



Sermon Transcription • Romans 13:8-10 (NIV)

Our Constantly Unpaid Debt

Pastor Jeff Bucknam

[Please Note: This transcript has been lightly edited for ease of reading. Also, some headings have been added in square brackets to aid the reader in locating portions of the sermon.]

I told you to go to Romans 13:8 but I want you to have your thumb there and then flip with your other thumb to Luke 10:25. It's a famous story. If you don't have thumbs, I put it on the screen for you so you can follow along as well. It's a very famous passage about a Samaritan—who in those days was considered to be quite wicked by the Jews, they were half-breeds. You know you'd avoid the Samaritan country by going around it as much as you possibly could. If there's a road that went north, you would go the long way around Samaria so you wouldn't have to go through that land because you just didn't like Samaritans if you were a Jew. But this story is actually a story about a *good* Samaritan. You know it. I'm sure you do. Listen if even if you're not involved in church at all, you've probably heard this one. You know of "Good Samaritan Laws", and this is where it comes from.

Luke 10:25,

"On one occasion an expert in the law [Okay, read 'lawyer' here] stood up to test Jesus. [By the way, what do you call a thousand lawyers on the bottom of the sea? A good start. Right. Just kidding. This is about a lawyer. I got more lawyer jokes later...] 'Teacher,' he asked, 'what must I do to inherit eternal life?' [Now remember this guy's testing Jesus—you saw that right? He's coming along to test Jesus. He's not asking the question because he's really interested in the answer. He's trying to test Jesus' orthodoxy. Are you gonna answer this question the right way? What must I do to inherit eternal life? Hmm..Jesus? What's the proper answer to that question? Give me your theological belief. Jesus' response, verse 26]

'What is written in the Law?' he replied. 'How do you read it?' [It's a great way to answer a probing question, just ask a question back. 'I don't know... What do you think?']

He answered, 'Love the Lord [He's a preening kind of guy, so he just wants to present "Yeah I know the answer to the question" **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.' [In other words, how a vertical relationship with God that involves every ounce of your being, give him everything you've got, and treat the people around you in the same way you'd want to be treated yourself.]



‘You have answered correctly,’ Jesus replied. ‘Do this and you will live.’ [It’s interesting of course. That the tables have turned. Jesus now is the one who’s testing him. As opposed to him testing Jesus. Lawyers are caught in this trap frequently apparently.]

But he wanted to justify himself [Which is also a trap that lawyers get caught into, right? Listen if you’re a lawyer in the room, you know it’s true. **he wanted to justify himself**], so he asked [a good lawyer question] Jesus, ‘And who is my neighbor?’ [Listen, let’s define our terms, Jesus. Like if we’re gonna think about this what God expects of us, surely God doesn’t want us to love everybody. That would be impossible. Especially he wouldn’t want us to love... I don’t know...the Samaritans. I mean are they worth it? We avoid them, right? They worship a different kind—we worship God but in a very different kind of way. They’re dirty and gross. And if I see one, I want to spit on them. So let’s define ‘neighbour’. Who’s my neighbour?]

In reply Jesus said [I’ve got a story for you]: “A man was going down from Jerusalem to Jericho, when he was attacked by robbers [That road from Jerusalem to Jericho is really windy, and it’s got craggy rocks along the side in these days, it was a frequent place for robbers to attack people. Usually in order to go up to Jerusalem, they would have lots of stuff with them, and coming down they would often have stuff with them and so you’d beat them. Often times when you beat them, you’d leave them on the side of the road and you do hide in the little caves in the rocks and wait for somebody to come along and try to help and then you beat *them*. And you might leave two people on the side of the road, and then you’d beat the next guy. The rule going down from Jerusalem to Jericho is avoid people on the side of the road, okay? You might get hurt by getting involved] They stripped him of his clothes, beat him and went away, leaving him half dead. A priest [Right? Lead pastor] happened to be going down the same road, and when he saw the man [What do you expect here? He went over to him and gave him great care, preached a wonderful sermon to him. But what do you get?], he passed by on the other side [stupid pastors]. So too, a Levite [Associate pastor. Now this guy’s surely gonna help. Associate pastors are always trying to jump to cue... you know? Get their name in lights], when he came to the place and saw him, passed by on the other side [These are the most religiously consistent morally upright people in the community and neither of them helped the guy on the side of the road. We don’t know why. Maybe it’s because they’re afraid of somebody jumping out. Maybe they just got a place to go... I don’t know] But a Samaritan [you gotta feel the throats of the people listening to Jesus, especially the lawyer, are tight. A Samaritan. What do you expect here? Well you expect a Samaritan went over to him, spit on him, kicked him and finished him off. That’s what Samaritans are like, you know? **A Samaritan**] as he traveled, came where the man was; and when he saw him, he took pity on him [And that pity took a form. It wasn’t just a feeling or a word to the guy. It took an active form]. He went to him and bandaged his wounds, pouring on oil and wine [probably for disinfectant]. Then he put the man on his own donkey, brought him to an inn and took care of him [Inns were a notorious places for those robbers that beat you up on the road to go and stay. You don’t leave people in an inn. They were not safe places. Seriously it’s not like the Marriott. They were frequented by all sorts of bad guys. So if you went to an inn, you had to have people look after you, or you’d



have to look after someone. So there they are, he **brought him to an inn and took care of him.**] The next day he took out two denarii [That's two days' wages. So figure out whatever it is you make in a day, double it] 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.' [So I'm paying you to look after the guy upfront, but when I come back, just keep a record and I will pay you back everything that you spent on him]

'Which of these three [says Jesus as he turns back to the lawyer, looks at him dead in the eye. **Which of these three**] do you think was a neighbor to the man who fell into the hands of robbers?'

The expert in the law replied, <grunts and grumbly noise> [covers his eyes, looks down] [I'm sure it was like that...<grumbles> Don't know...It's really unclear...</grumbles>] 'The one who had mercy on him.' [Notice he can't even bring himself to say the word 'Samaritan', right? Cause easy answer is "the Samaritan". No, it's just "the one who had mercy on him". I won't let those words cross my lips.]

Jesus told him, 'Go and do likewise.'

This is not a complicated passage of Scripture. I mean, it's not. You could read through this in a Bible study and at the end, I as the leader could say to you, "Okay. What does it mean?" And you would all be like, "Umm... Love your neighbour as yourself?" Right? And who's your neighbour? "Well, everybody." It's not a complicated passage. Like I said before, it's where we get our Good Samaritan Laws from. You know you're not allowed actually to pass by people who are in grave need. If you do so, and you don't pay attention to them, and you don't help them in their hour of need, you're actually complicit. You'll be judged by the law for not helping. There's all sorts of different Good Samaritan Laws all over the place in the Western world these days. And it comes from this passage. It's not hard to understand. Everybody understands what this story is about. The *problem* is it's very difficult to apply. Cause I don't love like this. Maybe you do, I don't... I doubt it. I don't love my neighbour as myself.

You say, "Why are you talking about this particular passage when it comes... I thought we were in Romans?" Right. We are in Romans. And in Romans 13:8-10, Paul basically picks up that command "Love your neighbour as yourself" and he says, "This is the fundamental rule for life in the kingdom of God. If you're a Christian and you want to respond to the grace of God shown you in Jesus Christ, Jesus died on the cross for you. God called you to eternal life, he has gifted you and you now are gonna lay yourself down before him and say, 'Look I'm gonna respond to that grace with everything I've got.' What you're gonna hear from God is 'Alright then. Go and do likewise.'" Love your neighbour as yourself. The whole law is summed up in that. Love your neighbour as yourself. And so Paul's got a few things to say about love, specifically this love for neighbour. One, he's gonna say it's our outstanding debt. It's an image he uses. Second, that love is the big idea... of what? Of everything.



And third, it has a particular look—love does. So those are kind of the three hooks that we'll hang our thoughts on okay?

[Love is Our Outstanding Debt]

So here's the first point he makes. Love is our outstanding debt. You can see it in Romans 13:8, it says,

“Let no debt remain outstanding, except the continuing debt to love one another, for whoever loves others has fulfilled the law.”

Now I want you to go back to Romans 13:7. Just the previous verse, okay? And you'll see the line of reasoning that Paul is using. That first line, “Let no debt remain outstanding” is a summary of the previous verse, which says Romans 13:7-8,

“Give to everyone what you owe them: If you owe taxes, pay taxes <heavy purposeful cough> [Excuse me. Cause this in the context of whether we should respond to the governments of our day. So if you're here last week, you heard that sermon. And you just sent an email that I threw away. So... **give to everyone what you owe them: if you owe taxes, pay taxes**]; if revenue, then revenue; if respect, then respect; if honor, then honor. Let no debt remain outstanding...”

That's his point. Let no debt remain outstanding. Now I just want to pause here for just a second. Because debt is a thing that we struggle with a little bit. The Bible is not condemning going into debt for Christians. But it does condemn the nonpayment of a debt owed. You can go into debt, which might be wise or unwise considering your circumstances at a particular time. But if you go into the debt, you have an obligation that you are called to pay off. Let no debt remain outstanding. And this is an important point just to pause and think about for just a second because I read a proverb this week it said “The only reason a great many Canadian families don't own an elephant is that they've never been offered an elephant for a dollar down and easy weekly payments.” Which is probably true... right? Cause we do. We go to the store and we're like, “Oh my goodness. This is a funnel that is going to... open up and head to the centre of the earth. I need one of these in my backyard. And look! It's only \$24.99 for the rest of my life a month! Honey! This will be great.” This is what... Seriously we put things on layaway, like all of that kind of thing. Pay our credit, you know pay things on our credit card as much as we want, so we're really in big debt often times. It's not wise, you know this, to accumulate a great amount of debt but it's downright sinful according to the Scriptures to not pay it back. It's not wise to accumulate it, but it's sinful to not pay it back.

There's actually a story that I came across a few years ago about this guy in the southern part of the United States, who came to faith in Jesus. And he had owed an enormous amount of debt and had actually tried to get out from under his creditors and he started several businesses and had claimed bankruptcy several times. This guy comes to faith in Jesus, and the first thing that happens after he



comes to faith in Jesus, like a week later, he comes to his pastor and says, “I have this burden on my heart.”

Pastor says, “What is it?”

“I have a burden on my heart that I have wronged all of these people. Like honestly, I feel so horrible about this. That part of my commitment to Jesus and laying down my life for him in response to his grace, is that I want to go back and pay all of these people back.”

The pastor’s like, “Wait a minute. That’s like millions of dollars.”

And he said, “Yeah.”

“Do you have it?”

“No... No. But I committed to work the rest of my life to see it my word be honoured when I made those agreements.”

“Well you don’t have to do it.”

“No. [Cause he’d been bankruptcy and stuff.] But I want to.”

You know that little story about Zaccheus? Little guy, climbs up on a tree, sees Jesus. Jesus says, “Hey listen, I want to go to your house today.” He’s a tax collector. He’s wicked in the community. He’s stolen from all sorts of people. Goes to his house for lunch, Jesus does. And halfway through the meal, Zaccheus stands up and says “Alright. Here’s the thing. I’m gonna pay back everybody what I’ve wronged them. Four times over. If I’ve wronged you, if I’ve not paid—If I’ve stolen from you or if I owe a deb, four times over I’m gonna pay it.” And the point of that story is, listen, when the gospel comes upon a person, it actually affects the way they think about their money. It should change the way you think about the repayment of debt. It’s what Paul’s getting at. We Christians should be people who honour our words. It’s what it means to live in the kingdom of God.

But that’s not what this passage is about. That was totally free. I just wanted you to know that completely, I’m not gonna charge you for that at all. It’s not what it’s about. You noticed the line itself. “Let no debt remain outstanding.” It’s just a sign of a transition from what he just said, to now what he’s gonna say. “Let no debt remain outstanding, except there is one debt that you will always owe.” The continuing debt to love one another. What’s he getting at here?

Alright, let’s imagine that I owe Ezra a billion dollars. Which I might owe him like... not the actual money, but honour. I don’t honour him very much. So, anyway. If I owe Ezra a billion dollars and Ezra decides he’s gonna wipe that away. And I’m so overwhelmed with gratitude for him, I say to him, “Oh because of how kind you’ve been to me, I’m going to lay my life down... I’m gonna try to repay portions of it throughout my life. Is that okay?” And he’s like, “Yeah of course. It’s fine.” Will I ever exhaust the debt? Will I ever pay him back, in other words, for the grace that he’s shown? Will I ever get to the point where I reach a billion dollars? Not on this salary. Just kidding. It’s a joke. Right? But you know... even if I own Google, am I ever gonna...No. I’m not gonna get there, eventually... It’s not gonna happen.

The image that we have in Scripture is basically you and I owing an enormous debt to God. And the debt is one of grace because of his grace. You and I have been sinners, who’ve run the wrong way,



God reaches out and he grabs us and he brings us back, he “redeems” us. That’s marketplace language. He forgives our debt. And then he calls us then to respond to the grace, to the forgiveness of debt, by worshipping him in a particular way. You say, “What way?” Well the love toward God and toward neighbour. So if you want to repay the debt, if you want to offer your life back to God, he’s gonna say “Right. This offering of your life back to me is gonna take a turn and form and that form is gonna be a love for your neighbour. Love your neighbour as yourself.” Will you ever love your neighbour as yourself enough to repay the grace debt? No. What do we say then? Well we say that you have an outstanding debt. What kind of debt? A debt of love. That’s what Paul’s saying, let no debt remain outstanding, except the continuing debt to love one another. Because of Christ’s outstanding grace toward us, our love for others will always remain our outstanding debt.

So I have a question for you, and this is just a real practical one: why is this so hard? Like this is the way that it’s supposed to work. God has graced us, we respond to the grace of God by loving our neighbours as ourselves. Why is that—that response so difficult? To love our neighbours as ourselves. Why is it so difficult when we read a passage like the Good Samaritan, we say, that’s really easy to understand but super hard to apply. So I got a couple of theories on why it’s really hard to love your neighbour as yourself.

Here’s the first one, we really have a fear of getting involved with other people. Cause you know, they’re really messy. Have you noticed that? If you get involved, things... you might get hit. You ever tried to break up a fight? You get in there, and... all of a sudden *you* get hit in the head. And you’re like, “What the heck?” There’s this lady named Kitty Genovese, have you ever heard of that name? She’s very famous actually, she actually died, she was 28 years old. And she, in 1964, was coming home in Queens, New York at three o’clock in the morning, and she walked down the street and she was stabbed. That’s not uncommon in 1964 in Queens, New York. What was weird about it is that there were a number of people who saw her being stabbed. Cause it’s apartment buildings right near it—very near where she was. Some doors were opened on the front of the apartment buildings and people when they heard her screaming, shut the doors [closes a door]. And they just assumed it was a domestic disturbance or something like that. One guy yelled out “Be quiet!” out of his door. And the guy who assaulted, who stabbed Kitty Genovese, took off. So she’s just lying there on the ground. Talk about it, story like the Good Samaritan, difference is nobody came out to help. Some people knew she was there, they just kinda closed their curtains, or they just... whatever. She crawled, tried to crawl back to her apartment, and half an hour later, the guy came back and stabbed her 13 more times. And people knew it was happening. They did nothing. By the way, this is where we get 911 from, did you know that? 911 started as a result of this event. Because there was no way prior to 1964 for people to call 911, at least in the United States. Or to call the police and getting an immediate response and not be, you know personally involved in this. So when psychologists looked at this entire event, and they were shocked. Everybody was shocked at it. Why didn’t nobody help? They came to the conclusion, after they interviewed a number of the people, they responded by these words “I’m just... I was just afraid of getting involved.”



Yes. And that's actually right. And you and I think, "Well that's awful. That's terrible." Yeah, but have you ever been in a meeting where there are two parties having kind of a disagreement, and you side very much with one of them, but you don't publicly in the meeting vocally side with them. Instead you keep your head down, and then after the meeting, which is always where things are done right? The meeting after the meeting. After the meeting, you go to the person you say, "You know I was really on your side about that." I've been the one sometimes, and this is hard to believe, I've often been the one in the angry discussion in the meeting, and then someone after the meeting will come to me and say "I really appreciated what you had to say." And I was like, "Why didn't you say something?" "Oh...I don't know... I just didn't want to get involved." Coward! Anyway... Nah.

That's why we don't want to get... That's why loving our neighbours, because honestly we know that it's gonna probably disrupt everything. We're afraid of what might happen if we get involved. If we go over to the guy on the side of the road, they might be hiding in the bushes or behind the rocks and they might come out and beat *me* up too! And I don't want to get beaten up.

Another reason I think that we don't get involved is, honestly... it's probably related to the first, it just takes a lot of time to get involved. You noticed that good Samaritan? You noticed how much time this guy spends at the end? I'm sure he was going somewhere... probably back to Samaria. Maybe he was going to visit his family somewhere, whatever. But he sees the guy on the side of the road, goes and gets involved, carries him down to the inn, stays with the guy at the inn, and then promises to come back after a few days to the inn, after spending all of his money. Oh my goodness... that's so much time. Do you know what's easier? Is just to push, hit the 'like' button on Facebook. Or Twitter, right? I'll retweet about this, "How horrible." And that's why we get involved in that kind of level and we think we've done basically our love for our neighbour because on Social Media we've approved of the right message or whatever it is. But the truth is, really loving your neighbour as yourself actually costs you a lot. It costs you a lot of time and energy, and our society values getting stuff done. And people are rarely done. They're like your kids' room, right? You clean it, and you're like, "Oh it's perfect." You shut the door, you go away, have a sandwich, you come back and it's like a tornado hit it. You're like, "What happened?" And your kids in the middle going "I don't know..." Cause people are like that. We mess ourselves up all the time. And it's difficult to fix us.

Regardless of the challenges though right, let's just be honest about the challenges and the things that go on in our hearts that stop us from wanting to love our neighbours as ourselves. But regardless of those challenges, what you're looking at here is that God wants us to respond to his grace with love for others.

[Love is the Big Idea]

And then he ratchets it up with the second point here. It's not only this is just a command, this is *the* command. So, love is the big idea. Secondly, Romans 13:9,



“The commandments, ‘You shall not commit adultery,’ ‘You shall not murder,’ ‘You shall not steal,’ ‘You shall not covet,’ and whatever other command there may be [I don’t know you just think of a command, right? Especially one that relates between you and somebody else. A command in Scripture. How you should act toward others, they’re all], are summed up in this one command: ‘Love your neighbor as yourself.’”

I’m not a finance guy. I often times go into finance meetings where the economically minded people, the accountants and others are sitting and talking about you know “Crude interest over the...” I don’t even know what they’re talking about and my eyes gloss over. The guy used to be our executive pastor, Steve Wiens, my dear friend, he used to come into those meetings with me and he used to give me a piece of paper. He always had a little piece of paper in his hand. He says, “This was for you.” And it was always like the executive, he called it an “executive summary”, I called it the “dumb guy sheet” right? Because I was like, “Oh... this is perfect.” It’s got just the summary of what everyone’s gonna be talking about. And I loved... loved it. I’ve been in lots and lots of other meetings before where I got a dumb guy sheet, and I love it. Me and the other dumb guys in the room, nod at each other and say [nods] “We are.. we’re equipped now” for this conversation.

Sometimes you just want the summary of the whole information. If you said to me, “Okay. The Old Testament law, which is really long. It’s got a whole book of Leviticus is involved in that. The Old Testament law, there’s lots and lots of laws, can you just give me a dumb guy sheet for it? Give me an executive summary for it.” What Paul is saying here is, “Yeah. All of those laws, particularly, the ones that have to do with you and your relation to other people, all of it can be summarized by ‘Love your neighbour as yourself’”. But how can that possibly be? Well he gives you an argument.

Okay, let’s take the word “You shall not commit adultery”. I was in a meeting at another place in another time, with a girl who was “dating” and by that I mean, sexually dating, a married guy. They were separated, the married guy and his wife. But they were trying to work it out and this girl had wanted to have coffee with me and sit down. She claimed to be Christian and she said, “So I just wanted to know what you thought of this, Pastor. Cause they’re kind of on their way to divorce but maybe not... and I love him. And we’re sexually active. Is this okay?” She said, in the meeting, “I work at a Christian school and all the other Christian school teachers I work with are saying ‘this is great’ and they’re excited for me. But I kind of feel like it might not be? So Pastor can you tell me?” “Sure. Umm...” So I said, “Alright I want you to imagine this whole thing works out for you. So you guys... divorce happens, you guys are together for the next 10 years. And in 10 years’ time, you guys have some troubles and you end up going in separating from him, or he separates from you and you’re trying to work it out. But you end up finding out that he now, is “dating” sexually, another woman who’s roughly your age and looks just like you right now. In that moment, how would you feel?” She said, “Well... not good.”

“Right. So go and do likewise.”

“I don’t quite understand,” she said.

“Oh... What I’m trying to tell you is you’re committing adultery, but your committing of adultery is actually just a form of your lack of love for your neighbour. If you love your neighbour as yourself, you



want to do to your neighbour what you would want to be done to you if you were in the same situation. So I'm putting you now in the same situation, what would you want to have happened?"

"Well I wouldn't want them to commit adultery."

"Yes!"

Right. You see that works? The foundational command is "love your neighbour as yourself" and it shows up in all sorts of different ways. Give you another one.

"You shall not steal," he says. You ever stolen your kids' french fries? Me a culprit. Steal my kids' fries, I call it "tax" and stuff like that. They will... I have a little girl and so some of my boys, one or two of my boys will have a pile of french fries in front of them, and my daughter's distractible, so they'll say "Oooh Sophie, look over there I think that's your friend." And she'll turn her head, and they'll grab six french fries off her plate and put them on theirs and start giggling. And then they'll do it again. And when they do it again, I reach over and grab twelves french fries off their plate and pull it back. And then they look at you and going "What are you doing?" I said, "Oh does it bother you when somebody steals your french fries when you're not looking? Is that a problem for you?" "Yeah! Why are you doing that?" Ugh, right? So thou shalt not steal is a function or a form of lack of love for your neighbour right? So this is what Paul's saying, "Listen the whole thing, the whole executive summary boils down to this: love your neighbour as yourself."

Can I just clarify something really quickly here? My fear is that some people are gonna say "Oh yeah, love your neighbour as yourself. I've heard that lots of times before." And you're gonna get in your car after the service, one of you, who thinks you're really clever is gonna say to their friend "You know you can't really love your neighbour if you don't love yourself." And I'm... on the one, listen I struggle with emotional health. So I totally get what you're saying in this. I do, right? Because sometimes we look in the mirror and we are despised by ourselves. And that is an emotional challenge and a mental challenge that we have. That's not what Paul's saying here. "Hey go love yourself and then you'll be able to love your neighbour." He's saying, "No you already love yourself. Cause you fed yourself this morning, you cleaned yourself this morning." If you're hungry right now, you're thinking about what you're gonna eat later. If you're bored you're on your phone right now... I see you. Right? Like you pleasure yourself all the time. We take care of ourselves all the time. He's saying, "Yeah. See? You always look after your needs. So love your neighbour, in the same way that you love yourself. Have concern for your neighbour in the same way you already have concern for yourself."

[What Love Looks Like]

But what does that look like? And in practical terms? So, here's the last one: what love looks like. Second part of verse 9, Romans 13:9-10,

"'Love your neighbor as yourself.' Love does no harm to a neighbor. Therefore love is the fulfillment of the law."



So here is the question that Paul wants you to ask yourself. Is what I'm doing to that other person, regardless of who they are or where they're from, regardless if they are a Samaritan, regardless of the wrong race, the wrong background, the wrong sexual orientation for you, regardless... whatever it is that you struggle with, doesn't matter who they are, is what I'm doing to that other person what I would want done to me if I were in the same situation? How do I seek their good and not their harm? So there's lots of examples of that.

Up on our Mission campus, we have this, there's a community group that heard that there's a single mother in the church. And she has some adult children and she needed to move from her house. And the community group didn't know her at all, contacted her on the phone, and said, "Hey we'd like to move you. So tell us where we need to be, what you need..." And she was like, "Well I guess I need some boxes and I need to be able to pack it up, but I don't have a lot of time for the packing up. And I need to be able to do all of those things... ugh." They said, "Listen why don't we just... we'll take care of it all for you. Cause like, seriously, we're all a bunch of married people and we can't imagine how difficult it would be to have to do the parenting thing on your own. So we're gonna help you out." So they did. They organized the whole thing and over a period of two weeks they went to her house, boxed up everything that she owned, rented a truck on their own, put it in there, moved her into the new place, unloaded it, bought the pizza on their own, fed her, this lady afterwards was so overwhelmed. With joy. What did they do there? All they did is take themselves and put themselves in her position and say, "Man if I were in that situation that would be really hard."

There's a ministry we have in our town called "Inasmuch Ministries". Inasmuch is run by Peter and Dawn-Lynn Prediger, it is a ministry to new refugees. Can you imagine what it would be like to be a refugee? You have to leave your country for political or religious reasons. Sometimes gender reasons. You have to leave your country, you have to leave everything you own, some cases you're a doctor there, a lawyer there. You've made a good life for yourself, but you have to leave because the government is oppressing you in some way or... your life is at risk because you've come to faith in Jesus in some cases. And you show up on the shores of Canada, and they say "Yeah you can come in." And then they just sort of send you into the abyss. Can you imagine what that would be like? You can't actually work as a lawyer or a doctor because you don't have the credentialing here. So now they say, "Well maybe you can drive a taxi or an uber... in a few months." Can you imagine what that'd be like? You don't have... you don't have anything. You got kids in tow, they don't have anything. Schools? They don't know the language that the government speaks when they speak to you. They have no idea about that language. And their solution, most people's solution, when they find out that you don't speak English, is to speak it <loud voice> louder. <shouting> Do you understand? </shout>. Can't even order food. Can you imagine what that would be like? Nobody looks like you. Can you imagine what that would be like? So their ministry is basically putting themselves into the shoes of another and saying, "You know what? That must be really hard. What they would need is a friend who knows the system and can hold them by the hand and lead them through this." They need somebody who can love their neighbour as themselves.



Can you imagine what it would be like to deal with same sex attraction? To, for whatever reason in your life, while everybody else wants to love people of the other gender, you feel an inclination to love your own gender. And you're a Christian, and you know—you want to follow God in this, and you know it's wrong. You're in the fight about it, and you want to repent of that, and you're struggling with it, but you can't say anything to anyone because you know like, the worst place to talk about this is for most people is at church—especially a conservative church like ours. So I can't be open about the challenge I have, even though I'm in the fight, I can't confess this particular challenge and sin and proclivity to people and so now I'm left all alone. Imagine what that would be like. To fight that particular sin in this particular time in our culture's divided moment. You know what they need? Someone to love them as themselves. Can you imagine if you were in their shoes, what you would want? What would it look like for you to do them good?

We have... I occasionally argue with my wife. Usually her fault. But like, we occasionally have a disagreement with my wife. And I say words that I shouldn't say and I... I remember going away several times, you get in the car and you drive away, <angry gibberish>. And they're always, the Spirit of God is always reminding me, "Jeff listen, if you were in her position and you had gone all day and work at the school to MEI, MEI! Can you imagine working in MEI for an entire day and then dealing at the end of all of that with other kids who are coming to your house, and you're expected to make the meal and your husband's sitting on the stinking' couch, watching a show or whatever... 'What's for dinner?' You know? And you show up and you get in a disagreement because you said something, 'Why didn't you pick the kids up on time today?' or something like that? And you accuse her of that. Can you imagine if you were in her shoes, how you would feel when someone like you saying that to her in the tone that you just used?" My response usually to the Spirit of God is, "No... I cannot." [audience laughs] Right?

Most of the arguments you and I have, in our marriages, in our good strong relationships are just plain failure to love our neighbour as ourselves. We just don't put ourselves in their situations. We don't know what it's like to walk in their shoes and to deal with the challenges that they deal with. You'd have a lot more peace if you love your neighbour as yourself.

I've sat across a table from people who are in a financial disagreement over businesses, and I found myself in the meeting, in the mediation meeting, with both parties saying "Can you imagine what it would be like to be in their shoes?" Yes. Their business have failed, things have not gone the way that they had planned. They owe you money. I get it. Totally. Can you imagine what it would be like to have your house at risk? All your assets at risk? All the things you've worked for basically be laid out now and have you say, 'you owe me!' Can you imagine what that would be like if you were in the situation, what would you want from somebody? Some understanding I would think. And then the person on the other side, "Yeah. That's right." Then turn to them and say, "Can you imagine what it would be like to actually sell a business to somebody who didn't pay? And how frustrating that would be? Can you imagine how hard that would be for that family... and those that could... shouldn't you be putting yourself in this situation? Most of the mediation stuff that we do as a church is just trying to get people to love their neighbour as themselves. Cause the whole law is summed up in that.



So here's my point. There are many in our lives lying in need on the roads we travel. In our families, in our businesses, in our social lives, there are many who are lying in need on the sides of the road we travel. What would you want if you were in their shoes? How would you do them good? Let no debt remain outstanding, except the continuing debt to love one another.

Let me pray.

Father I'm so thankful for your grace and for this passage. And I pray Lord that you'd help us to consider what it means, how it looks. I'm gonna trust your Spirit the next little bit to convict us of sin, to help us to see where we've been wronged and to confess it, Father and be filled by your Spirit to do better in the future. We're thankful for our Lord Jesus, you love us Father even when we don't do this well. So help us Father in response to your grace, to do it well, we pray in Jesus' name, Amen.