

## What is the Opposite of Poverty?

Scripture: Luke 10:25 – 37

March 16<sup>th</sup>, 2025

A lawyer, an authority on the Law of Moses, steps up to test Jesus. Jesus' test is a trick question that the lawyer thinks is not easy, and the test will trap Jesus. This is not an innocent asking for information, but it is an interrogation with hostile intent!

This test is not a practice exam, it is a TEST!

The question is – 'What must I do to inherit eternal life?'

It seems an easy question. It seems an easy test. It must have an easy answer. Think about the different ways the lawyer could have asked the question – What do I need to do to go to heaven? Or what must I do to be saved?

What answer would you give? (pause)

My answer might be – Accept Jesus Christ as your Lord and Savior, or be baptized, or feed the hungry, or welcome the stranger, or visit the sick and imprisoned.

Jesus returned the question to the sender with a question – What is written in the law?

Being an A+ student in the law, the lawyer quoted two scriptures from memory – Love your God and love your neighbor. I can see the lawyer smiling at all around him. I can the lawyer's chest puffing out!

Now the lawyer goes back on the offense, and he wants to justify himself, so he asked Jesus a second test question – Question 1B – Who is your neighbor?

This again seems like an easy question. This again seems like a simple test question. To answer this question, Jesus uses a parable. He tells the parable of the Good Samaritan.

The bad blood between Jews and Gentiles is boldly obvious in the Bible. Samaritans descended from the mixed-race population who occupied the Northern Kingdom of Israel following the destruction by the Assyrians in 722 B.C. The Samaritans were viewed as ceremonially unclean, socially outcasts, and religious heretics.

To find 'A Good Samaritan' is impossible!

In the parable, a man is attacked by robbers, and he is beaten and left for dead. A priest (a Temple senior) and a Levite (a Temple helper) pass by the injured man. They stay on the other side of road and do not even go over to see if the man is still alive!

Let us not be too quick to paint them as incredibly callous or consider them ungodly. Remember, if they touch a corpse, they are unclean, and they must go through a long process to become clean again in the Temple. If they touch a dead person, they would be ineligible for Temple service.

Next in our story, a Samaritan came by and stopped to help the injured man. He not only stopped and took care of him, he also took him to a house where he told the owner to help the man, and if there were any expenses, he would come back and pay the owner all his bills!

Jesus ends his parable by asking the lawyer which of these three - the priest, the Levite, or the Samaritan - was a neighbor for the injured man.

This is an easy question. This is a simple test! The lawyer answers Jesus – The one who showed mercy! Jesus quickly responds – *Go and do likewise!*

Whether the lawyer did, or whether the lawyer went back to his books to study more about the law, is not revealed. What is revealed is this – in what ways do we know precisely what to do, but fail to actually do it?

We know the answer to the test of life, but we fail the exam! We do not need to write the answer on our arms, on our shoes, or on a note, we need to write the answer on our heart!

Therefore, be the one who shows mercy! Go and do likewise! Go and do likewise!

At LTS, my class was asked this question – What is the opposite of poverty? I thought this was my chance to impress the others in the class and answer this one, but my shyness got the best of me. I would have answered – Being Rich! That answer was WRONG! Praise God for willing me to keep my mouth closed!

Do you think of poverty in the same way that I did - \$\$\$\$\$? Do you see poverty as a financial thing? Do you think of your wallet when discussing poverty?

Definition of POVERTY – lack or lacking, state of being poor, in need, absence. Notice that money is not mentioned.

Jesus did **NOT** think of poverty in that way. Jesus did **NOT** look at poverty as a financial thing. Jesus did **NOT** think of his wallet when discussing poverty.

The poverty Jesus spoke about was lacking in right relationships, absence of right relationships, and scarcity of right relationships.

So what is your most important right relationship in your life? Is it with your spouse? Sorry, Sherri, but no. Is it with your children? Sorry,

boys, but no. Is it with your grandkids? Sorry, Grayson, Skylar, Coby, and Morgan, but no! Is it with your family? But, no!

The most important right relationship in your life is the one that you have with God. This is the right relationship that Jesus talked about – the relationship with his father – our God!

As I am in my sixth year as your pastor, I have seen our numbers grow, I have felt our spirit soar, I have been touched by your faith, and I have sensed your commitment to our shared ministry.

I almost feel that someone should pinch me to wake me up, because this has been such a blessing for me and my wife. I wonder if I am dreaming?

Let us dream together – Let us dream heavenly dreams!

I have developed many right relationships within this congregation, and you have helped me get out of poverty. I feel rich being here today, and always, as your pastor.

Our community of faith is a poverty remover. Our community of faith will make us rich. Our community of faith is creating the opportunity for God to enter our lives. Our community of faith will put you in a right relationship with God!

We do this by following the teachings of Jesus Christ, and by praising and worshipping our Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ. It is through Him that a right relationship is made with God.

So here is my answer to the question – What is the opposite of poverty – COMMUNITY!

Let us pray:

May we live in a community of faith that makes us lack in poverty,  
but rich in faith in Jesus Christ.            AMEN.