good for another. The phrase "being a Good Samaritan" is still out there. Jesus teaching has had a profound impact.

So far in this series we've looked at the topics

- Jesus the Son,
- Jesus the King and
- Jesus the Healer.
- And next week we will be looking at 'Jesus the Lover'.

I'm not sure that any of these understandings would rate highly in our survey. I think Jesus the Teacher would be the most popular understanding of Jesus.

Jesus loved to teach in parables and this morning we're looking at two of his parables from Luke's Gospel.

-As we've noted one is very well known,  
"The Parable of the Good Samaritan". In Luke 10.

-The other one not so well known,  
"The Parable of the Rich man and Lazarus". In Luke 16.

Both these parables could be read simply as moral tales and the moral is, try harder and you can save yourself if you just work at it. Many have reduced them to this level and embraced the teaching at a humanistic level, which leaves God out of the picture altogether.

So the parable of the Good Samaritan is about the equality of all races and we should help all in need even those who belong to a race we might naturally despise. And the parable of the rich man and Lazarus is about concern for the poor and sharing our wealth around.

There is no doubt these morals are there in the parables; however if we leave it at that level we have just skimmed across the surface. It is like skating on an iced over lake early in winter. We might find it is very thin ice and it just can't hold us.

So let's dig a little deeper into these parables and discover just how profound a teacher Jesus is.

Firstly, The Parable of the Good Samaritan.

I think most of you would be aware of something of the historical background to this parable.

The man who is beaten up and left dying on the side of the road is a Jew. There are three people going down the road that day, two were Jews - a Priest and a Levite (who was like an assistant priest), and the third was a Samaritan. Jews and Samaritans hated each other. Jews looked down on Samaritans because they came from the northern part of Israel where there had been a lot of mixing with other races which resulted in the watering down of their Jewish faith. They were seen as socially inferior and religiously impure.

The two Jews were highly respected spiritual leaders in their community. They failed to help their fellow Jew who was in trouble. It is the despised Samaritan who gives him a hand. The one you would least expect to help is the one who is the hero in the story.

Today it may be like a member of the Greens party is bashed up on the side of the road and it is a member of One Nation who comes along and gives a hand. Or it could be the CEO of a Building company is in need on the side of the road and someone from the CFMEU is the one who gives a hand.

The lawyer's question to Jesus was, "*Who is my neighbour?*" The answer is, 'even the person you can't stand is your neighbour'.

It is a powerful message isn't it, one that is especially needed today where people are quick to despise one another and try and cancel each other out.

However, there are further depths to the parable than just that. The lawyer's initial question to Jesus was, "What must I do to inherit eternal life?"

The question is basically flawed, yet it does have a hint of truth in it.

It is flawed because this lawyer thinks that there is something you have to do to get eternal life. For him that probably means working out the most important laws you have to keep in order to earn eternal life. A little later on in v29 we're told the lawyer wanted to justify himself. This means that he wanted to be able to say, "Yes I've kept those laws and therefore I'm in God's good books, I'm OK".

But of course the heart of the gospel is that there is nothing we can do to earn our salvation, eternal life! It is by grace, it has to be received as a gift. So the question is basically flawed.

The hint of truth in the question is that he talks about inheriting eternal life. An inheritance has the idea of being a member of the family and receiving the inheritance simply because of your membership not because you earned it like a wage.

When we trust our lives to Jesus we are born again and become members of God's family. And one of the privileges of membership is the gift of eternal life.

Sadly, the popular understanding of the parable is that we just have to try harder to love our enemy, and God is left out of it altogether. Which of course is the exact opposite of the real message.

Look again at the first answer the lawyer gave to Jesus' question, "What is written in the law?" He answered, "*Love the Lord your God with all your heart, soul, mind and strength and your neighbour as yourself.*" The two great commandments. Jesus commended the Lawyer for this answer. We have to love both God and our neighbour. The two go hand in glove in the Bible. This parable points us to the fact that we show our love for God by loving our neighbour, and that means not just the people like us, but people who are different from us, like in the parable. Jesus says go and do likewise.

It is an amazing parable and there is so much more that could be said about it, but to simply note this morning what an incredible teacher Jesus was.

Next though we want to look at the lesser known Parable of the Rich Man and Lazarus. This one is in your face just as much as the parable of the Good Samaritan.

Once again it would be easy to think it is just a good moral story of Jesus condemning wealth and lifting up the poor. Well there is an element of that, however the parable is talking about a specific wealthy man who had no regard for the poor. He was very aware of poverty, it was right at his gate. He appears to be a religious man because he addresses father Abraham with respect; yet it was obviously a phoney faith. It never issued in any action.

The rich man ends up in Hades and the poor man is in the bosom of Abraham.

The parable points to a number of truths.

Our faith and behaviour in this life have consequences in the next life.

That seems fair enough. Most people would agree justice should be done and so there needs to be a final reckoning.

However, there are two kickers in the tale here as well. The first one is that there is no second chance. Abraham says this, *"Between us and you a great chasm has been set in place so that those who want to go from here to you cannot, nor can anyone crossover from there to us."*

I think a lot of people have this idea that God is so loving and kind he'll just let people in at the end anyway

-whether they've believed or not,

-whether they've done many good deeds or not.

I don't think Jesus holds out that option in any of his teaching and in this parable definitely excludes it.

The second kicker is that Abraham asks for someone to go and warn his five brothers that there is a reckoning, a final judgement. Abraham replies that they have Moses and the prophets, let them listen to them. But the rich man says, no if someone goes from the dead, then they'll repent. But Abraham says, *"If they will not listen to Moses and the prophets, they will not be convinced even if someone rises from the dead."*

Jesus is giving a very barely disguised hint that he indeed will be the one to rise from the dead. But will people take any notice of him? Jesus has the words of eternal life for both now and all eternity. But people's hearts are hard –

-Moses and the prophets are ignored.

-Jesus rising from the dead is the biggest witness, but people will ignore him to.

The kicker is that people's hearts are hard.

This is astounding teaching.

To claim he knows what will happen in the next life,

to weave the hint of resurrection into it, which he will accomplish in a little while.

To understand the hardness of people's hearts.

It is all quite amazing.

If you are not rocked to your absolute bootstraps you're probably not hearing the message.

I can remember I was Confirmed in the Anglican Church when I was in Year 7. This is a long time ago! and it was in an era when everybody was rounded up and it was the done thing to be Confirmed in Year 7. And I can remember going to about 3 months of weekly classes. I did try to take it seriously because I can remember thinking I should be reading my Bible so I picked it up and began at Matthew, finished Matthew got halfway through Mark and gave up. I remember thinking this teaching is just impossible. How can anyone follow this 100% of the time?

There are two thoughts I've had about it since.

- I wish someone had explained grace to me at the time. All of Jesus teaching is pointing to his death and resurrection and the means of grace for us to be saved. I don't think anyone highlighted for me this aspect of Jesus' teaching.

-My second thought about it is that I just had a hard heart, and I loved the world more than I loved Jesus' teaching. And my teenage heart was making plans for a happy life apart from God. So I don't blame anyone else except myself.

One of the things I think Rebecca McLaughlin brings out so powerfully in this chapter on Jesus as teacher is just how ridiculously high Jesus' standard is and how impossible it is for us to reach it. But she also points us to grace.

Let me quote this little piece, *"Jesus says that one day he will judge us all. Jesus moral standards are so high that we haven't a hope in hell of reaching them. And yet he welcomes the most abject moral failures."*

Isn't that beautiful.

Isn't that pure relief.

All I have to do is admit that I'm an abject moral failure and there is grace awaiting me. The pressure is off.

So to Conclude.

Do you acknowledge Jesus as Teacher? To be a disciple is to sit under Jesus' teaching. The common understanding of disciple is a follower, and that's correct. But more literally the word disciple means learner. In the Jewish world it was about sitting under a Rabbi, being his disciple and learning. Sitting under a teacher and learning.

To be a disciple of Jesus is to acknowledge him as the Teacher.

That means picking up your Bible every day and reading his teaching.

I want to encourage you to have a daily habit of Bible reading.

It is good to have a Bible reading guide or lectionary, so you cover parts of the Bible that are not so popular. It is good to have Bible reading notes that help you better understand the Bible. Lynda and I use the Scripture Union, Encounter with God notes.

They are very helpful.

But I do want to issue a warning. Rely on the Bible not the notes. Reading the notes only is not reading the Bible. You are reading someone's opinion about the Bible.

The Bible is the original and the best. Sit under Jesus' teaching; don't sit under a human guru.

To sit under Jesus' teaching is to be

- convicted of sin
  - Who is my neighbour?
  - Do I care for the poor?
- led to repentance
- empowered by the Holy Spirit to put the teaching into practice

To sit under the teaching of Jesus is

- to discover afresh every day just how amazing that teaching is,
- to stand in awe of the one who is the Son of God, the King and the Healer, and
- to fall in love with him all over again and to want to keep following that marvellous teaching.

Amen