

Looking for Strength in All the Wrong Places

Building Core Strength

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Bible Text: Luke 10:1-42

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Well, have you ever thought you were in the right place, but it turned out you weren't? Has that ever happened to you? I spent a lot of summers while I was working my way through school in the suburbs around Chicago and it generally took us about a week to build an in ground pool and then we were off to the next location so you had to learn the location of the various restaurants quickly. And I found out I really liked Chicago style hot dogs. Am I the only one here like that? I didn't think so. And they had all kinds of places up there that specialized in hot dogs. In fact, some of them were even called dog houses.

So after we moved here to Lafayette one Saturday I am running around and started getting hungry and just had a taste for one of those hot dogs. You know the sensation, right, where you just need a certain kind of food and you need it right away or you might expire. I mean, you just have to have it. So I am thinking, ok, where can I get a good hot dog in this town? And I remembered seeing a place called Trisha's Dog House. And I thought that is perfect, not very far away at all. In fact, I mentally congratulated myself for being able to identify the problem, the extreme need for a good hot dog coupled with a mind like a steel trap that remembered that there was such a restaurant and I could quickly navigate myself over there.

So I actually walked inside the place. And then the odor immediately told me I was in the wrong place, because Trisha's dog house, well, I am sure it is a very fine establishment, it is not a restaurant that serves gourmet hot dogs. It is apparently some kind of kennel.

There were dogs everywhere, but not ones interested in being eaten on that particular day. And I don't even remember exactly how I backed myself out of that building, but I was definitely looking for hot dogs in all the wrong places. There you have it.

Sometimes that happens on your phone where you think you are calling the right number, but you have made some sort of a mistake. Am I the only person in the room who has done that I was looking for someone in the wrong place on my phone.

Did you hear about the poor fellow right up the road here in Attica? Sixty one year old man who was trying to set up a drug deal, but apparently he called someone's cell phone earlier and offered to sell him drugs and that guy didn't call him back, so he sold those drugs to somebody else. But then he got some more drugs. So he called who he thought was the first guy again. And said, "Hey, you never called me back, so I sold those drugs to somebody else. But now I have some more. Call me and we will set up a place to meet so you can buy these new drugs from me."

What he didn't realize was he was calling the Attica chief of police. Now this was at seven o'clock Thursday a week ago in the evening. And the chief of police thinks this has to be a crank call. I mean this has to be a crank call, but he went ahead and set up the drug deal and sent two of his officers over and sure enough the guy was there and they arrested him for dealing drugs.

That is called having a really bad day. Do you realize that? Some wrong numbers are worse than others.

In case, by the way, you are trying to keep track of the life lessons here, so far we have learned that if you want a gourmet hot dog, don't go to a kennel. And if you want to sell drugs, don't call the chief of police. Are you getting all this down? Glad you came to the church house.

Why am I actually raising the subject this morning? It is because if we are not careful, we can look in the wrong places to find our strength. That is right. That mistake can eventually be crippling to our long term walk with Christ.

With that in mind I want to invite you to open your Bible this morning to Luke chapter 10 and that is on page 50 of the back section of the Bible under the chair in front of you.

If you have been attending our church now for a period of time, you know our theme this year is building core strength. That is what we are all about. We are trying to get stronger at the level of the core, at the level of the heart, which is why we keep going back to this key theme verse, Psalm 138:3.

"On the day I called, You answered me; You made me bold with strength in my soul."¹

And we want that to be true and be coming truer of us individually and as a church, building core strength.

"You made me bold with strength in my soul."²

Now, we have over week after week talked about the fact that we are trying to emphasize this in three particular ways this year. We are not just talking about this. We are trying to actually make it happen. And one of them is suring up foundational areas in our walk

¹ Psalm 138:3.

² Ibid.

with Christ and our church ministry as it comprise the basis of godliness and effective community service. So I hope everybody here can point the way since you believe you are becoming stronger in your heart and you are becoming closer in your walk with the Lord. And we are trying to find all sorts of ways as a church family to help you grow and to help you get to a better place. Not just the fundamentals. If we don't have that in place we are really in trouble. And then thinking about that from a corporate perspective, all that God is laying out for us in terms of opportunity just right here in our neighborhood, well, if we are not strong at the level of the heart, at the level of the core, we are going to leave all sorts of resources on the table and we are going to miss all sorts of opportunities and some, because of what God is doing just right in this neighborhood, the opportunities that are there, we want to be sure we are building core strength so we are able to seize those opportunities well. There is a lot of it. We just kind of hit that tab. I am not going to, but if we hit that tab and just open up it right now, there is a lot of things that are happening at that level of our church just to try to be sure that all of that is in place.

And then, secondly, building for strength, planning and praying for the construction of Faith West and the successful launch of that cluster of new ministries over in West Lafayette. A lot of good things are happening there, but it is requiring strength and a lot of men and women have risen up to the challenge, some anticipated, some not. But God is helping us to become stronger and I thank the Lord for that and we are not quite to the place where we are going to announce the ground breaking, but we are getting close. Pray for us in the next couple of weeks especially, some very important conversations and meetings are taking place and decisions are being made and finalized and it requires strength. And if we are able to do that, we are able to launch that ministry, we are going to have to be strong. So we want to build core strength there.

And then, thirdly, preparing for the next round of ministry dreaming. Once we get that project out of the ground, starting in January, officially, I hope you are praying about this and thinking about it already that throws us into a new strategic planning process for the next five years. We are going to be working together as a church family. You have to be strong in the level of the heart in order to be sure that we are being good stewards of all that God has entrusted to us here.

So that is a theme that we are not just putting on the side of the bulletin and forgetting about. That really drives us and all sorts of ways day after day and week after week.

Now these verses before us this morning are fascinating, because Jesus is about to send out a larger group of people to serve him, kind of like us. Now, remember, he has been talking very specifically now in these last several chapters about his impending death, burial and resurrection. And so as a result of that there is a clear transition being made from Jesus ministering to people teaching them and ministering to their needs. Then the transition to the 12 disciples being sent out to teach and to minister to he needs of people now to a group of 70 others who were called to do very similar things.

What we are going to see this morning is a series of three interactions all of which have a central statement or a central question that helps these individuals and hopefully helps us avoid the tendency of looking for strength in all the wrong places. Let's look of these three key interactions, Luke chapter 10 beginning in verse one.

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. 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. Go; behold, I send you out as lambs in the midst of wolves. Carry no money belt, no bag, no shoes; and greet no one on the way. Whatever house you enter, first say, 'Peace be to this house.' If a man of peace is there, your peace will rest on him; but if not, it will return to you. Stay in that house, eating and drinking what they give you; for the laborer is worthy of his wages. Do not keep moving from house to house. Whatever city you enter and they receive you, eat what is set before you; and heal those in it who are sick, and say to them, 'The kingdom of God has come near to you.' But whatever city you enter and they do not receive you, go out into its streets and say, 'Even the dust of your city which clings to our feet we wipe off in protest against you; yet be sure of this, that the kingdom of God has come near.' I say to you, it will be more tolerable in that day for Sodom than for that city. Woe to you, Chorazin! Woe to you, Bethsaida! For if the miracles had been performed in Tyre and Sidon which occurred in you, they would have repented long ago, sitting in sackcloth and ashes. But it will be more tolerable for Tyre and Sidon in the judgment than for you. And you, Capernaum, will not be exalted to heaven, will you? You will be brought down to Hades! The one who listens to you listens to Me, and the one who rejects you rejects Me; and he who rejects Me rejects the One who sent Me."

The seventy returned with joy, saying, "Lord, even the demons are subject to us in Your name."

And He said to them, "I was watching Satan fall from heaven like lightning. 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. Nevertheless do not rejoice in this, that the spirits are subject to you, but rejoice that your names are recorded in heaven."

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. All things have been handed over to Me by My Father, and no one knows who the Son is except the Father, and who the Father is except the Son, and anyone to whom the Son wills to reveal Him."

Turning to the disciples, He said privately, "Blessed are the eyes which see the things you see, 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."³

Now second vignette. Again, if you are in the habit of writing in your Bible, this is the second key verse in this passage.

And a lawyer stood up and put Him to the test, saying, "Teacher, what shall I do to inherit eternal life?"

And He said to him, "What is written in the Law? How does it read to you?"

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."

And He said to him, "You have answered correctly; DO THIS AND YOU WILL LIVE."

But wishing to justify himself, he said to Jesus, "And who is my neighbor?"

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. And 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 also, when he came to the place and saw him, passed by on the other side. But a Samaritan, who was on a journey, came upon him; and when he saw him, he felt compassion, 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. 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.' Which of these three do you think proved to be a neighbor to the man who fell into the robbers' hands?"

And he said, "The one who showed mercy toward him."⁴

It would have been great if the man would have also said, "And there is no way I could

³ Luke 10:1-24.

⁴ Luke 10:25-37.

be like that on my own strength. I am certainly not going to trust my ability to do that," but that was not where he was coming from.

"Then Jesus said to him, 'Go and do the same.'"⁵

Third vignette.

Now as they were traveling along, He entered a village; and a woman named Martha welcomed Him into her home. She had a sister called Mary, who was seated at the Lord's feet, listening to His word. 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 help me."

But the Lord answered and said to her, "Martha, Martha, you are worried and bothered about so many things; but only one thing is necessary, for Mary has chosen the good part, which shall not be taken away from her."⁶

We are talking this morning about looking for strength in all the wrong places. And with the time we have remaining, let's talk about three wrong places to find your strength. I hope you and I would never try to find our ultimate strength in either of these three places that are mentioned in these vignettes in the gospel of Luke.

First of all, in your own accomplishments. As we mentioned before, we read the passage, there is a clear ministry progression taking place now. We started with Jesus teaching and meeting needs himself. That was in Luke chapter four through chapter eight. And then as he started ... or began talking more about his death, burial and resurrection, there was a transition, as I said, from Christ doing that to the 12 disciples being sent out to do the very same thing. And now in this chapter the 70 sent out to teach and to meet needs. That is what we read in verse one, a transition in this entire gospel.

"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."⁷

Really important lesson there about how God chooses to accomplish his work. On purpose he operates on the principle of multiplication and where common ordinary members of the church are equipped to use their gifts and abilities in service for Christ. They were going to entrust the 12—and you know what they were like—and now we are going to entrust the 70, the principle of multiplication. And in this world that worships the superstars and worships the idols, isn't it refreshing to watch the way God chooses to do his work with just common ordinary people like you and me? That is why Paul would later tell Timothy:

⁵ Luke 10:37.

⁶ Luke 10:38-42.

⁷ Luke 10:1.

“The things which you have heard from me in the presence of many witnesses, entrust these to faithful men who will be able to teach others also.”⁸

A very simple, yet powerful formula and we are watching it unfold right before our eyes in the gospel of Luke.

Now something else about the way God equips people to do his work. He is very open about the ministry challenges. He is practicing full disclosure here for sure in part by talking about the scarcity of workers.

“The harvest is plentiful, but the laborers are few; therefore beseech the Lord of the harvest to send out laborers into His harvest.”⁹

And you could choose, I suppose, to look at that one of two ways. One, look at how scarce the workers are, or, two, look at how great the harvest is. And there is truth in both sides of that equation. But based on what is about to happen, we could certainly be thankful for the great number and potential opportunities to make an eternal difference in somebody else’s life. If we are trusting in the right source for our strength, you can have a significant difference in somebody else’s life for all eternity. That is why I am so glad for the man men and women who this past week gave up an entire week of your life to serve in vacation Bible school. Thank you so much for doing that and I realize you did that not because you were kind of bored and looking for a little something to do with your time. I realize that many of the men and women who were serving this past week, you had all your other responsibilities. So you were busy at work an busy with your family and everything else that goes along with your already activity filled life and yet you still carved out that time and I realize many of you might be tired right now because those young people that you were chasing around this week are a whole lot younger and have a whole lot more energy than you do. So I understand some people might need a nap more than the need a sermon. But why is that? Well, in part it is because of your belief in your heart that the harvest really is plenteous and you believe that spiritual work can be accomplished in a ministry just like that. You are glad that God would answer the prayer and pray, therefore the Lord of the harvest and he answered it on this particular day in Luke 10 and he answered it the lives of all the people who served in that important ministry here this past week.

Now another challenge was the need to trust Christ for provision and for sustenance. This was a hard job he was sending them out to do. In fact, he said:

“Go; behold, I send you out as lambs in the midst of wolves.”¹⁰

Well, that will sober you up in a hurry, huh? Here is the assignment. I am sending you out as a lamb in the midst of wolves. Well, if everybody was already a lamb of God there would be no need for ministry, huh? There is a sense in which that part of the story ought

⁸ 2 Timothy 2:2.

⁹ Luke 10:2.

¹⁰ Luke 10:3.

to make us more enthusiastic of the things of God, even though it sobers us up as well, but Jesus also says, “I will provide.”

“Carry no money belt, no bag, no shoes; and greet no one on the way.”¹¹

“I will give you everything that you need,” which means these people who were deciding to serve God the way he called them to, they were putting themselves in a significant position of trust. I am going to trust God to bless and I am going to trust God to provide. He is going to be the source of my strength.

Unlike that guy last week, do you remember, if you were here? The guy who said, “I will follow you as soon as I bury my father.” And we talked about how what probably was happening there was the man’s father had not even died yet and what this potential disciple of Christ was saying was, “As soon as my father dies and as soon as we have the funeral and especially as soon as I collect my inheritance and therefore am independently wealthy, then I will follow you, Christ, because I really don’t have to trust you at that point, because all of my needs are going to be met. And even if you are not who you say you are, I am still going to be fine, because I am trusting in myself and looking for strength in the wrong place.” That guy, not these 70. These are individuals who are being at least called upon to find their source strength in Christ himself even though that would be hard.

Here is another part of the ministry challenge. It was the surety of judgment for those who reject the message. These are some hard verses. Luke 10 beginning in verse 10.

But whatever city you enter and they do not receive you, go out into its streets and say, Even the dust of your city which clings to our feet we wipe off in protest against you; yet be sure of this, that the kingdom of God has come near. I say to you, it will be more tolerable in that day for Sodom than for that city. Woe to you, Chorazin! Woe to you, Bethsaida! For if the miracles had been performed in Tyre and Sidon which occurred in you, they would have repented long ago, sitting in sackcloth and ashes.¹²

The one who listens to you, Jesus later said, listens to me and the one who rejects you, rejects me. And he who rejects me, rejects the one who sent me. And Jesus is making it clear when it comes to this matter of the kingdom of God being near, at some point a personal decision has to be made by every person who hears the message. That is why last week when we talked about James and John and their response to the persons in Samaria who would not show hospitality to Christ, remember what their proposed solution was? Let me call down fire from heaven, they said. And Jesus said, “You don’t even know of what spirit you are of.” Why? Apparently because the people who had rejected showing hospitality to them, they hadn’t even heard the message of Christ yet. They were rejecting Christ.

¹¹ Luke 10:4.

¹² Luke 10:10-13.

Remember the text said solely on the basis of the fact that he was on his way to Jerusalem and because the Samaritans hated the Jews, therefore they were going to reject somebody simply because he was on his way to Jerusalem and Jesus said, "Listen. You don't know what spirit you are of." But I pointed out last week that doesn't mean that there is never a place for judgment, because we have said, we knew these verses were coming. There is a place for judgment for those who reject the message that Christ has called on us to proclaim.

You can imagine these 70 servants hearing this and concluding what Christ is calling us to here is serious. There is a heaven to be gained and there is a hell to be shunned. So they had to decide were they going to take this responsibility? And they did. The text says they went out and by God's grace it actually went well. They had great success.

"The seventy returned with joy, saying, 'Lord, even the demons are subject to us in Your name.'"¹³

And the Lord agrees. That is right. You were involved in a spiritual battle for sure and by my power you overcame.

"I was watching Satan fall from heaven like lightning. 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."¹⁴

But what he says next is the crux of this particular part of the story, because when you see that word in verse 20, the verse I encouraged you to circle in your Bible if you are in the habit of doing that:

"Nevertheless do not rejoice in this."¹⁵

Don't find your source of strength there, that the spirits are subject to you. But instead:

"...rejoice that your names are recorded in heaven."¹⁶

Now what is the point of that? You have to get the point. When it comes to thinking about your ultimate source of strength moving forward, don't try to buy a hot dog at a kennel. And don't arrange a drug deal with the chief of police. And don't look for your strength in all the wrong places. See? There is nothing wrong with your accomplishments. That is the point here. Nothing wrong with your accomplishments. In fact, Jesus had called them to that and gave them the power to have them. But there is something far better than any of our accomplishments, whether we are talking about what happened to the 70, whether we are talking about what happened last week in vacation Bible school, whether we are talking what might happen with... blah, blah, blah.

¹³ Luke 10:17.

¹⁴ Luke 10:18-19.

¹⁵ Luke 10:20.

¹⁶ Ibid.

There is something far better than all of our accomplishments and that is the fact that you have been saved by grace alone through faith alone in Christ alone in this case, in what Christ was about to do for them on the cross.

That is why Paul told Titus:

“He saved us, not on the basis of deeds which we have done in righteousness.”¹⁷

Before or after our salvation do we all have that? If we are finding our ultimate source of strength in our accomplishments, we are setting ourselves up for failure.

He saved us, not on the basis of deeds which we have done in righteousness, but according to His mercy, by the washing of regeneration and renewing by the Holy Spirit, whom He poured out upon us richly through Jesus Christ our Savior, so that being justified by His grace we would be made heirs according to the hope of eternal life.¹⁸

Now why is it so important for us to remember that either as individuals or as a church that our ultimate source of strength is not our own accomplishments? Why is that so important? One is it is because the security of our salvation can never be taken away. See, if you are fine in your strength, if you are rejoicing in the fact that your name is written down in heaven, the great news is that can never be taken away. The Bible could not be clearer about that in places like John 10 where if you had a definite time in your life where you trusted Christ, you didn't reject the message like we read about earlier, but you have had a definite point in your life where you have trusted Christ and Jesus said in John 10 that you are now in the hand of Christ and you are in the hand of God the Father. That is a really secure place to be. Paul said in Ephesians one and Ephesians four you are sealed. You say what is the Holy Spirit doing? You are sealed with the Holy Spirit of God and in chapter four verse 30 you are sealed with the Holy Spirit until the day of redemption. That is something to find your strength in every day. That is something to rejoice in every day that can never be taken away, whereas understand this, ministry accomplishments might be. Is that right? If you are finding your ultimate source of strength in the fact that somebody is doing better and you serve them or something is going well and you are involved in it, that kind of accomplishment might be taken away.

You may be working with someone and it would appear that that person has really trusted Christ and they are really heading the right way and if you are not careful your joy, sometimes our pride, might be wrapped up in how well that individual is doing. That is a very dangerous place in which to find your strength. And that is a very dangerous place in which to find your ultimate joy. Why? Because you never know if that person is going to continue to do well. It may be determined down the line that that person never really knew Christ. And as a result their life is not working out the truth of their salvation. And

¹⁷ Titus 3:5.

¹⁸ Titus 3:5-7.

if your joy was dependent on somebody else that you were trying to help heading in the right direction, you are setting yourself up for disappointment and failure.

But if you are rejoicing, you are finding your strength in the fact that your name is written in the book of life, it could never be taken away.

Also this. Serving God doesn't always result in immediate accomplishment humanly speaking. Some people are called to being to break up hardened ground. And it may be years before you see any tangible result in the live of that child. Do you realize that? It may be years before you see any tangible result in the workplace that God has called you to serve. It may be years before God does anything in that neighborhood with your extended family, et cetera, et cetera, et cetera. Some people are called upon simply to break up the hardened ground. And if your ultimate source of strength is all about accomplishment, you are setting yourself up for a disappointment.

Also this. If we will rejoice most of all, if we will find our source of strength most of all in the fact that our names have been written in the book of life, that produces humility, doesn't it? Because if my name or if your name is written in the book of life based upon what we have just studied, it is because of what? How wonderful a fellow I am? Was there some day where God said, "You know, that Steve, he just made the team. He just made the grade. He is such a wonderful person"? I don't think so. How about for you? If your name is written in the Lamb's book of life, it is only because of God's mercy.

It is only because of God's grace. No question about that. And that keeps us humble in light of accomplishments. And, listen. There were some great things that were accomplished last week in vacation Bible school. Praise God for that. Absolutely. Praise. It would be wrong for us to minimize that. But where we find our strength more than that is the amazement that God would ever choose to use is in that way. And it is just like if we are able to bring these last details together for Faith West and if we are able to talk about some sort of a ground breaking in the next several weeks, et cetera, et cetera, what I really like is I don't have any concern at all that there is going to be a bunch of faith people strutting around over there as if we are all that and a bag of chips. No, if we are able to get to the place where we can do that ground breaking over there on Northwestern Avenue, I think I can speak for all of us corporately, we are going to have nothing other than amazement in our hearts that God gave us the privilege, first and foremost, to be in the book of life and, secondly, to work together in order to accomplish that additional opportunity for ministry. But hopefully it will be done in a humble fashion, because we are not finding our strength in the wrong place, our accomplishments.

Now here is a second wrong place to find your strength. It is your ability. Now we love the parable of the good Samaritan, right? And if you didn't know anything else about this chapter that I just read to you, surely you know the parable of the good Samaritan, but here is what I want to point out. Regrettably, frequently we don't consider a passage like that in its context. This parable was given for a reason. Let's back up and think about what that reason was. It started with this lawyer's question.

“And a lawyer stood up and put Him to the test, saying, ‘Teacher, what shall I do to inherit eternal life?’”¹⁹

Which is exactly the wrong question. Do we all get that? If what I just said a moment ago is true that we are saved by grace alone through faith alone in Christ alone, by repenting and admitting our need for a Savior, then it would be impossible for us to earn eternal life, to inherit eternal life on our own. It is the wrong question. But interestingly enough, Christ was frequently asked that very question. In fact, kind of hold your brain in Luke 10 for a moment and think about this additional example of how that exact same question was asked, because I want you to see that Jesus often answered it in a similar fashion.

Here is Mark 10, different guy, different day.

“As He was setting out on a journey, a man ran up to Him and knelt before Him, and asked Him, ‘Good Teacher, what shall I do to inherit eternal life?’”²⁰

And on that occasion—I can’t go through all the verses—but Jesus answered in a very similar way. He pointed this man, whom we later refer to as the rich young ruler, to the law with the intent that the man would realize, “I can’t keep the law on my own merit and strength. Therefore I need a Savior.”

But the rich young ruler said amazingly:

“Teacher, I have kept all these things from my youth up.”²¹

Seriously? The law has had no more effect on you than to make you proud? Which is why Jesus said to him, “Well, fine.”

“One thing you lack: go and sell all you possess and give to the poor, and you will have treasure in heaven; and come, follow Me.”²²

And the point was... you say, “Why did Jesus say that?” The point was that if you sell all your possessions then you are going to be able to inherit eternal life. Jesus was trying to let the law help this man see the covetousness of his own heart, which is why sadly the passage ends up like this, with those words:

“... he was saddened, and he went away grieving, for he was one who owned much property.”²³

¹⁹ Luke 10:25.

²⁰ Mark 10:17.

²¹ Mark 10:20.

²² Luke 10:21.

²³ Mark 10:22.

And the point is when a person asks what he can do to inherit eternal life, they need to be pointed to the law, not because a person can save himself by keeping the law, but because the law was intended to reveal our sin and our subsequent need of a Savior. That is why the apostle Paul referred to the law as our school master pointing us to Christ.

Now take all that back to Luke 10. I was afraid if I didn't get that in there that this whole parable might be confusing. Take it back to Luke 10. When this man said, "What can I do to inherit eternal life?" Jesus said, "Well, what is written in the law?" And the lawyer said, "Well, what is written in the law is I am supposed to love the Lord my God with all my heart, soul, mind and strength and love my neighbor as myself."

And so Jesus says, "Well, fine. You answered correctly. Do this..." And the anticipated response was, "Well, I can't. I need a Savior."

But the lawyer said, "Well, if that is the case, if I have to do that, who is my neighbor?"

In other words, I don't want to have to love anybody with all my heart, soul, mind and strength any more than I absolutely have to. So tell me the boundaries. Are we talking about my next door neighbor? Are we talking about everybody on my street? What do we... if I have to earn my way to heaven, if that is the way it works and I think I can inherit eternal life, tell me how broadly this has to go," which is why Jesus gave that great story of the good Samaritan where this man is going down from Jerusalem to Jericho and he falls among robbers and he is beaten and robbed and left for dead. And the priest goes by and he does nothing. And the principle is: Hey, Mr. Lawyer, if the priest behaved that way, do you think you would have done any better? And then just to be sure the point is unmistakable. A Levite does exactly the same thing. The point being: Mr. Lawyer, do you still believe you could earn eternal life on your own merit? Do you really think you would have done any differently if you had been there? Do you really want to know who your neighbor is?

And, of course, the kicker is a third man comes along and treats the man with grace and mercy and he is a what? A Samaritan. The point being the only way a Samaritan would have ever behaved that way in a way that we all know is good is if he had had a transformational relationship with Jesus Christ as Savior and Lord. Just like the woman at the well had in John chapter four. And the intent of Jesus' parable of the good Samaritan was to help this lawyer understand. You could never behave in a way that is good like the Samaritan unless, first, you have admitted your need and you have placed your faith and trust in Christ.

And Jesus said, "Go and do likewise," and the best response would have been, "Lord, I can't apart from a personal relationship with you." And the big headline is: Just like you can't find strength in your own accomplishments, 70 who just had a great ministry tour, you also can't find strength in your own abilities, lawyer who thinks you can earn your way to heaven. Don't find your strength there.

That is why wise people spend less time scheming and more time praying and less time fretting and more time studying the Word and less time planning revenge and more time seeking godly counsel. And if we don't when we get ourselves in a jam, we end up sounding just like this lawyer. What can I do to inherit eternal life? What can I do to figure this out on my own? What can I do to work myself out of this jam?

And this isn't just some sort of a Bible study. We have all been there even this week where we were in a situation where somebody frustrated us or somebody disappointed us or somebody honked us off or whatever and at that very moment you had to decide. What is your source of strength going to be? How are you going to respond? And for many of us we default just like this attorney did, to our own ability. How can I figure this out?

The Word of God is trying to help us say we ought to be running to the Savior for our strength. Just like the psalmist:

“Blessed be the LORD, Because He has heard the voice of my supplication.”²⁴

Here it is. Can you say this?

“The LORD is my strength and my shield; My heart trusts in Him, and I am helped.”²⁵

And I hope that is becoming more true of you as an individual. I hope that is becoming more true of us as a church family. That is part of what it means to have core strength.

So don't look for strength in your accomplishments. Don't look for strength in your abilities. And, lastly, don't look for it in your activities. Now keep in mind that Luke is telling each one of these stories to his friend Theophilus. Luke is wanting him to become a follower of Christ just like these 70 who are being sent out in this passage. And he wants his friend to understand the gospel. This is far different than legalistic religion that expects you to earn your way to God in some sort of self centered fashion and then find your strength in something that you bring to the table. All throughout, I mean, written throughout this entire text is focusing on Christ, finding your strength in your Savior. And that is what Mary is doing in this text. She had a sister called Mary who was seated at the Lord's feet listening to his word.

See, Mary understood something that these 70 servants apparently didn't and the self righteous lawyer didn't. The most important source of strength was at the Savior's feet listening to his Word. And we could all picture this, can't we? Because we have all been there scurrying around with all our preparations.

And, by the way, preparations aren't bad. I mean, I hope somebody over at our house sometime today is going to be preparing for a little lunch. I mean, preparations are not all bad, but it is certainly possible to become so focused on the activities that we neglect the Savior. And Martha makes this outrageous complaint.

²⁴ Psalm 28:6.

²⁵ Psalm 28:7.

“Lord, do You not care that my sister has left me to do all the serving alone? Then tell her to help me.”²⁶

It is almost humorous, isn't it? If it didn't hit so close to home. Martha was distracted with all her preparations, trying to find her strength and her satisfaction in her activities.

“But the Lord answered and said to her, ‘Martha, Martha...’”²⁷

And I wonder if he were going to speak audibly to us today how many of our names he could put in that same way.

“Martha, Martha, you are worried and bothered about so many things; but only one thing is necessary.”²⁸

So today is all about not looking in the wrong places. We got that? And so don't look for a gourmet hot dog in a kennel. Did we learn that lesson? And don't try to sell drugs to the chief of police. In fact, I guess, technically, since I don't want to get a bunch of emails about this, don't try to sell drugs anywhere, ok? Don't try to find strength in your accomplishments or your abilities or your activities. Let's be like the psalmist.

“The LORD is my strength and my shield; My heart trusts in Him, and I am helped.”²⁹

Dustin, would you come and close us in prayer so I can get over to my other place?
Thank you.

²⁶ Luke 10:40.

²⁷ Luke 10:41.

²⁸ Luke 10:41-42.

²⁹ Psalm 28:7.