

Can't Live Without Intermediaries (excerpt)

Luke 10.25-37

Priests. This might seem like a foreign word with no relevance today, but actually we all need, long for and use priests today. We don't call them priests but when you want to get into Kids exchange, the massive twice a year collection of consignors of kids clothes, where you can buy fall clothes for your child for \$2 a piece instead of \$30, you need someone who has a pass. I've never been but I've heard the stories; you are NOT getting in early to kids exchange (when there are still clothes left) without someone as a mediator (giving you a pass). Those soccer moms who run the show are more fierce than mother grizzlies who've lost their clubs, they are stronger than bouncers at the latest NYC club and, I've heard the first hand accounts of this, more unbending on the minute details of Kids Exchange law than the legal expert talking to Jesus. They are hard core. But with a pass from your friend the priest, you walk right in, are greeted with southern hospitality and you can transact to your heart's content.

While Jesus and the Lawyer agree on the basic requirements of v.27, do you see what the lawyer does at the end of v.29? He wants to limit who is his neighbor? He reads the commandment but thinks, I'm in trouble, because I can't do this, so his solution is to tighten down the scope for the commandment to what he can do. The lawyer's approach is "to not break the requirements" by limiting the requirements to what he can achieve. He is going to do them, and do them all by himself, he will get the 100% on the test by squeezing down the questions to the ones he knows.

Instead of the shrinking down of the lawyer, Jesus is taking this commandment to love our neighbor and he is blowing blowing on it until it is huge, then he releases it for us to see and deal with. Jesus has expanded the command so far that no one can keep it. So where does that leave us? In the complete opposite position to what the lawyer tries to do. We can't justify ourselves, and when we see how Jesus has expanded the commandments, we know we never will keep it, and to try some approach to say we can is the completely wrong approach. To try to justify ourselves is actually to reject his words and thus him.

What is left? Only to say I can't do that. With our boss we say; I'll do that, and then walk away thinking, "How in the world am I going to do that?" Our boss is interesting in our performance and so we try to figure a way to meet her expectation. Jesus is not. When we tell Jesus we can't do it, and we haven't, and we never will be able to keep the commandment as you are showing us, that is the beginning of letting him be our perfect priest--the one who mediates between us and God—with his very own life.

If you assume that the question from the lawyer is valid, and that its answer has something to do with how we keep God's instructions for life—his law—and Jesus affirms both in v.28—then there are only two options. Either you live up to the law yourself or someone lives it in your place.