

THIRTEENTH SUNDAY AFTER TRINITY.

LUKE 10:23-37. K.J.V

Contents:

How Christ praises the time of the gospel; preaches on truly good works; and how the kingdom of Christ is represented here in a beautiful picture.

Luke 10:23-37

And he turned him unto his disciples, and said privately, Blessed are the eyes which see the things that ye see: For I tell you, that many prophets and kings have desired to see those things which ye see, and have not seen them; and to hear those things which ye hear, and have not heard them. And, behold, a certain lawyer stood up, and tempted him, saying, Master, what shall I do to inherit eternal life? He said unto him, What is written in the law? how readest thou? And he answering said, Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy strength, and with all thy mind; and thy neighbour as thyself. And he said unto him, Thou hast answered right: this do, and thou shalt live. But he, willing to justify himself, said unto Jesus, And who is my neighbour? And Jesus answering said, A certain man went down from Jerusalem to Jericho, and fell among thieves, which stripped him of his raiment, and wounded him, and departed, leaving him half dead. And by chance there came down a certain priest that way: and when he saw him, he passed by on the other side. And likewise a Levite, when he was at the place, came and looked on him, and passed by on the other side. But a certain Samaritan, as he journeyed, came where he was: and when he saw him, he had compassion on him. And went to him, and bound up his wounds, pouring in oil and wine, and set him on his own beast, and brought him to an inn, and took care of him. And on the morrow when he departed, he took out two pence, and gave them to the host, and said

unto him, Take care of him; and whatsoever thou spendest more, when I come again, I will repay thee.36. Which now of these three, thinkest thou, was neighbour unto him that fell among the thieves? And he said, He that shewed mercy on him. Then said Jesus unto him, Go, and do thou likewise.

I. HOW CHRIST PRAISES THE DISPENSATION OF THE GOSPEL

1. This Pericope contains especially three lessons. First, that Christ praises the time when the Gospel was revealed and published, which is rightly and justly called the time of grace. Secondly, what truly good works are according to the command of God, which he pictures by the beautiful example or history of the Samaritan 's actions to the one wounded by robbers. In the same history he sets forth as in a loving picture the third lesson, a portrayal of the kingdom of Christ, or of grace, which the preaching of the Gospel makes known. The first lesson is given in these words: *“Blessed are the eyes which see the things that ye see: for I say unto you, that many prophets and kings desired to see the things which ye see, and saw them not; and to hear the things which ye hear, and heard them not.”*

2. The Evangelist says Christ spoke these words especially to his disciples, and just at the time when he was greatly moved with joy in his soul or with spiritual delight, and therefore he thanked and praised his heavenly Father from his heart for the revelation of the Gospel. Here we see that he was especially anxious to speak thus with his disciples, since their own salvation also depended upon that revelation. And such words are nothing more than praise of the Gospel, that they lived in the time (and now hear and see) of the revelation of the Gospel, which brings to the world deliverance and salvation from sin and all misery. And of this time or revelation the beloved prophets formerly prophesied in a glorious manner, and they longed and cried for it beyond measure in their very souls, as is manifest especially in the Psalms and in the Prophecy of Isaiah. Therefore, you are blessed and more than blessed; for you enjoy now the truly golden year, the pure kingdom of grace and the blessed time; therefore only see to it that you retain it and make good use of it.

3. For such praise is true admonition, yea, an earnest discourse of lamentation; for he exhorts to thanksgiving for such grace. And on the other hand he laments over the great ingratitude of the world, that there are so few people who know and receive this, while so many despise it, therefore he says Christ turned especially to the disciples and praised them; as if he wished to say: Yes, your eyes and ears are indeed blessed, which see and hear this; for, alas! on the other hand there are many eyes and ears that do not wish to see

or hear it, although they have it right before their eyes and ears. Christ thus shows however great and superabundant the treasure is and however comforting the preaching of it may be, yet among the great mass of people it is only despised and persecuted.

4. And now the times are changing, since the beloved fathers and prophets in their day would have given their body and life had they been able to live to see it, and had they experienced it their hearts would have blossomed to fruit in their bodies because of joy and they would have thought they were walking where there were only roses. As the pious, aged Simeon, Luke 2:28f., embraced in his arms the Savior while he as an infant could not yet speak nor walk, and with all joy entrusted his life to him, and no longer cared for this life nor for anything in it. Dear mother Eve also, Genesis 4:1, earnestly prayed and longed for this salvation, and was glad when God gave her a firstborn son; for she thought he would be the Savior; but when her hope in him failed, she longed still more for it. And later the hearts of all the fathers clung to and sighed for the same deliverer until he came and permitted himself to be seen and heard. Then the whole world should have received him at once with all joy and gloried in being saved; just as he himself praises this grace.

5. Joyfully and with his whole heart aglow pious David thanks God when he heard the first time from the Prophet Nathan God's promise, Samuel 7:12f., that he would establish not only a dynasty and a permanent kingdom with his descendants; but also that he would let Christ be born of his body and thus he would found an eternal kingdom of his grace and mercy. And because of this' his great joy he did not know what he should say before God and how he should thank him, and hence he composed so many beautiful Psalms about it, especially the 89, and besides in his last words and testament he praises this kindness in the highest manner and says: "He hath made with me an everlasting covenant; ordered in all things and sure: for it is all my salvation and all my desire," etc. 2 Samuel 23:1. But now the dear, blessed time has come, and there is a change, I say, so that people live and appear who wish neither to see nor to hear, neither to know nor to tolerate this rich grace and this highest favor of God bestowed so gratuitously.

6. Just as we also see at present and easily understand how those who wish to be the Church and to be called Christians, the Pope and bishops with their followers, who should lift their hands to heaven and thank God for their deliverance from darkness and blindness that they have again the pure light of the Gospel; these bring fire and water, wet their sword and polish their weapons to exterminate from the earth those who teach and confess the pure Gospel, and there are so many unthankful, false Christians among us just like them, who despise this salvation in the most defiant manner. Formerly, when we were captives under the Pope's tyranny, burdened with the preaching of lies, relating to

indulgences, purgatory and all the dreams of the monks, what a sighing and longing there was then in all the world for the true preaching of the Gospel. How gladly would one then have given, labored and suffered all things possible to secure true instruction and comfort, and to be delivered with a good conscience from the fearful martyrdom of the confessional and other oppressive burdens imposed by the Pope! And how happy were many pious people at first because of this deliverance who learned it and thanked God for it! But now, how many are there who rejoice from their hearts and acknowledge how blessed they are in that they can see and hear this? How soon they took offense at this blessed treasure and then sought something else, when they forgot all they had received, and the world became again filled with fanaticism and false teachings.

7. Indeed it really depends upon seeing and hearing; it is fully revealed and it stands forth clearly in the light before our eyes and ears; but the great mass of the world can not see nor understand it, even if it were stuck in their eyes and continually rung and hammered into their ears. For if they could hear and see a little of it, then it would accomplish something among them and improve them, so that they would become more reasonable and would not thus oppose the truth.

8. What did it help all the Pharisees that Christ himself preached the Gospel to them? And what would it help all the fanatics and critics even if it were preached twice as clearly, how we obtain the forgiveness of sins and true consolation of the conscience, likewise how a Christian should live in every calling of life and should know that he pleases God. Of all this they heretofore knew and heard nothing, so that they themselves acknowledged that the teaching was indeed excellent, but at the same time they remained stone-blind and it never entered their hearts that they could walk and live in harmony with it, all is strange to them that they hear, read or they themselves speak concerning it. For they are too completely chilled and choked with other thoughts of their own self-conceit and pleasure about things dear to them, so that aside from these they can neither see nor hear anything. Thus among them it is fulfilled as the prophets and Christ spoke before to the Jewish people and all like them, that with eyes to see they shall not see and with ears to hear they shall not hear, in order that they may change and be saved. This is the highest, the most horrible and the most fearful punishment they can bring upon themselves, and in addition be tormented in that they must daily see and hear the word and work of God, that is offered to all men for their salvation; and yet they have not the grace to receive it, Matthew 13:14; but only hear and see in it their vexation and thus become so bitter against it that they would rather hear and see the devil from hell.

9. On the other hand it is great grace and a precious treasure for him who receives this teaching that he sees and hears it aright, so that we should indeed declare such a one

saved. For the seeing and hearing that enter the heart bring and give a fullness and richness of possessions in understanding, enlightenment, comfort, strength and growth of spirit, joy and life, that we can never hear and see enough of it and prefer to hear, to learn and to know this above everything else that may be preached, taught, sung or said, that it should help to our salvation. Yea, it lets all other things pass as if it heard and saw them not, although in civil government and life it must see and hear much, yet it clings alone to this light and knowledge, which is so great that it completely fills the eyes and heart, and darkens and blinds everything else.

10. In like manner the sun at its rising so completely fills the world with light that the moon and stars are no longer seen or thought of, although they give their light every night. Just so let those, who can, give light also here, be they learned, wise, holy people, even Moses, the Prophets, the fathers, or St. John the Baptist himself; yet they all should yield to Christ, yea, bear witness that he alone is the light, by whom all men are to be enlightened and that they themselves must become partakers of that light, and that in Christendom all light, wisdom and teaching aside from Christ must cease, or be found alone in him.

11. In the same manner should the beautiful sound and the lovely music of the Gospel of Christ so engage and fill our ears, that we may hear nothing else, as when a great bell or a kettledrum and trumpet sound and resound, the air is so full that whatever else is spoken, sung or cried cannot be heard. So should Christ's words constantly in all our lives and actions have the upper hand in our hearts through faith, and know of comfort, righteousness and salvation from none other. These would indeed be blessed eyes and ears that could thus make use of the blessed time or dispensation of the Gospel, and know what God has given them in it; for such eyes and ears God himself esteems as an excellent and precious treasure and a sacred and holy possession, which could not be purchased by the whole world even if it had many more and brighter lights and suns.

II. THE SERMON OF CHRIST ON TRULY GOOD WORKS

12. This is an admonition of Christ to his dear disciples, yea, a consolation and encouragement heartily to stand by the Gospel, since he esteems and praises it to be so precious.

13. But how it is esteemed by others who are not true disciples of Christ, but are much smarter and holier themselves than that they should need his teaching, the lawyer shows, who stands by (as they were all together with Christ wherever he came, and they heard whatever he spoke); he had heard that Christ speaks earnestly to his disciples that they

hear and see what was never seen nor heard before. This lawyer could no longer retain his great skill and wisdom, he had to step forward and let himself be heard, and try if he could not put him to shame, and carry off the glory, that Christ was nothing, but he was the highly educated Rabbi, in that he propounds to him a much higher theme, Hence he steps forward and proposes to him this question: "*Teacher, what shall I do to inherit eternal life?*"

14. That these are not the eyes and ears of one who hears and sees what Christ is, he himself makes manifest by his own words, as all must do, if they in the most perfect way prove themselves to be such. For he hereby confesses he knows nothing more nor higher than the doctrine that treats of our own doings and works; of God's grace, Christ's office and work he knows nothing, he has as yet never understood anything about them, although he had heard Christ speak of them; he at once imagines he knows much better than Christ can teach him; he wished to say like our fanatics and critics: that which I have hitherto heard from you, is common; you must ascend much higher to interest us. Dear sir, teach the people once to do something, by which man is saved. But Christ lets such a tempter rush ahead and gives him a good handle by which he in a masterly manner ensnares himself in his own words, bids him to report and answer himself, since he wishes to be so learned and clever, and says: "What is written in the law? how readest thou?"

15. As if he would say: I hear indeed that you profess to have higher wisdom than I. Come, deliver yourself, I will be a pupil of your discourse and consider you a teacher. In his answer Christ however forces him into the Scriptures, when he says: "How readest thou?" For it is not Christ's pleasure for people to propound and preach their own arrogance; and hereby he shows this lawyer (as he later draws from him through his own confession with the question, who is his neighbor etc.), that he does not understand the Scriptures, even in that part where they speak of our own works; therefore much less does he understand the other higher teachings. Here he must not and cannot answer differently than as Moses in Deuteronomy 6:5 comprehended in the shortest form the summary of all God's commandments, how we should live in our relations both to God and men. "Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy strength, and with all thy mind; and thy neighbor as thyself."

16. That is teaching truly of high order; yea, the greatest thing that can be required of a man; as Christ himself confesses and confirms, when he says: "Thou hast answered right: this do, and thou shalt live." But it is nevertheless a teaching that is common, that is well known to all the Jews as to the words, although they did not rightly understand them, and the disciples of Christ had also certainly heard them. Hence this critic should have indeed

known that Christ spoke of another, a higher theme, since he said his disciples were especially blessed in that they see and hear what others did not. But all such hypocrites and fanatics must prove that they esteem Christ and his Gospel as nothing, and let themselves imagine they know everything much better.

17. Now, this commandment has often been explained and there is still much to be said about it; for it is indeed the highest art and wisdom, it is never learned perfectly, much less perfectly fulfilled and lived; so that God's Son had therefore to come from heaven, shed his blood and give us the Gospel, so that this commandment might be kept. Although here in this life it makes only a little beginning among Christians; yet in the life beyond we will constantly and forever have it in our eyes and hearts, and live it. In short, it is far too high above the mind, heart and sense of all mortals what the words mean, to love God with all thy heart, with all thy strength, with all thy soul and with all thy mind. For as yet no one experiences it, except those a little, who have the Gospel and embrace Christ by faith, and receive the comfort and power of it in times of need, temptation and prayer, and thus experience a taste of it; yet these persons themselves feel and lament, like all the saints and Paul himself, that they are still far from it and their flesh and blood feel nothing but sin and death; which of course would not be the case if this commandment had gone fully into practice and life.

18. Therefore such proud, godless spirits are shameless and troublesome, as this latter who went forward so boldly, that they esteem nothing at all, neither the high and earnest command of God nor do they wish to hear and know the doctrine of the Gospel: they imagine, it is enough if they have heard and can say the words: "Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart and thy neighbor as thyself." They do not perceive that God wants such doctrines not only heard and spoken, but put into practice, and where one does not esteem this, it will bring upon him higher and unbearable condemnation, as Christ says in Luke 12:47: "*And that servant, who knew his Lord's will, and made not ready nor did according to his will, shall be beaten with many stripes,*" etc. Therefore Christ gave this lawyer no other reply than this: "*Thou hast answered right; this do and thou shalt live.*"

19. That means, preaching the law aright and delivering a good strong lecture, yea, snaring him with his own words and taking hold of him at the right place, to show him where he was lacking. The doctrine he says is precious and true; but, dear sir, do it also; I would gladly see the doer of the law, then be a master and let your work of art be exhibited; for you all have spoken, written and known it; and you need nothing more; but just here you and others are lacking, that you do not do what you profess, but imagine it is enough to speak and think the words. No, in this way no one will live or be saved. The

commandments must be kept and done, or the wrath of God and eternal death instead of life will abide upon you.

20. Such is the judgment upon the critics, who wish to know so much and teach everybody the way of salvation, yet they know nothing more than their own doings and works, and despise the teaching of the Gospel; so that such talk is nothing but mere empty, wicked and vain nonsense, since nothing follows from it; as St. Paul says of these doctrines of the law and of works in Galatians 6:13: “For not even they who receive circumcision do themselves keep the law.” Hence one may justly say to them, as Christ here says to this lawyer: Dear Teacher! Do yourself what you tell and teach others; and also as St. Paul, Romans 2:19-23, says: *“Thou art confident that thou thyself art a guide of the blind,” etc. “Thou therefore that teachest another, teachest thou not thyself?” “Thou who gloriest in the law, through thy transgression of the law dishonorest thou God?”*

21. Thus one sees in the papal sophists, fanatics and all who are not of the pure Gospel teaching, what great and excellent works they profess and how they adorn themselves in the highest degree with them, as the saintly monks do; and yet they accomplish nothing. Yea, they only transgress God’s law and oppose it; as is proved in their case and Christ shows in the following parable that no persons are more unmerciful, more unpleasant and of course more unloving to their neighbor, more destitute of love to God, than such hypocrites.

22. Yea, “this do” are the words of Christ, the eternal lesson and sermon that is here spoken and preached to all men, also to the saints, and it accuses them, that they cannot and dare not glory before God on account of their works, merits and sanctity. But they must, if they would know themselves aright and stand before God, condemn themselves and their manner of life; so that here no saint has ever been able to stand upon this foundation, neither in the Old nor in the New Testament. They must all be mirrored in these words, “this do,” which mean nothing more than: See, you have not yet done this, nor fulfilled it. Like Moses himself, who had the honor of being faithful in all the things of God, and God called him his friend, with whom he spake by word of mouth and face to face; yet he had to say to God, Exodus 34:6-7: *“Oh, Lord God of all spirits and of all flesh! Thou art merciful and gracious, slow to anger, and abundant in loving kindness, thou forgivest iniquity, transgression and sin, and before thee none is guiltless. Here he casts away both his own holiness and that of all men and pleads guilty before God.”*

23. In like manner the prophet Isaiah, Isaiah 6:5-6, when he stands before God and sees his glory confesses that he is unclean, and must be comforted by an angel that his sins are

forgiven him, etc. And Jeremiah, when he prayed before God and gloried in opposing his persecutors, Jeremiah 17:16-17: “Lord, thou knowest: That which came out of my lips was before thy face”; here he is holy and happy; and yet soon after he turns and says: “*Be not a terror unto me; thou art my refuge in the day of evil.*” Likewise, Jeremiah 10:24: “Oh, Jehovah, correct me, but with measure”, that is, with grace; “*not in thine anger, lest thou bring me to nothing.*” Where is here the pious and holy man with whom the Lord is never angry? Why then does he fear that he will bring him to naught?

24. Thus also Daniel confessed his own sin and the sin of all his people and said in Daniel 9:18: “*We do not present our supplications before thee for our righteousness, but for thy great mercies’ sake.*” And David himself, when he received the forgiveness of his sins and sure consolation, that he had a gracious God, often glories, especially in Psalm 119:97f., how he did what is right and pleasing to God; and God himself bears witness of this concerning him, 1 Samuel 13:14, that he had found a man after his own heart. Yet he prays and sings Psalms of the greatest fear and anxiety: “*O Jehovah, rebuke me not in thine anger, neither chasten me in thy hot displeasure,*” etc. Psalm 6:1. Likewise Psalm 143:2. “*O Jehovah, enter not into judgment with thy servant; for in thy sight no man living is righteous.*”

25. In the same manner also St. Peter opens his mouth boldly in Acts 15:10 and says of the whole law: “Now therefore why make ye trial of God, that ye should put a yoke upon the neck of the disciples which neither our fathers nor we were able to bear?” This he says of all saints, fathers, prophets, apostles and he should in this manner exclude all from heaven; as must have happened on account of the law and their doings, had they not remained under the heaven of grace, as he in verse 11 further says: “But we believe that we shall be saved through the grace of the Lord Jesus, in like manner as they.” And St. Paul in Acts 13:38-39: “*Through this man is proclaimed unto you remission of sins; and by him every one that believeth is justified from all things, from which ye could not be justified by the law of Moses.*”

26. Now if the saints must confess this, who still have grace and the Holy Spirit, how will or dare the other blind, poor spirits presume and imagine that they have kept the commandments of God, when they form human thoughts and dream they love God and their neighbor. And yet they are so far from it that they do not understand nor know what God’s commandment requires and how it is kept. This they prove when they are put to the test, when they are to exhibit in a becoming manner love to their God and their neighbor. As when they are required to suffer anything for God’s sake, as injury and disgrace, either from men or when God himself visits them with his rod; then one sees that the thoughts springing from their own brain are really nothing, yea, they work only

the opposite, they rage, murmur, curse and blaspheme against God, as if God did them an injustice, etc. In like manner they act to their neighbors. Where they know not how to enjoy a neighbor or to secure some advantage and honor from him, but should serve him gratuitously and help the poor, as this Samaritan did the wounded one by the wayside, or expect also harm and ingratitude for extending the helping hand; then there is not only no spark of love, but at once they seek revenge, turn the people over to Satan and think they do right in this and are under no obligation to love such persons.

III. A BEAUTIFUL PICTURE OF THE KINGDOM OF CHRIST

27. Even this blind hypocrite is of the same mind, he never thinks and speaks of what he owes his neighbor, and yet he wants to be considered saintly and holy, because he is a lawyer and knows how to speak of the law. And although he was indeed reprov'd by Christ, and he surely knows he was hit and was told he did not keep the law; yet notwithstanding he is so bold and impudent as to despise God's word, so that he beautifully adorns himself and shines brightly and begins to ask: "*And who is my neighbor?*"

28. He feels that he made a mistake in speaking and that he opened his mouth too wide against himself. He is now caught and taken captive by the Lord's answer, and he drives a pin before his tongue so that he is not able to take it back. Yet he was not so pious that he did Christ and God the honor to humble himself and confess the truth, that he did not keep these commandments etc.; but he forges ahead and desires to be viewed as having done all, especially all that is due to God. Hence he does not even think of asking if he is indebted more to God, but desires no more than that Christ shows him who his neighbor is, to whom he should still be indebted anything and he has not performed it.

29. It is shameless presumption on the part of such saints of Satan, that they are so very certain in their knowledge when God judges them: and even when they have been moved by the law, and it is sufficiently proved to them that they did not keep the law, they are not changed by it until they once meet the judgment and the wrath of God in their severity, so that they are compelled to feel them. However the lies and shame of such hypocrites are hereby sufficiently uncovered; although they will not be ashamed; nor turn red for it, so that they must show by their own confession that they do not yet understand what Moses and the law require; because those who still wish to be masters of the Scriptures prove themselves to be guilty in that they do not know or do not appreciate who their neighbor is, as he is clearly enough set forth by Moses and in this commandment. Therefore Christ also shows the same to this lawyer clearly and plainly enough; not from the Scriptures, but by means of a plain parable and picture, so that he

himself must seize it and let fall upon him the judgment to his own shame that he did not wish to know or understand it. "*A certain man was going down from Jerusalem to Jericho; and he fell among robbers,*" etc.

30. Now the lawyer hears for the first time the appropriate text that puts him and all hypocrites like him to shame, and publicly he is convinced that he never kept the law, yea, that he did not understand it, even in the smallest point referring to his neighbor, because he still doubts and does not know, whom to consider as his neighbor, otherwise he is inclined to love his neighbor. But thus it serves them right, who wish to master this man Christ and his word. And because they are very anxious to approach Christ with the law and plan to present it to him in a high and sharp manner, so they find also sharp opposition and they are obliged to depart in shame, and they see that he also knows something to say about the law, and that he lays hold of it and has Moses in his eye in a different way than they.

31. In brief, Christ shows here that he will not and cannot be caught by questions and debates relating to the law, and it is hurtful to no one but to those who let themselves fall into such questions and become entangled by them so that they can never get out again. For this surely happens to all, who deal with the law independent of faith and the right understanding of the Gospel. For where Moses alone with his shining light and rays, which are the horns going forth from his countenance, strikes us in our eyes, no one can stand before him. In short, whoever allows himself to be driven to Moses and will deal with the law, is lost; so that here even Christians must battle until they get out and are again wrapped up and enclosed in Christ, concerning which I have said more elsewhere.

32. Now in their folly and blindness all hypocritical saints resemble this lawyer, in that they not only fail to keep an iota of the law, however high they praise it; but as to its fundamental meaning they understand nothing about it; nor do they know how to make the right use of it, unless they learn to repeat its words like crows. As St. Paul also says of them in Timothy 1:7: "Desiring to be teachers of the law, though they understand neither what they say, nor whereof they confidently affirm." Yea, verily it is true that no man on earth knows, except by the Spirit of Christ, either what God is, how he should honor and thank him, or who his neighbor is. For just as all the world make their own gods and never happen to produce the true God, but is divided into innumerable idolatries; so is the world also blind here in that it never meets its neighbor, whom it sees ever before its eyes; passes by him, lets him suffer in distress and hunger, whom it should serve and help, since it in other ways gives very much and does many great works.

33. And especially are the Jewish hypocritical interpretations hereby reprov'd and rejected, which paint and polish their neighbor according to their own fancy, consider

him a neighbor whom they like, that is, he who is a friend, who has well merited and is worthy of a kindness and of love, whom they have enjoyed or hope yet to enjoy; they imagine they are not indebted to serve and help the stranger, the unacquainted, the unworthy, unthankful enemies, etc.

34. Against such hypocrisy Christ answers with the history of this poor, wounded man, who fell among robbers and was lying half dead, whom the Samaritan alone receives, serves and helps, and whom both the priest and the Levite pass by and leave lying helpless. Here the lawyer himself must answer that neither the priest nor the Levite was a neighbor to this man, but he who extended to him a kind helping hand was. The hypocrite did not dare to mention the Samaritan by name; for the Jews were bitter enemies to the Samaritans. Their neighbors, considered them to be the worst people, like we look upon heretics or fallen Christians. By this, without any praise to himself, yea, against his own will, he is obliged to confess and say, who is a neighbor to another.

35. And truly it sounds strange that he should be called a neighbor who does a good act and loves another, since otherwise (to speak after the manner of the Scriptures and of this commandment) he is called a neighbor who needs a favor or should be served and shown love; but both belong together and both are comprehended as in the predicate of relationship (*praedicamento relationis*) and they bind us all together so that every one is a neighbor to another. However to be such neighbors among one another is twofold: the first only in name and with words, the other in deed and with works of love.

36. In this sense the Samaritan was neighbor to the wounded man, not the priest nor Levite, who by right should have been and were under obligation to be. For in this respect all men are debtors to one another and have the same commandment: "Thou shalt love thy neighbor", etc. Hence there is no difference, and in brief the meaning of this example is as Christ forces this hypocrite to confess, according to the common understanding of men, that they are neighbors, who before God belong together, where one needs help and another can give it, and here no one is excused nor free, be he priest or Levite.

37. And Christ is here especially sarcastic and vexed so that he attacks the priest and Levite, the most holy persons and the commissioned servants of God, and accuses, shames and scorns them by the example of the Samaritan, before whom they had a horror and an aversion as before a condemned criminal. But by this he shows that those who are the greatest and boast most of keeping God's commandments and teaching others, and should go ahead with good examples, in brief, those who are considered to be the high, the wise, the influential, and the best, have the least neighbor love; especially to the poor, forsaken, persecuted Christians, who suffer for the sake of God and his Word. For with

their eyes centered constantly on their own sanctity, wisdom, and great talents they imagine every person is obligated to serve them, they do not think, that which they have is given by God only for the purpose that they might let their righteousness, wisdom, honor and possessions serve the needy, ignorant, sinful and despised. Hence this Samaritan is justly praised to the everlasting shame of the priests, the Jewish saints and also this hypocrite, for he showed such kindness and love to this stranger and wounded man, who was doubtless a Jew; while his own priest, Levite and scribes left him lying in his misery and wretchedness and as far as they were concerned, dying and perishing.

38. But by Christ making the Samaritan a neighbor of him who had fallen among the robbers, is meant especially to prove that he himself is and desires to be neighbor, who fulfils the law in the right sense and shows his love to the poor, wretched, and before God wounded and perishing consciences and hearts of all men. And by this he also is an example that his Christians should do as he does, who is considered as a Samaritan before the whole world and especially in the eyes of the great saints, his own Jewish countrymen; that they do the same, since other people do it not, also that they take to themselves the need of the poor, forsaken and helpless, and know what they do to them they do to Christ as their neighbor.

39. Now here in this Samaritan Christ pictures and makes known the kindness, help and comfort, which he ministers in his kingdom through the Gospel; which is the same of which he spoke to his disciples at the beginning: "Blessed are the eyes which see the things that ye see", etc. He paints in the most Comforting manner what faith possesses in him, and how far his Gospel differs from the doctrine of the law of the priests and Levites; concerning which I have said so much heretofore. We see in this picture how we, who have fallen in sin against God, he under the wrath of God and must die the eternal death, are again rescued only by him, in that we receive God's grace and comfort, and a quickening of conscience, and we begin to keep the law.

40. This is the principal article of the doctrine of faith, that says we cannot save ourselves, neither can anything we do nor the doctrines of the law; but he must begin faith in us, who does not force the law upon our attention, when we feel our sins and misery; for that is the work of the secure spirits like this lawyer, who resent being reproved as sinners. But he has tender mercy upon us, besides is friendly and consoling through his Word, and himself binds up the sores of the wounded, places him on his own beast, nurses and looks after him. For he had to accomplish our redemption alone and take our place, bear in his own body our sins and need; he himself publishes this and gives us the comforting word, by which our wounds are bound up and healed.

41. This is called pouring wine and oil into the wounds, both of which are good medicines for the injured. The wine preserves the flesh clean and fresh that the wounds may not corrupt or fester; likewise this balsam is especially given to the land of the Jews, namely, the noble, precious oil, that is, the best remedy known for all kinds of injuries. It is the preaching of the holy Gospel, which does both; it keeps the penitent conscience in the knowledge of its sins and' wickedness, that it neither becomes secure nor ceases to long for grace, and besides he comforts the conscience by grace and forgiveness, and thus ever makes man better until he is again well and begins again to do the work of a healthy man.

42. And to this end he now makes use of the office and service of the Church, as Christ commands her to expect and take care of such by means of the same office and spirit, which he bestows, and asks her to be faithful in everything that ministers to their strength and improvement, to comfort, admonish, restrain, chastise, etc.; and assures her what she does and sacrifices in such cases, he will reward.

43. Behold, this is the doctrine and the power of the Gospel and the treasure by which we are saved; which brings us to the point that we also begin to fulfill the law. For where the great unfathomable love and favor of Christ are known and believed, thence flows forth also love both to God and to our neighbor. For by means of such knowledge and consolation the Holy Spirit moves the heart to love God, and gladly does what it should to his praise and thanks, guards against sin and disobedience and willingly offers itself to serve and help everybody, and where it still feels its weakness it battles against the flesh and satan by calling upon God, etc. And thus while ever rising in faith it holds to Christ, where it does not do enough in keeping the law, its comfort is that Christ fulfills the law and bestows and imparts his fullness and strength, and thus he remains always our righteousness, salvation, sanctification, etc.

44. This is the right way to secure the observance of the law, of which our blind critics know nothing; but Christ beautifully shows by this, that one must hear the Gospel and believe in Christ before he can fulfill the law; otherwise there is nothing but hypocrisy and nothing but pure boasting and talking about the law without any heart and life in it all.

45. Here we should also answer those, who misuse today's Gospel to support their blasphemous doctrine, when Christ says of the Samaritan, he commended the sick to his host, and when he gives him the half dollar, says to him: "Whatsoever thou spendest more, I, when I come back again, will repay thee." For the monks and sophists have invented from these words their lies about works which they call the works of

supererogation, works in excess or more than are required, when one does more than God commands him, which he is otherwise not obligated to do. And such lies they confirmed by other blasphemies in making rules from the sermon of Christ in which he explained the ten commandments, Matthew 5:21f.; and later applied them to their monastic life as if the monks were the greatest saints, for whom it was too insignificant a thing to keep God's commandments. As if they did on a higher plane many and great excessive works in their orders; for which God was obliged to give much more than heaven not only to themselves, but to other people to whom they wished to impart their works of supererogation, namely, to sell their lies and blasphemies for money. Their god the pope confirmed this and canonized and exalted these his saints as those who hereby strengthened his godhead and influence also over the dead in purgatory.

46. This blasphemy is however entirely too base and shameless, far above the blindness and presumption of this lawyer and those like him; for they do not only wish to be praised for keeping God's commandments, none of which they understand, nor think of keeping the least one in earnest. But they wish to be considered as having done much higher and many more works than all the saints whom God himself praises in the Scriptures; all of whom nevertheless confess that they have not kept the law for themselves, and must therefore, because they did not fulfill the law, seek and pray for grace and forgiveness with Christ.

47. What a shame! that people in the Church of Christ dare speak of works and spheres of influence which should be superfluous, and they be said to have done more than God's command required; and still Christ said publicly of the lives of all men in Luke 17:10: "Even so ye also, when ye shall have done all' the things that are commanded you, say, We are unprofitable servants; we have done that which it was our duty to do." Thus you hear that it is purely a debt and a duty, even if one should reach the point, which no saint on earth can, that he had done all, and he would then have nothing of which to boast, and for which God would be obliged to thank him. Still what better and higher work will one find or name that should have been commanded by God? For although they have now for a long time dived about virginity, I ask if such work can be better than what God calls here to love God with the whole heart, yea, if independent of this command it can succeed or be done, should it be good and well pleasing to God in a different or extraordinary way? How is it then possible to have an excess of good works or do anything better than God has commanded? For what good can you do that you do not do either to God or to man out of love, which you are indebted to do by reason of your eternal condemnation. What can father and mother do more for their child, yea, what more can God himself and Christ do for us, than to love us. What does it mean then to advance such shameless lies and foolishness about certain works, which are an excess

over those that are commanded when no one has as yet fully attained to the measure of the ten commandments here upon earth?

48. It is true the Papists are now ashamed of such slabbering, with which they have poured all their books full, but yet they cannot quit their blasphemy. Since they see now that this lie will not stand, they fall upon another interpretation that is just as blasphemous as the first; they turn the words, “Whatsoever thou spendest more”, from the life and works to the doctrine, and say we must do not only what the Scriptures teach, but hear also what the Church teaches and decrees concerning the same. For the Apostles and bishops are commanded to add more to the two shillings, namely, to the Old and New Testaments.

49. Yet see how the devil juggles and distorts himself by his sophistry and blind tricks in that he adorns and colors his lies. They have heard and learned something of us that in this parable the two shillings apply to the office of the ministry in the Church. For Christ is speaking of the office that should attend and care for the sick, and is administered for their relief and recovery. Hence, the two shillings are the Holy Scriptures or rather the pound as Christ calls them in another place, that is, the understanding of the Scriptures in the measure and the gifts of the Spirit, given to each one; all which is still the one and the same understanding without one having it in a richer degree than another. These sophists wish now to cite these words to support the foundation of their lies, that in Christendom we must teach, believe and hold as essential for salvation more than Christ has given and commanded us to teach. They are blind, mad, perverted persons who always seek something different and more, both to do and teach, than God’s Word require, and yet they do not do it nor teach it, but let that be realized which they wish to have taught and practiced.

50. Therefore we tell you here again as before: Beloved, what can you do or what do you know that is better and more necessary to teach, than what Christ taught or commanded to teach? And what do we need more, to minister to the consciences in every thing that is necessary for them, to instruct, admonish, comfort, strengthen, correct and in short to do all that is necessary for salvation, than the doctrine of the Scriptures, namely, both of the law and of the Gospel? as St. Paul also shows in 2 Timothy 3:16- 17:” Every scripture inspired of God is also profitable for teaching, for reproof, for correction, for instruction which is in righteousness: that the man of God may be complete, furnished completely unto every good work.” In these words you hear that the Scriptures richly contain and offer everything that serves to right living and good works; why will you then feign or seek something different that is to be taught above or along side of the Scriptures?

Beloved, first explain the two shillings Christ gives and practice well the doctrine they teach, then we will see later what more you are able to explain or teach.

51. For this excess or explanation of the two shillings we may without danger and in harmony with the meaning of the Scriptures also interpret as the growth and exercise in the true doctrine and the understanding of it; as St. Paul admonishes in 1 Timothy 4:13-15: “Give heed to reading, to exhortation, to teaching, neglect not the gift that is in thee,” etc. “Be diligent in these things; give thyself wholly to them; that thy progress may be manifest unto all.” For the more one practices and exercises himself in the doctrines of the Scriptures, the more learned, gifted and powerful he becomes in them, as is the case in other arts. Therefore the explanation of this excess is, where one practices this doctrine among the people, as every one is bound to do, and according to his faithfulness in doing it he is either weak or strong, and needs more comfort, admonition, etc., than another.

52. But it is not the intention and the zeal of these sophists ‘to be so faithful and diligent that they correctly explain the two shillings, that is, that they teach diligently what Christ commanded, since they do not wish to do or to know this, for they shun the Scriptures like they shun satan, they neither understand the teaching of the law nor of the Gospel. But they fill the Church with their prattle and human doctrines, pervert and counterfeit God’s Word, as the devil advocates that this explanation of the two shillings must teach them something different than the Gospel teaches; as they do nothing but propagate another and contrary doctrine of their cursed lying prattle against the faith of Christ among the people.

53. The summary is, since Christ himself and the Apostles everywhere forbid the introduction of other doctrines, it cannot stand the test that one should desire to confirm a different doctrine by this parable or allegory; so Christ will not expect of such sick persons anything different than he himself gives to them; and that which can be further explained must not be anything different, but be in harmony with that which Christ himself has given. However it is possible that one should study a doctrine more and harder than another and thus he explains more; as St. Paul says of himself in 1 Corinthians 15:10, that he labored more and accomplished more than all the other Apostles. And St. Ambrose also applies this explanation to himself and says: He did with his sermons and writings, which indeed are nothing more than Christ commanded him to teach, fill his measure to overflowing and he accomplished thereby more than others; but of himself and other preachers he says: God grant that we might make use of and compute what we have received of Christ.

[ContentPage](#)



[First Page](#)