

Text: Luke 10:25 – 37
Theme: What Must I Do to Inherit Eternal Life?

In his message from God's Word for us last week, Pastor Schultz reminded us that our Savior, Jesus, does everything well. Jesus does everything well, by providing everything we need for our physical life day after day. Jesus does everything well, by providing everything we need for our spiritual life. Two weeks ago, we heard the Good News that we are justified, that is declared "Not Guilty!" of our sins only because of Jesus. It is the blood of Jesus that washes away the guilt of your sins and mine, and makes us righteous, innocent, perfect in God's sight. In the Gospel Lesson for today, we once again have before us the question that mankind has been asking since the first fall into sin: "What Must I Do to Inherit Eternal Life?" I invite you to listen to a portion of the Gospel Lesson we heard read earlier from Luke chapter 10. At this time I will re-read for us verses 25 – 28:

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?"

²⁶ "What is written in the Law?" he replied. "How do you read it?"

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.'"

²⁸ "You have answered correctly," Jesus replied. "Do this and you will live."

In this event of Jesus' ministry before us, Luke reports that an "expert in the law" came to test Jesus. Perhaps this man came to Jesus looking for an answer that he had been struggling with for some time. Perhaps he wanted to find out more about what Jesus was teaching to the people. Perhaps he wanted to catch Jesus in some false teaching so he could be put on trial. Whatever this man's motives were, the question he asked is one that is asked by many people today as well, "What must I do to inherit eternal life?" It is clear where this "expert in the law" has placed his hope for eternal life: It is in himself and what he can say or do.

Seeing this, the Savior answers him, "What is written in the Law? How do you read it?" In other words, Jesus tells this man if you want to be saved by your obedience to the Law, what does the Law say. 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 have answered correctly,' Jesus replied. 'Do this and you will live.'" According to the teaching of the Law, this man was right. If he wanted to save himself he had to obey the commandments of the Lord, and obey each one of them perfectly. But, he knew from his own life that he failed to live that perfect life all the time, so we are told, "But he wanted to justify himself, so he asked Jesus, 'And who is my neighbor?'" The Savior then tells the parable of the Good Samaritan to show the man that everyone is his neighbor and that he is to show kindness to all people, not just to certain people that he chose to help.

It is part of your sinful nature and mine to think that we are able to do something to save ourselves. When the question is asked, "What must I do to inherit eternal life" the mirror of the Law answers clearly by showing us our sins and how we have failed to be perfect as the Law demands. In Isaiah 64 we read, "All of us have become like one who is unclean, and all our righteous acts are like filthy rags." And in his letter to the Romans, Paul writes, "No one will be declared righteous in [God's] sight by observing the Law; rather through the law we become conscious of sin...All have sinned and fall short of the glory of God...The wages of sin is death." This message of God's Law applies to each and every one of us here today. The sinful nature inside all of us wants to ask, "What must I do to inherit eternal life?" But when we honestly examine our lives in the light of God's Law, none of us is able to claim that we have obeyed the Law of God perfectly our entire lives. When we look to ourselves for the answer to the question about being forgiven and inheriting eternal life, the only result will be eternal death in the never-ending flames and torment of hell.

Think about what an inheritance is. It is something that is freely given to us. We didn't earn it. We didn't work for it. Rather, it is a gift given to us by someone. So it is with our inheritance of eternal life. We did not earn it. We did not work for it. Rather, the forgiveness of all of our sins and eternal life in heaven are free gifts to you and me, given to us by our gracious Savior-God in heaven. As we read from the opening chapter of Paul's letter to the Colossians, it is a gracious God who "has qualified [us] to share in the inheritance of the saints in the kingdom of light. For he has rescued us from the dominion of darkness and brought us into the kingdom of the Son he loves, in whom we have

redemption, the forgiveness of sins.” Our Savior, Jesus Christ, obeyed our God’s Law perfectly in your place and mine. Jesus offered his perfect life as the payment price demanded for our sins. As Jesus hung on the cross, our sinfulness and all our sinful thoughts, words and actions were placed on him. And in exchange, we have been given the free gift of forgiveness and the inheritance of eternal life at our Savior’s side forever in heaven.

As you and I come into God’s house today, this section of our Lord’s Word gives you and me the opportunity to hear once again the Good News that Jesus has won the forgiveness of all of our sins; that Jesus gives to you and me the inheritance of eternal life at his side in heaven. But, this section of Scripture also gives us an opportunity to review for ourselves the role of faith and good works. In light of what Jesus Christ has done for us, we do desire to live for him. Again, quoting from Colossians chapter one, we read, “We always thank God, the father of our Lord Jesus Christ, when we pray for you, because we have heard of your faith in Christ Jesus and of the love you have for all the saints—the faith and love the spring from the hope that is stored up for you in heaven and that you have already heard about in the word of truth, the Gospel that he came to you.” In his letter, God the Holy Spirit led James to write about the connection between believing in Jesus as our one and only Savior and the good things that we do. “What good is it, my brothers, if a man claims to have faith but has no deeds? Can such a faith save him? Suppose a brother or sister is without clothes and daily food. If one of you says to him, ‘Go, I wish you well; keep warm and well fed,’ but does nothing about his physical needs, what good is it? In the same way, faith by itself, if it is not accompanied by action, is dead. But someone will say, ‘You have faith; I have deeds.’ Show me your faith without deeds, and I will show you my faith by what I do.”

So we see from the Bible that there is a very close connection between believing in Jesus Christ as the only Savior from sin, and how we live our lives. The good things that we do are not done to earn our way into heaven, but rather they are a way for us to give thanks to the Lord Jesus for winning for us the forgiveness of sins and giving to us the inheritance of eternal life in heaven. In response to all that our loving Savior has won for us, we look for ways to live for him. Like the man in the parable of the Good Samaritan, when we see a person in need, we will help that person as we are able to, because of the goodness we have been shown by our gracious and forgiving Lord Jesus. But it is important for us to remember that we have something much more valuable to share with people than the material things of this world. We have the wonderful Good News of the Savior, Jesus Christ, to share with them. Listen again to words from Paul’s letter to the Romans, “But now a righteousness from God, apart from law, has been made known, to which the Law and the Prophets testify. This righteousness from God comes through faith in Jesus Christ to all who believe. There is no difference, for all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God and are justified freely by his grace through the redemption that came by Christ Jesus.” Yes, “the wages of sin is death”, God in his Law tells us. But, the Good News of the Gospel tells us that “the gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord.”

“What must I do to inherit eternal life?” The answer to that question is that Jesus Christ has already done it all for you and me. So a better question may be, “What will I do now that I have inherited eternal life?” Along with my fellow believers, I will set aside time in worship to offer thanks and praise to my gracious Savior-God for all that he has done for me. I will look for ways to use my time, talents and treasures in service to my Church. I will willingly help others in need as I am able to. With the help of God the Holy Spirit, I will live my life each day in joyful response to the great love shown to me through my Savior, Jesus Christ. We will join the Apostle Paul in praying that we might “live a life worthy of the Lord and may please him in every way; bearing fruit in every good work, growing in the knowledge of God, being strengthened with all power according to his glorious might...joyfully giving thanks to the Father who has...rescued us from the dominion of darkness and brought us into the kingdom of the Son he loves, in whom we have redemption, the forgiveness of our sins.” (see Colossians chapter 1) Rejoicing in the forgiveness of all of our sins through our Savior Jesus, and giving thanks that we are empowered by God the Holy Spirit to live for our Savior-God, we will close with a prayer at this time: “Thank-you, dear Lord Jesus, for giving to me the free gift of the forgiveness of all of my sins and the inheritance of eternal life. Help me each day to live a life of thankful service to you for all your goodness to me. Amen.”