

Love Your Neighbor As Yourself

Part One: "Yourself"

The first passage was **Matthew 5:3-12**.

Jared began with a story about his dad who, after years of always bringing in help to move the family piano, finally asked Jared to help. This was a blessing, because it showed the value his dad saw in Jared as he grew into a young man. In light of the beatitudes from the Sermon on the Mount, and also considering Jared's story, think about the ways you have felt blessed in life. **What role does your understanding of blessing relate to your value/worth?**

The second passage was **Luke 18:35-43**.

The blind beggar was rebuked by the leaders when he called out to Jesus. He was considered cursed both by the warped theology and the skewed values of Greek culture. Theologically, people assumed there was sin in his life that caused his ailment. Culturally, he did not fit the mold of a model citizen of their society. The cultural value system of that society was not new, nor would it disappear with the Roman Empire. Daniel and his friends faced this skewed system in Babylon, and Native Americans faced cultural genocide in the Americas (after the actual genocide). Even today, throughout the world, selective abortion and infanticide are routinely used to dispose of those seen as lacking value.

The third passage was **Matthew 22:34-40**.

Hearing that Jesus had silenced the Sadducees, the Pharisees got together. One of them, an expert in the law, tested him with this question: "Teacher, which is the greatest commandment in the Law?" Jesus replied: "**'Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind.'** This is the first and greatest commandment. **And the second is like it: 'Love your neighbor as yourself.'** All the Law and the Prophets hang on these two commandments."

Three of the next four weeks will be focused on loving your neighbor as yourself; but today we will look at the struggle with loving yourself, and understanding the value that God gives you.

Have you ever felt cursed? Have you ever struggled to see your worth?

Do you ever assume, like Job's friends, that the problems in your life are always the direct result of your sin, or that God is punishing you?

Do you assume, like the majority of American Christians, that "God helps those who help themselves", and that you are only as worthy as you make yourself to be?

God has called us to a higher view of our worth. **We are more than what we appear to be.**

We all have a tendency to judge others based on all the outward signs. We have heard so many lessons on the need to avoid this kind of prejudice. Unfortunately, while we may strive to avoid judging others by these standards, we often continue to use these standards to judge ourselves!

How have you unfairly judged yourself?

How has this damaged your relationships with others? How can it damage your relationship with God?

Read **John 13:34**:

“A new command I give you: Love one another. As I have loved you, so you must love one another.

How is this new? It forces us to look beyond our love for ourselves and see the love Jesus has for us.

Jared asked us to imagine what the disciples each thought about when contemplating Jesus' love for them.

What do you see in Jesus' love for you?

Jared took us back to the story of the blind beggar in Luke 18. Jesus saw his worth. He called him to him. That man became a disciple of Jesus.

The final passage was from I Corinthians 1: 26-31. We used this passage to wrap up the story of Hosea last week. Read this passage in light of the purchase of Gomer by Hosea, but then read it with yourself in mind.

How are we valued by Jesus? What is the message of God about our worth?

How can you embrace that value for yourself? How will that increase your love for yourself, and your capacity to pour out that love toward others?

Prayer:

God, thank you for giving everything for me. Help me see the value in myself and others that you see. Forgive me for treating myself as less than you have proven me to be. I pray that you finish the work you have begun in my life, so that I can show others the value of life as a child of yours. In the name of my Savior, Redeemer, and LORD, Jesus, Amen.

