**“Things I Wish Jesus Never Said” – Week 1 – Love Your Neighbor**

**April 1-2, 2017**

Hello everyone! We starting a brand new series that will be for two weeks called “Thing I Wish Jesus Never Said.” As some of you know, when you read through a Bible, the words of Jesus are highlighted in red instead of black. The reason for this is because Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John were either eyewitnesses or knew people who were eyewitnesses to these stories about Jesus. When Jesus said these things, they were either there or they knew someone who was there. The reality is that Jesus said many incredible things, but today, we’re going to look at some things he said that, well, are really hard to hear.

Jesus said a lot of things… He made commandments, he asked tough questions, he taught in parables that hit home for all of us, he said things that make us feel good, he said things that challenge us, and he said things that we honestly don’t want to hear. Today, we’re going to look at one of the statements that we probably wish Jesus never would have said.

This week, the statement that Jesus makes seems easy at first… actually at first thought everyone probably likes this command… *(Check this out… Good Samaritan news story video)*

**Let’s check out what happened in Luke 10:25-37 to learn about the circumstances that led Jesus to say the first thing some of us wish he wouldn’t have said!**

*“On one occasion an expert in the law stood up to test Jesus. “Teacher,” he asked, “What must I do to inherit eternal life?” ”What is written in the Law?” he replied. “How do you read it?” 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.” But he wanted to justify himself, so he asked Jesus, “And who is my neighbor?” 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. A priest happened to be going down the same road, and when he saw the man, he passed by on the other side. So too, a Levite, when he came to the place and saw him, passed by on the other side. But a Samaritan, as he traveled, came where the man was; and when he saw him, he took pity on him. He went to him and bandaged his wounds, pouring on oil and wine. Then he put the man on his own donkey, brought him to an inn and took care of him. 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.” ”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, “The one who had mercy on him.” Jesus told him, “Go and do likewise.”*

This parable illustrates the importance of loving God with our heart/soul/mind/strength, but there is a second commandment that Jesus emphasizes: to love our neighbor as ourselves. Seems pretty easy, right? Well, let me give you a little background on this parable. Let’s just say that Jews and Samaritans DID NOT hang out together, let alone like each other. Jesus did this on purpose to say that loving our neighbor may even include loving someone we don’t like or our worst enemies. Our THP today simplifies it for us…

**THP: Love your neighbor as yourself.**

Listen, guys…**Loving others isn’t easy.** It’s inconvenient. Most of the time, there isn’t any kind of mutual benefit. Maybe, in order to love someone, it is going to take up your time. I get it…we are all busy, we all have time commitments, and we all have priorities. It might cost you money. It might be doing something that we don’t like doing. The reality is that sometimes people do things to you that make it really hard to love them. If you have a sibling, you know exactly what I am talking about. Ha!

Unfortunately, the real issue is with us. Jesus gave his life for us to show us God’s love and the greatest love we will ever experience. Our problem is that we have a hard time loving others because we are sometimes selfish, self-serving, or unconcerned… you know, we take a “not my problem” attitude like the first 2 guys (the priest and the Levite) in the passage we just read.

**Loving others is a command.** It’s not like Jesus is just giving us some good advice or a suggestion. He is COMMANDING us to love our neighbor. When Jesus is asked what the greatest commandment is, he says it’s to love God, but he can’t seem to separate loving other people from it. He doesn’t even finish his sentence before he is attaching the second greatest commandment to it. He says “Love God and love your neighbor as yourself.”

When he says this, he is telling us that it is not enough just to love God, but that in order to love God COMPLETELY, you must also love his children. Loving people is necessary to us completely loving God, and if we don’t do that, then we are disobeying him. Disobeying God is sin, and when we sin, we are outside of God’s will, meaning that we aren’t loving him as we are expected to do. You can’t love one completely without loving the other.

In Matthew 25:31-46, Jesus says there are consequences for not loving others. It’s a longer passage, but it perfectly illustrates our THP. Check it out.

*“All the nations will be gathered before him, and he will separate the people one from another as a shepherd separates the sheep from the goats. He will put the sheep on his right and the goats on his left. “Then the King will say to those on his right, ‘Come, you who are blessed by my Father; take your inheritance, the kingdom prepared for you since the creation of the world. For I was hungry and you gave me something to eat, I was thirsty and you gave me something to drink, I was a stranger and you invited me in, I needed clothes and you clothed me, I was sick and you looked after me, I was in prison and you came to visit me.’ “Then the righteous will answer him, ‘Lord, when did we see you hungry and feed you, or thirsty and give you something to drink? When did we see you a stranger and invite you in, or needing clothes and clothe you? When did we see you sick or in prison and go to visit you?’*

*“The King will reply, ‘Truly I tell you, whatever you did for one of the least of these brothers and sisters of mine, you did for me.’ “Then he will say to those on his left, ‘Depart from me, you who are cursed, into the eternal fire prepared for the devil and his angels. For I was hungry and you gave me nothing to eat, I was thirsty and you gave me nothing to drink, I was a stranger and you did not invite me in, I needed clothes and you did not clothe me, I was sick and in prison and you did not look after me.’ “They also will answer, ‘Lord, when did we see you hungry or thirsty or a stranger or needing clothes or sick or in prison, and did not help you?’ “He will reply, ‘Truly I tell you, whatever you did not do for one of the least of these, you did not do for me.’ “Then they will go away to eternal punishment, but the righteous to eternal life.”*

The sheep are those that loved him and loved their neighbor as themselves…and the goats are those that chose not to love others. Jesus says that when we love and care for another person, it is as if we have loved and cared for him. However, when we choose NOT to love another person, it is the same as rejecting him. That’s tough.

Even though we live in a world that is full of hate, it is our responsibility to love our neighbors as ourselves. If we truly love others, sharing Christ with people and loving them is not optional…it’s a command…the most important part of being a Christian!

The very last verse in the book of Matthew, Jesus gave his disciples and followers one more command before he went to heaven to be with God. Here’s what it says in Matthew 28:19-20 ***– “****Therefore go and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, and teaching them to obey everything I have commanded you. And surely I am with you always, to the very end of the age.”*

The last thing that Jesus charges us to do is to go and make more disciples. Share the hope of Jesus with everyone that you can because there is nothing that you can do to love someone more than to introduce them to their Savior and the gifts of joy, freedom, forgiveness, and eternal life in heaven. It is our job! It is our responsibility.!

**Our THP is a big challenge today: Love your neighbor as yourself. Are you up for the challenge? What is it going to take for you to start loving God with your whole life? What is it going to take for you to love people, including those you don’t like? Is there a selfishness inside of you that’s preventing you from doing that right now? I want you to reflect on those questions a little bit and talk about them in your groups today. Before we go to our group discussion, let me pray for us.**