

Introducing “Loving Our Neighbors”

Why Should I Care?

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Bible Text: Luke 10

Preached On: Sunday, July 7, 2013

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One of the primary themes in the Bible is the concept of the Kingdom of God. As soon as we open the Scripture we learn of a Lord who is powerful and majestic enough to create the entire world; he's a great King. Then we read that he made human beings male and female. He placed them in his world with the privilege of subduing the creation around us in glory to the King and out of hearts that love the King. Things turn sinister in Genesis 3 when human beings are given the option of either following the rightful King or rebelling against him in pursuit of our own pleasure and lust, that maybe we can be our own kings. We all know that part of the story far too well.

But even in man's rebellious state, the heavenly Father begins to explain the coming of his own Son, a Messiah King who will make a provision for our sin that can redeem and transform us by his grace making it possible for us to be restored to our position of joyful servants in the Kingdom of God. Much of the Old Testament, then, illustrates the difference between men and women who choose to move toward the King in repentance and obedience and faith or those who choose to rebel against him and do what is right in their own eyes. Along with, in the Old Testament, the additional and progressive revelation of this Messiah King who will one day be given and also a lot in the Old Testament about the nature of the Kingdom that he will one day establish. The Old Testament closes and there's a profound sadness because of the consequences of the rebellion of man along with a heightened anticipation of the coming of the Messiah and you close the book of Malachi and say, "We need a divine King."

That's why the season that we celebrated last month is so significant because it's so much about the message that the King is here even in the angelic announcement to the shepherds, "Don't be afraid, for behold I bring you good news of great joy which shall be for all the people for today in the city of David," that's where a king would be born, "there has been born for you a Savior who is the Messiah, who is Christ the Lord." And we can honestly spend the rest of the morning just talking about how that brief announcement was tied to the Messianic expectations of the people of God in dozens of different ways. When you start connecting the dots, your mind goes on overload: the King has come.

You think then about what the wise men innocently said to the so-called King Herod. They come to him and they say, “Where is he who has been born King of the Jews for we saw his star in the east,” there is something miraculous, divine about this, “and we’ve come to worship him,” not you, Herod, but him. In other words, we want to do exactly what human beings were created for in the Garden of Eden, we want to worship the King and we want to enjoy the blessings and the benefits of living in his Kingdom.

Not surprisingly then, Matthew explains that when Jesus began his public ministry, right after he had gone through the temptation of our adversary, the devil, and proved that he was superior to Satan and he was superior to the first Adam who had failed that test, proving that he was a divine King, Matthew explains that Christ’s ministry could be summarized like this, “From that time, Jesus began to preach and say, Repent for the Kingdom of Heaven is at hand.”

In that very next chapter, we have Christ’s Sermon on the Mount where he explains what the conditions in his Kingdom will be like. He says things like, “Blessed are the poor in spirit for theirs is the Kingdom of Heaven.” In the next chapter, still part of the Sermon on the Mount, followers of Christ are taught to pray, “Your Kingdom come, your will be done on earth as it is in heaven.”

What, though, becomes quite apparent is that while the people are certainly ready for the Kingdom of God to come, they want it on their own terms, not on Christ’s. They don’t want to repent, that’s part of it because they believe their birthright and their legalism is more than enough to establish a relationship with God and, secondly, they want Jesus to help them overthrow Roman dominion. In other words, they want him to advance their kingdom instead of them to advance his. Those two positions become so hardened in a pivotal text in Matthew 12 where the Jewish leaders actually commit what Scripture calls the “unpardonable sin”; they ascribe the works of Christ to the devil and they formally reject Jesus as their King.

Then, if you know your Bible, you know that in the very next chapter, Jesus gives several parables all which have the common theme of delay. In other words, the final and complete establishment of the Kingdom is now delayed. He makes it clear that he’s going to have to now suffer and die for the sins of man and be resurrected from the dead. Of course, that was always part of God’s plan; that’s the only way human beings can be delivered from our sin or possibly have hope of ever living in the Kingdom of God. He also begins now something brand new in the gospel of Matthew after the Jewish leaders officially rejected Christ as their King and now the full establishment of the Kingdom on this earth is delayed, Christ begins speaking about a new entity, the church, an organism he’ll build of men and women who are willing to admit their need and come to him in repentance and faith and begin to live out Kingdom conditions here and now.

The disciples find that concept difficult to grasp so even in the Garden of Gethsemane while Christ is betrayed, Peter pulls out his sword and cuts off one of the soldiers’ ears as if you can bring about the Kingdom of God by human force. And Jesus later explained to Pilate, “My Kingdom is not of this world.” I hope you understand that theologically, “My

Kingdom is not of this world. If my Kingdom were of this world, then my servants would be fighting,” not withstanding Peter and his little put-off problem, but “my servants would be fighting.”

Even after the resurrection, the disciples were still struggling on that particular theological point because what in the book of Acts did they ask Jesus as soon as they had the opportunity to do so? Acts 1:6, “Lord, is it at this time that you are restoring the Kingdom to Israel?” We want the Kingdom right now still on our terms. And Jesus had to say, “It’s not for you to know times or epochs which the Father has fixed by his own authority but you will receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you,” here is what you need to be doing. “You shall be my witnesses both in Jerusalem, Judea, Samaria and even to the uttermost part of the earth.” In other words, and please understand this theologically, Jesus was saying, “I will take care of the final institution of the Kingdom of God and its timing. You focus on the accomplishment of the mission of the church in the meantime in this age.” And the rest of the book of Acts and the bulk of the remaining New Testament, instructs followers of Christ what it means to live for and serve the King as men and women who have been redeemed by the shed blood of Christ.

Along with, though, this corresponding and challenging corollary that we’ve been placed in a world that will progressively reject the King. Paul made it clear, “In the last days,” happy times will come? No, “In the last days perilous times will come.” That doesn’t mean that we go through life judgmentally or pessimistically but nor are we surprised when moral and spiritual conditions around us get worse as a result of a cultural rejection of the King. Frankly, proving that is like shooting theological fish in the New Testament barrel.

But here’s a couple of verses for your contemplation as you think of what’s occurring in our culture even today. 2 Peter 2:1, “But false prophets also arose among the people, just as there will also be false teachers among you, who will secretly introduce destructive heresies, even denying the Master who bought them, bringing swift destruction upon themselves.” Now hear this, “Many will follow,” what? “Their sensuality.” We don’t want to have a King over us, “Will follow their own sensuality and because of them the way of the truth will be maligned; and in their greed they will exploit you with false words; their judgment from long ago is not idle, and their destruction is not asleep.” Welcome to the world in which we live. 2 Peter 3, “Know this first of all, that in the last days mockers will come with their mocking.” So, we’re not expecting the work of God’s people to result in the establishment of the Kingdom of God in this age. Frankly, we expect the exact opposite and most cultural indicators you would want to select would appear to confirm the accuracy of that belief.

However, there is a corresponding hope, that is, the return of the King who will return with his children to establish a literal Kingdom on this earth in complete fulfillment of the Old Testament prophecies and promises that have been made but not yet consummated which is why we would read in places like the book of Revelation this affirmation that when Christ comes “on his robe and on his thigh he has a name written,

King of kings and Lord of lords.” And I can promise you, there is not going to be a vote on that.

The next chapter explains that “blessed and holy is the one who has a part in the first resurrection over these the second death has no power but they will be priests of God and of Christ and will reign with him for a thousand years in his Kingdom.” Now, you might say, “Wow, that was a lot.” Well, I haven’t been able to preach the last couple of Sundays. But all of that is to say that the challenge we face today as individuals and as a church is, what does it mean to live for the King in a culture that is clearly in the process of rejecting him just as the Scripture predicted? Friends, that is the question before the house today.

With that in mind, open your Bible, if you would, to Luke 10. That’s on page 54 of the back section of the Bible under the chair in front of you if you need it. We’re obviously in the New Testament this morning. If you’ve been in our church for over a year, you probably know what the title of today’s message is. We’re talking about: why are we here, where are we going and how do you fit in? I tried to give this message a couple of weeks ago and we had a blizzard and so we prepared a different message and put it on line and had a few services here. Then I went off to the Caribbean and did I mess you, I thought about you every minute. Now we’re back and planning to do this message and then we had the blizzard yesterday. I’m telling myself last night, “I’m not sure Jesus wants this message preached.” But you’re here, I’m here and we’re here.

Why are we here? Where are we going? How do you fit in? It’s sort of our annual state of the church discussion, I suppose, where we remind ourselves of our mission and especially think about what are the initiatives that we hope to accomplish together this year as a church family. I just probably need to tell you at this point in this discussion, I am very excited about where we are as a church, very excited about what we’re hoping to do together in the coming months and I’ll unpack this more in a few moments but I really believe we have all sorts of reasons to be very thankful for the position in which our sovereign God has placed us. As we think about: what does it mean to be a part of the answer to the prayer that he taught us to pray even in this day and age, “Thy Kingdom come. Thy will be done on earth as it is in heaven.” What does that look like in the culture in which we find ourselves?

I think this text can really help us. Luke 10, beginning in verse 1,

“1 Now after this the Lord appointed seventy others, and sent them in pairs ahead of Him to every city and place where He Himself was going to come. 2 And He was saying to them, ‘The harvest is plentiful, but the laborers are few; therefore beseech the Lord of the harvest to send out laborers into His harvest. 3 Go; behold, I send you out as lambs in the midst of wolves.’”

For sake of time, look at verse 17, how does that end,

“17 The seventy returned with joy, saying, ‘Lord, even the demons are subject to us in Your name.’ 18 And He said to them, ‘I was watching Satan fall from heaven like lightning. 19 Behold, I have given you authority to tread on serpents and scorpions, and over all the power of the enemy, and nothing will injure you. 20 Nevertheless do not rejoice in this, that the spirits are subject to you, but rejoice that your names are recorded in heaven.’”

Verse 23,

“23 Turning to the disciples, He said privately, ‘Blessed are the eyes which see the things you see, 24 for I say to you, that many prophets and kings wished to see the things which you see, and did not see them, and to hear the things which you hear, and did not hear them.’ 25 And a lawyer stood up and put Him to the test, saying, ‘Teacher, what shall I do to inherit eternal life?’”

There is a guy who is kind of full of himself, What can I do to inherit eternal life? Fine and dandy,

“26 And He said to him, ‘What is written in the Law? How does it read to you?’ 27 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.’”

He should have gone on to say, by the way, “And I realize I can’t do that on my own. I need a Savior and a Lord.”

“28 And He said to him, ‘You have answered correctly; do this and you will live.’ 29 But wishing to justify himself, he said to Jesus, ‘And who is my neighbor?’”

Let’s get the parameters down as tightly as possible if I’m going to have to inherit eternal life on that basis.

“30 Jesus replied and said, ‘A man was going down from Jerusalem to Jericho, and fell among robbers, and they stripped him and beat him, and went away leaving him half dead. 31 And by chance a priest was going down on that road, and when he saw him, he passed by on the other side. 32 Likewise a Levite also, when he came to the place and saw him, passed by on the other side. 33 But a Samaritan, who was on a journey, came upon him; and when he saw him, he felt compassion, 34 and came to him and bandaged up his wounds, pouring oil and wine on them; and he put him on his own beast, and brought him to an inn and took care of him. 35 On the next day he took out two denarii and gave them to the innkeeper and said, ‘Take care of him; and whatever more you spend, when I return

I will repay you.” 36 Which of these three do you think proved to be a neighbor to the man who fell into the robbers' hands?’ 37 And he said, ‘The one who showed mercy toward him.’ Then Jesus said to him, ‘Go and do the same.’”

38 Now as they were traveling along, He entered a village; and a woman named Martha welcomed Him into her home. 39 She had a sister called Mary, who was seated at the Lord's feet, listening to His word. 40 But Martha was distracted with all her preparations; and she came up to Him and said, ‘Lord, do You not care that my sister has left me to do all the serving alone? Then tell her to get in the kitchen.’”

By the way, if you ever hang out with Jesus, it would probably be best not to boss him around. Just kind of note to self.

“41 But the Lord answered and said to her, ‘Martha, Martha, you are worried and bothered about so many things; 42 but only one thing is necessary, for Mary has chosen the good part, which shall not be taken away from her.’”

What a great passage of Scripture. Why are we here? Where are we going? How do you fit in? And with the time we have remaining, let’s look for three principles to focus our attention and our actions as we seek to faithfully live for the King in the culture in which God has placed us. What are those principles? First of all, to rejoice in your relationship with Christ and the privilege of serving him in the harvest. I should probably pause and say that this entire discussion assumes that there has been a definite time in your life where you admitted your sin, you admitted you could not inherit eternal life and you begged Christ for forgiveness. You trusted him as your Savior and your Lord, you bowed to him as your rightful King. Paul made that point in Romans 10:9 that “if you confess with your mouth that Jesus is Lord,” King, Messiah, “and believe in your heart that God has raised him from the dead, you’ll be saved for with the heart a person believes resulting in righteousness and with the mouth he confesses resulting in salvation.” If you’ve never had a definite time in your life where you’ve trusted him, we would urge you to begin this year by placing your faith in him. But if you have chosen to become a follower of Christ and you want to submit to his Lordship in practical ways on his earth, I really believe the verses that we just read are a goldmine of information for us as individuals and certainly for us as a church.

Including this helpful reminder: that we are called to minister to men and women who are indifferent and sometimes even hostile to the King. I’m not going to take the time to illustrate the various ways our culture is choosing to rebel against our Creator God other than to say that the pace of cultural rebellion against the King and sometimes even his people, appears to be dramatically increasing and that has direct implication to the way we think about 2:14 as a church. Frankly, we do not have any time to waste on ancillary battles. That’s why it’s good for us to be reminded of our mission this morning. Our

mission is to glorify God by winning people to Jesus Christ and equipping them to be more faithful disciples.

Our former pastor, Bill Goode, used to like to say it like this: the church's job is not to clean up the city of Corinth, it's to clean up the church of Corinth. And there is a big difference between the two, meaning, we're not a political action committee and we're not trying to usher in the Kingdom of God by force of governmental law. Now, we live in a participatory democracy where there are times when it's appropriate for us to contact our elected officials or to vote appropriately, of course, we ought to do that. But not to try to usher in the Kingdom of God by force of governmental law and the more indifferent or even hostile people are to the King, the more we have to be reminded of that fact or we're going to go through life angry at the world in which we live.

Now, it's true, frequently God demonstrates his power by using one of us to influence someone to choose to follow the King, that happened in this text. This ministry team returns in Luke 10, rejoicing in the amazing ways God is using them. There is a sense in which the prayer was being answered, "Thy Kingdom come, thy will be done on earth as it is heaven." And the Lord has chosen to use many people in this church in all sorts of ways and undoubtedly will in the coming days as well but this passage puts some very important balance on that. Whenever God uses one of us, we ought to be humbled by his grace, not elevating ourselves as if we're better than somebody else by our own merit. Jesus challenged these servants, he said, "Don't rejoice in this that the spirits are subject to you, rejoice that your names are recorded in heaven." That's what ought to amaze you and it ought to amaze me.

I think, as we live in a culture that is becoming increasingly rebellious, let us redouble our efforts to remember that the only reason we're not even worse than others is because of God's amazing grace. The cross ought to remind us every day of the amazing price that had to be paid for our sin and it ought to motivate us to relate, to think about, interact with a lost and dying world with patience and love, not hatred and anger. Rejoice that your names are written in heaven and remember the great price that had to be paid to make that possible.

If that doesn't humble us, there is another point exegetically in this text that might help us. Do you realize that often God uses people who are not particularly wise or intelligent anyway so there is no question about where the glory goes. Isn't that what the passage said? Some of you are saying, "Oh, I hope that's not true." It's really true. Here it is, "At that very time He rejoiced greatly in the Holy Spirit, and said, 'I praise You, O Father, Lord of heaven and earth, that You have hidden these things from the wise and intelligent and have revealed them to infants. Yes, Father, for this way was well-pleasing in Your sight.'" And there are many places in the Bible that make that exact same point so those of us who have chosen to submit ourselves to the King should carry ourselves with humility and grace, not judgment and pride. Our position is that America is not so much a battlefield as it is a mission field and keeping that clear will help us think properly about our mission in this coming year.

Now, it's in that context, at least in the way Luke organizes these events, that a lawyer comes to Jesus and asks in verse 25 what he can do to inherit eternal life. So, Jesus takes him up. "You can ask me that question and I'll give you the answer. What is written in the law?" And the man responds correctly, "You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, all your soul, all your strength, all your mind." Jesus says, "Fine, go do that, big boy. If you really think you can do that, go do that," which was intended to encourage the man to admit that he couldn't do it on his own and, therefore, to acknowledge that he needed a Savior and a Lord but instead, he tried to justify himself.

In verse 29, he says, "Well, who is my neighbor? If I've got to do that, then let's narrow this definition down as much as possible." We're just talking about a quarter mile here, right? To which our Lord gives the marvelous parable of the Good Samaritan. Well, perhaps we could summarize it like this: learn what it means to love your neighbors. You want to talk about what it means to faithfully live for the King in a lost and dying world, is that the question before the house? Is that the assignment that we're facing this year? There is the answer: learn what it means to love your neighbors.

Now, the basic details of the story are so well known, we even have Good Samaritan laws, so I'm assuming I don't have to spend much time on the details of the text. The dilemma was an innocent man was robbed and beaten and left for dead, reminding the servants of God that it's not only they who were being sent out as lambs in the midst of wolves, that's the kind of world that many people who live around us every day, face. The curse of rebellion and sin has produced pain and suffering in epic proportions.

What's amazing is that the text doesn't dwell on the wickedness of the thieves, that's not the scandal in this text. The scandal is the two religious leaders who walk right on by without doing a thing. By chance, a priest was going down on that road and when he saw him he passed by on the other side. Likewise, a Levite passed by on the other side. Now, friends, why is that in the Bible? Why is that in the Bible? Well, here is the answer: to help every last one of us take a long hard look in the mirror because the more rebellious our world becomes, the more tempting it will be for the people of God to draw into our self-protective cocoons and justify our apathy and our indifference.

Which is why Jesus ends this story with a shock. The shock is the introduction of the Samaritan and it's important for us to understand that that part of the story had incredible important ethnic overtones. I'm not going to get into this for sake of time other than to say that the Jews hated the Samaritans. You wanted to call somebody a really bad name, call them a Samaritan. They were viewed as half-breeds; people who had no contact with God; held in contempt by the Jewish nation. People that you could count on to always do the wrong thing. And the way that Jesus set this story up, you have to picture the way the first recipients would have responded before they heard the punch line: Well, if that's the way the priest acted, walked right on by and then the Levite walked right on by, what do you think this wicked Samaritan is going to do? Probably rob him again. Probably cross the road and kick him, murder him for the fun of it. No, you have to imagine what would have happened in their heart when Jesus said, "And the Samaritan saw this man who had been robbed and he felt compassion and he came to him and bandaged up his wounds,

pouring oil and wine on them and put him on his own beast and brought him to an inn and took care of him. On the next day he took out two denarii and gave them to the innkeeper.” So, he’s investing his time, he’s investing his passion, his heart, his resources out of love.

Friends, that’s the best way I know to summarize what our church family has determined this year must be all about. Please remember, we just went through an extensive five year strategic planning process as a congregation so the initiatives that are printed in your bulletin, and I would encourage you to look at that brochure that’s in there, the colored brochure, and just look at those later on today. But those aren’t edicts from headquarters in Chicago, those are the concepts that we voted on last year that are going to guide us in this year. That’s why our annual theme is: Loving our Neighbors. That’s what we want to be all about in the next 12 months.

Now, you may remember, you say, “Loving our neighbors. What exactly does that mean?” You may remember that last year we had an annual theme as we frequently do, and we had three main emphases. Do you remember that? So, Sunday after Sunday after Sunday, I talked to you about the theme and I talked to you about the emphases because I think repetition is good. Well, we also believe in progressive sanctification, don’t we? If those three emphases of the theme served us so well, what do you think we ought to do this year? Let me speak on your behalf since I have the mic, have more emphases. So, this year when we think about loving our neighbor, we’re planning to do that in – look at that, aren’t you glad for progressive sanctification? Aren’t you glad your pastor loves you – five specific ways.

I really believe our church family nailed it this year given where we are in our church’s history, where we are in the condition of our culture, this is exactly where we ought to be focused: on loving our neighbors, being like the Good Samaritan. What do we mean by that? Here’s the first one: by implementing our soul care initiatives to achieve deeper friendships within our church family. It starts by loving our neighbors with whom we go to church. And when we talk about soul care, it’s everything we’re doing as a church family to help all of us grow closer to one another and to the Lord. Pastor Aucoin is especially leading this effort and we want to do everything in our power to be the kind of church where it’s easy to connect, it’s easy to make friends, where we have the kind of small group opportunities where some of those friendships can go deeper into the things of God, where there is mutual fellowship and accountability, where we’re doing life together. We’re loving one another.

I can unpack that in all sorts of ways but a couple of things you may want to know: part of that emphasis is that we’re going to especially work on men’s ministries this year. We’re going to work on everything but we believe, interestingly enough, we may be a bit further ahead in women’s ministries than men’s ministries. We want to be sure that we’re shoring that up too so that men in our church can be working on loving one another in the sense of having meaningful relationships that help us go deep in the things of God.

We also recognize that everybody grows differently. We're not going to be legalistic about it. Some people prefer ABFs, a few attend on the east side of town; some prefer point man groups, ladies' Bible studies' some like couples, small groups. We want to increase the number of choices on the smorgasbord but the point is, when we think about loving our neighbors, part of that is growing in our love for those we attend church with. We're going to work really hard at that this year.

Secondly, as individual church member, growing in our ability to build stronger relationships with those who live right around us. Everybody got that? Then let me say it again: growing in our ability to build stronger relationships with those who live right around us. Some, perhaps many of us, have work to do at just being a better neighbor to those who live right around us wherever that may be. Let's face it, some of us are like the priest and the Levite when it comes to the needs of our immediate neighbors. We pass right on by while the garage door went down, yet again.

We're going to be studying some great books together like this one, "The Art of Neighboring." We're going to be offering several classes in our Wednesday night Faith Community Institute to just help equip us on all of this. We're going to try to share testimonies along the way to just share best practices of who is doing what in their neighborhood that is helping us be like the Good Samaritan. The authors of this particular book said this: "What if Jesus meant that we should love our actual neighbors?" Nervous laughter noted because some of us have some work to do right there, huh? Which is why you would say right now in your heart, "I am so thankful for my pastor right now, my head is about to pop off my neck. To think about the fact that we get to work at being like the Good Samaritan actually and literally and practically this year." Are you pretty excited about that? Because our Savior can help us to it. Our Savior can help us do it.

Thirdly, as a church family, developing our parish mentality to especially serve those who live near our two ministry campuses. That's a phrase that is going to become more and more of our DNA around here: our parish. Taking responsibility for the people especially who live right around our church. Part of the scandal of the evangelical church is that many churches don't know their neighbors and neighbors don't know the people that come to the church. There is no concern for the people who live right around us and we're going to do everything – we want to win everybody to Christ. In Jerusalem, Judea, Samaria, the uttermost part of the earth but we believe we have a special responsibility to the neighborhoods right around our church and there are some very exciting things happening already and if we're serious about loving our neighbors, then part of that is loving those who live right around us.

Fourthly, I'm so fired up about this: launching our Faith Community Development Corporation to serve urban neighborhoods with excellence. The City of Lafayette came to us last year and they said they had quite a bit of Federal funding available to revitalize some of the worst homes in our urban areas downtown but the city cannot use that money directly, they have to find a non-profit partner who will lead that effort of revitalizing homes and streets in our community and they asked us to be that non-profit partner. So, we have now organized a 501c3, a separate corporation that is part of our church. It's

called Faith Community Development Corporation; that board is active; we have already purchased our first home. You say, "Well, can I see it?" Yeah, there it is right there. You say, "That's ugly." That's the point. We're not flipping here, we're buying the worst houses on the worst streets and then we're revitalizing them. We're bringing them back up to the appropriate standards starting with that dude with the sledgehammer.

Then, the second piece of this program is that we have the ability to select low or moderate income persons who can move into that home which is now a beautiful home on that street and that person can choose to just start loving their neighbors. As we have the opportunity to get to know those who live around those homes that we've purchased and revitalized, as we learn of additional needs, we can work together with the homeowner associations and the people who live on those blocks and seek to be a blessing in those places. We hope over a period of time, the city wants us to get to the place where we're doing 10 of those houses a year. Multiply that by 15 years, 150 homes in our 26 urban neighborhoods, that can make a dramatic difference for Christ and we're hoping that some of these streets are so improved that the neighbors look around and say the King came, Jesus came. Jesus loves us and this is a better place to live as a result of the love of the people of God who didn't pass right on by the way on their way from the east side to Purdue. Really, essentially, we've bookended our community with two suburban campuses and now we're seeking to marshal suburban resources to meet urban need. I really do believe that we can have a great impact and I am so very excited about that.

Then, lastly, by constructing the first phase of our senior living community. We had a great meeting on Friday. If you happen to know one of our county commissioners, Tom Murtagh, you might want to thank him for his effort because we're a strange zoning beast, I get that. A church is doing a senior living community, what do you even do with that? Tom Murtagh was very, very helpful to us. When we think it's possible that we could begin construction of homes for senior citizens on this site this summer and we are fired up about that because we live in a culture that looks at senior citizens as throw-aways. We don't have any time for them. We want to scream the message around here, we love them just like we love everyone else. Friends, we may get that done yet this year. In other words, we want to relate to our culture like Good Samaritans, loving our neighbors.

One more thing: it's interesting in the organization at least in the way Luke tells this, that he ends with this little vignette about Mary and Martha. That will help us to always keep the main thing the main thing because you might say, "Wow, we are going to be busy!" Well, we're not going to be Martha-like busy; we're not going to get involved in all this and then grump at Jesus. "You don't care that she's not serving." No, we're going to be like Mary, we're going to start at the feet of the Savior and it's going to be out of our love for him and our amazement at his grace that we seek to learn how to love our neighbors well.

Hey, do you think there's a place for you in all that? Absolutely and Lord willing, a year from now, we will be able to say that we loved God more and that we've learned to

practically love our neighbors better. We're talking about living for the King in a challenging time by loving our neighbors well.

Let's stand together for prayer, shall we?

Father in heaven, thank you for the opportunity to study your word and, Lord, I pray that you would help each one of us learn this year what it means to love our neighbors more. We pray this in Christ's name. Amen.