



Hey everyone, if we haven't met I'm Mark, I'm one of the Pastors here and I want to welcome you to our service. A lot has been happening. For the entire year our theme has been 'One' – we've been focusing on oneness as the people of God, and just last week we announced that all three of our campuses will be coming together as one. So we're very excited about how God is growing our Ohana. Speaking of growing Ohana, on September 25, Jalee and I welcomed our third baby into the world – Lylah lolana Palompo. Thank you so much for all of your prayers and support! Jalee and baby are doing awesome, the kids are stoked with their new baby sister, and we are loving this new season.

Speaking of new seasons, today we are kicking off a brand new series that will take us all the way into the Christmas season. Can you believe it? Our series is called The Chosen Ones and we will be focusing on the lives of Jesus and His followers – His Chosen Ones. All of these stories are found in scripture and we've also been enjoying the creative imaginings of The Chosen series. This completely crowd-funded project tells the stories of Jesus in a fresh and unique way from the perspective of His followers.

Last year we did a series following The Chosen season 1, which focused on the beginning of Jesus' earthly ministry including the choosing of His first disciples. If you missed that series, all of those messages are available online at nhcohawaii.org. We left off with Jesus' profound conversation with the Samaritan Woman at the well. Pastor Theresa gave a phenomenal message so check out nhcohawaii.org if you missed it. And if you want to catch The Chosen episodes, you can watch them all for free by downloading The Chosen app from the App Store.

Season 2 picks up immediately after Jesus' conversation with the woman at the well. A few weeks ago Pastor Earl spoke about the woman at the well and how she dropped everything to tell her neighbors about Jesus. Episode one takes place in Sychar, which is a Samaritan City, so a major theme throughout the episode deals with the prejudices between Jews and Samaritans. I love that this is how we get to kick off our series because I think Jesus' approach to people who are 'other' is timely for the season we find ourselves in as a State, as a Nation, and as a Church whose campuses coming together. How are we as Christians called to love those who are not like us?

1. Who do you consider 'other' in your life? Why is it sometimes challenging to relate to those who are 'other'?

The tension between Jews and Samaritans is a recurring theme throughout the New Testament, but in order to fully appreciate its significance, you have to understand how it all began.

So why the bad blood between Jews and Samaritans? The first answer is exactly that – bad blood. After Israel split into two kingdoms, Israel and Judah, the northern Kingdom fell into idol worship. Because of this, God gave them over to the Assyrians in 2 Kings 17.



⁵ The king of Assyria invaded the entire land, marched against Samaria and laid siege to it for three years. ⁶ In the ninth year of Hoshea, the king of Assyria captured Samaria and deported the Israelites to Assyria..." (2 Kings 17:5-6 NIV).

"The king of Assyria brought people from Babylon, Kuthah, Avva, Hamath and Sepharvaim and settled them in the towns of Samaria to replace the Israelites. They took over Samaria and lived in its towns," (2 Kings 17:24 NIV).

So Israelites from Samaria are being deported and foreigners are brought in to replace them. Intermarrying is taking place as well as intermingling of religious practices and those in the southern kingdom of Judah – The Jews (Judah - Jews), are seeing this take place and no longer consider the Samaritans one of the 12 tribes of Israel. They're mongrels –half-breeds (Bad blood). So there's racial tension. There was also religious tension. Eventually the southern kingdom followed their northern brethren into exiled captivity. But through the Lord's miraculous deliverance they returned from exile and started to rebuild the temple in Jerusalem.

"When the enemies of Judah and Benjamin heard that the exiles were building a temple for the Lord, the God of Israel, they came to Zerubbabel and to the heads of the families and said, "Let us help you build because, like you, we seek your God and have been sacrificing to him since the time of Esarhaddon king of Assyria, who brought us here." But Zerubbabel, Joshua and the rest of the heads of the families of Israel answered, "You have no part with us in building a temple to our God. We alone will build it for the Lord, the God of Israel, as King Cyrus, the king of Persia, commanded us," (Ezra 4:1-3 NIV).

So the Jews returning from captivity reject the aid of the Samaritans and in turn the Samaritans begin to sabotage the rebuilding of the temple. The Samaritans ultimately reject Jerusalem as the location of God's holy temple and build their own temple on Mt. Gerizim – the place where Abraham was commanded to sacrifice Isaac. This is why in her conversation with Jesus, the Samaritan woman at the well says,

"Sir," the woman said, "I can see that you are a prophet. Our ancestors worshiped on this mountain, but you Jews claim that the place where we must worship is in Jerusalem," (John 4:19-20 NIV).

By the time Jesus stepped on the scene, Jews and Samaritans were historically divided racially, religiously, and politically. To make matters worse, in 128 BC, John Hyrcanus, from the Maccabean family, destroyed the Samaritan Temple on Mt. Gerizim). So these guys hate each other. They literally cross to the other side of the street to avoid one another.

2. Where do you see division happening today?



Jesus' followers were constantly shocked by His dealings with Samaritans. Jesus didn't cross to the other side of the road, Jesus didn't avoid speaking to the Samaritan woman. But undoubtedly, His most shocking revelation came in the form of a story. This parable was featured in the first episode of The Chosen season 2. We find it in Luke 10,

²⁵ On one occasion an expert in the law stood up to test Jesus. "Teacher," he asked, "what must I do to inherit eternal life?" (Luke 10:25 NIV).

This is the million dollar question isn't it? This is the question on all of our minds. If heaven exists, what do I need to do to get there? It's why we're here. This is the question religion seeks to answer. But listen to Jesus' response,

²⁶ "What is written in the Law?" He replied. "How do you read it?" (Luke 10:26 NIV).

In other words, "What do you think you need to do?" Listen Church, how you answer that question will determine your eternity. Many people believe the answer is to simply be a good person and they're banking eternity on it. Others would say do more right than wrong and they are staking eternity on it. How does this expert in the law respond?

3. How would answer the question, "What must I do to inherit eternal life?"

²⁷ He answered, "'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, 'Love your neighbor as yourself.'"

You see, there were certain verses in the Old Testament that spoke of eternal life but there was not one verse that spelled out how to get there. So many Jews were banking eternity on their ceremonies, traditions, and laws to qualify them but at the end of the day there was always this nagging question of whether it was really enough. And this is the problem with religion isn't it? You never truly know if you've done enough. So out of their 600+ laws, this expert in the law answers Jesus' question with Deuteronomy 6 and Leviticus 19. As an expert in the law, he deduced that all 600+ laws could be summed up in two verses – to love God with all that you are and to love your neighbor as yourself. To love God with all of your heart, all of your soul, all of your strength, and all of your mind – in other words, to love God perfectly. And to love others the same way you love yourself.

²⁸ "You have answered correctly," Jesus replied. "Do this and you will live," (Luke 10:28 NIV).

This right here would've been enough to take most of us out of the game. Are you kidding me? Love God perfectly with all that I am and love others the way I love myself? I'm out. Game over. Anybody with me? But not this guy! This expert in the law still thinks he has a shot!



²⁹ *But he wanted to justify himself, so he asked Jesus, "And who is my neighbor?"*

Can you imagine the cojones on this guy! He's trying to justify himself to Jesus. He's like, "Let's just say I'm doing the first part perfectly, you don't know me – That's between me and God. But when you say neighbor what do you mean?" So Jesus tells him a story that blows him away, blows everyone listening away, and should blow us away too.

³⁰ *In reply Jesus said: "A man was going down from Jerusalem to Jericho, when he was attacked by robbers. They stripped him of his clothes, beat him and went away, leaving him half dead," (Luke 10:30 NIV).*

Jesus started His story with a scenario that would have been familiar to everyone listening – a man traveling from Jerusalem to Jericho. Jerusalem is about 3,000 feet above sea level while Jericho is approximately 1,000 feet below sea level. So in a distance of 17 miles you have to descend 4,000 feet. It's a difficult journey if nothing goes wrong but to make matters worse, this stretch of road was a haven for thugs and bandits earning it the name, Tal'at ed Damm or The way of blood. So a guys gets jumped traveling The way of blood. So far, no surprises.

³¹ *A priest happened to be going down the same road..." (Luke 10:31a NIV).*

At this point, all of the Jews listening probably breathed a sigh of relief because Jesus might as well have said, "Then Superman showed up." The priest was considered the holiest person among them. He taught the scriptures, he offered sacrifices on behalf of the people, and he was allowed to go into the special part of the Temple where the "regular" people were not. If anyone was going to reflect the character of God in this moment, it was the priest.

"...And when he saw the man, he passed by on the other side," (Luke 10:31b NIV).

He went out of his way to avoid helping! This is a huge plot twist! But what I find interesting is that nobody objected. Nobody listening said, 'Oh come on! A priest would never act that way!' Or, 'That would never happen!'" Why? I think it's because, in their heart of hearts, they knew what we wall know – the priest was human. No, he wasn't a monster, he wasn't a villain, he was human. Sadly, I find I'm rarely shocked anymore when I hear about another Pastor or Minister falling into sin. I'm heartbroken, but rarely shocked. Why? Because they're human. I'm not justifying their actions, I just don't put them on a pedestal. Can I ask you a favor? Don't put people on a pedestal. They're only human.

4. Was there a time you were let down by someone you looked up to?

³² *So too, a Levite, when he came to the place and saw him, passed by on the other side," (Luke 10:32 NIV).*



If the priest was at the top of the religious ladder, levites were at the bottom. They assisted the priests in the temple and like the priests, knew the law. So these guys knew what the law required in this situation and did nothing. What Jesus was trying to illustrate was that from top to bottom, from the highest to the lowest, there are none who can fulfill the law. Not even the best among us is measuring up. Think of the holiest person you know. They blow it. All have sinned and fall short of the glory of God. As James writes, *"For whoever keeps the whole law and yet stumbles at just one point is guilty of breaking all of it,"* (James 2:10 NIV). And before those listening could pick their jaws off the floor, Jesus continues,

"³³ But a Samaritan, as he traveled, came where the man was;" (Luke 10:33a NIV).

And just as those listening would have cheered when the priest arrived and expected him to help, those same listeners would have moaned and groaned at the mention of the Samaritan. Remember, these guys hate each other. Most of them probably wouldn't have bat an eyelash if Jesus said the Samaritan finished the man off.

"And when he saw him, he took pity on him." [He had compassion that wouldn't let him walk away]

"³⁴ He went to him and bandaged his wounds, pouring on oil and wine." [He took time, which made him vulnerable and he used his own resources]

"Then he put the man on his own donkey, brought him to an inn and took care of him." [He gave the man his donkey, which means he most likely walked. He preferred the man before himself]

³⁵ The next day he took out two denarii and gave them to the innkeeper. 'Look after him,' he said, 'and when I return, I will reimburse you for any extra expense you may have,'" (Luke 10:33b-35 NIV). [He put the man up and said put it on my bill]

³⁶ "Which of these three do you think was a neighbor to the man who fell into the hands of robbers?" ³⁷ The expert in the law replied, "The one who had mercy on him."

The expert in the law couldn't even choke out the word, "Samaritan". And in one of the most stone-cold responses ever,

Jesus told him, "Go and do likewise."



"You think you have what it takes? Be my guest." As if he could. How could he? How could any of us? This is not a one-time event Jesus is talking about. This is how Jesus calls us to love every single day. For most of us, there's only one person we would ever love this way – ourselves. Maybe a dear loved one. But someone we disliked? An enemy? See, for years I would hear this story and think that the point was to just to be a more loving person, to be a good Samaritan. But that's not the point! Because I'm not the good Samaritan. I'm the priest who looks the other way rather than be inconvenienced. I'm the levite who comes up with a million excuses for why I can't get involved. Come on, when you see those who don't think like you, believe like you, vote like you go through difficult times, is your response to say, "Man, I'm going to go out of my way to help that person. I'm going to sacrifice to meet their needs." Or do we say, "Serves them right. They're just reaping what they sow."

The good Samaritan demonstrated compassion based on need not on worth. How many of you are thankful God showed you compassion based on your need, not on your worth. This is the God who sent His Son so that while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us. This is the God who causes the sun to rise and the rain to fall on the righteous and unrighteous alike. We're not the good Samaritan, Jesus is.

When I was at my lowest point – broken and beaten by sin, Jesus didn't cross to the other side of the road. Jesus abandoned heaven and emptied Himself of all glory in order to stoop down to where I was and bandage my wounds. He let me take His place while He took mine and marched the cross that should've been mine to Calvary. Jesus gave everything, bankrupt heaven, in order to redeem my life and see me made whole again.

This whole year we've been talking about being unified – being one. We live in one of the most divided times in history. In this season we will be bringing three campuses (three communities) together as one. If you think the way to oneness is going to come through all of us just trying a little harder, being good samaritans, then like the expert in the law, we missed the point. It's only when we admit that all of this is beyond us and allow the reality of what God has done for us into our brokenness to grip us and transform us that will we see oneness.

Notice, the Bible doesn't say, "Love your neighbor as they deserve" it says, "Love your neighbor as yourself." In other words, the way you love your neighbor isn't contingent on who your neighbor is, it is contingent on who you are. "Love your neighbor as who? You" This is why God loved us as Himself. We love because He first loved us.

5. What do you think was the point of Jesus' story? What is our response to Jesus' story?