Where Jesus Leads: Following Him on the Way to the Cross

1. Read Luke 10:1-16. In verse 3, Jesus says, "Go your way; behold, I am sending you out as lambs in the midst of wolves." That image is meant to jar us. Because, in ordinary life, if a lamb were sent into a pack of wolves, we would expect only one outcome: the lamb would be torn apart. So Jesus does not soften the danger of the Christian mission. He does not describe His messengers as vicious predators, hunters, or spiritual conquerors. He calls them lambs.

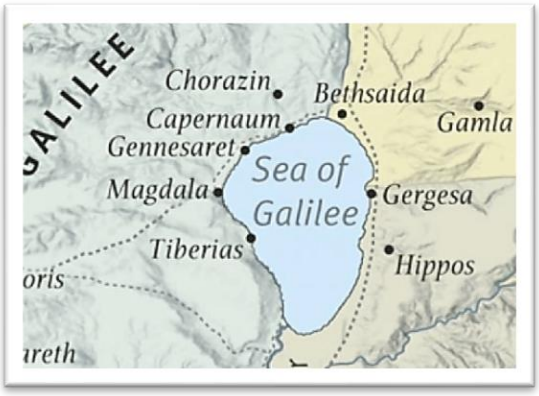
   That language is even more striking when we consider the technical force of the word "lamb." It evokes sacrificial imagery familiar from the Old Testament: the Passover lamb, the lamb of the burnt offering, the lamb associated with peace offerings. In other words, Jesus is not merely saying that His disciples will be weak in the eyes of the world. He is identifying their mission with sacrifice. They go bearing, in their lives and witness, the pattern of the Lamb Himself. Their ministry will not be marked by worldly power, coercion, or visible strength, but by weakness, suffering, and humility in the face of hostility.

   He has called them to a mission in which rejection is expected, suffering is not accidental, and worldly opposition is part of the calling. They are sent with full knowledge that the world is at enmity with the kingdom they proclaim. Like sacrificial lambs, they are sent not to dominate the world, but to serve within it, to suffer for the sake of the truth, and to bear the image of the true Passover Lamb who takes away the sin of the world.

   Discussion question: If Jesus intentionally sends His people out as "lambs among wolves," how should that reshape our expectations of Christian living and ministry today—especially when we are tempted to measure faithfulness by comfort, safety, influence, or success?

   It reminds me that faithfulness is not the same thing as ease or visible success. If Jesus sends us out as lambs, then hardship, rejection, and weakness are not signs that something has gone wrong, but often part of following Him. So instead of asking, "Is this comfortable, safe, or impressive?" we should ask, "Am I being faithful, humble, and obedient here?" That helps me remember that the goal of Christian life and ministry is not to win by worldly standards, but to bear witness to Christ with trust and love, whatever the cost.

2. Consider the map. Remember that Jesus' home was in Capernaum. So why does Jesus condemn the nearby Galilean cities of Chorazin and Bethsaida?
Because their citizens refused to repent and believe in Him as the Messiah, despite witnessing His mighty miracles firsthand.



- **Unmatched Privilege:** Along with Capernaum, these towns formed the "Evangelical Triangle" around the Sea of Galilee, where Jesus spent the majority of His earthly ministry. They received unparalleled exposure to His teachings and healing power.

- **Rejection of Truth:** Despite this abundant evidence, the residents did not change their hearts or accept His message.

- **Severe Judgment:** Jesus stated that if wicked, pagan Gentile cities like Tyre and Sidon had seen the same miracles, they would have repented long ago in "sackcloth and ashes". Consequently, Chorazin and Bethsaida would face a harsher judgment than those condemned cities.

This condemnation emphasizes the biblical principle that to whom much is given, much is required; having greater access to spiritual truth brings greater accountability when it is rejected.
Would you

Note: Jesus said, "Stay in that house." Eat and drink with them and "do not move around from house to house." Speculate as to why that might be. What might they be tempted to do if they moved from house to house? Perhaps if they moved from house to house, they might be tempted to find the "best" house to stay at. They might also be tempted to strive for gain instead of giving Jesus' peace, healing, and proclaiming the kingdom.

An interesting observation is that by staying at one place the entire for the entire period of time a strong relationship and a strong base might be formed. From there then possibly other emissaries might be sent out in the future. This might also be the basis for the early house churches.

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3. Read Luke 10:17–24. The disciples return exhilarated by what they have seen God do through them: demons submit, Satan's kingdom is shaken, and Jesus confirms that their ministry has truly struck a blow against the powers of darkness. In dramatic language He says: "I saw Satan fall like lightning from heaven" (Luke 10:18). The gospel they proclaim is powerful. It plunders Satan's domain. In that sense, this moment echoes Jesus' promise that the gates of hell will not prevail against His church. Wherever Christ is preached and received, Satan's rule is being broken.

Yet Jesus immediately redirects their joy. Why does He tell them not to rejoice mainly in spiritual power or ministry success, but rather that their names are written in heaven? What does that reveal about the deepest foundation of Christian joy, identity, and ministry?

Their greatest joy is not that God works through them, but that they belong to Him. Jesus redirects the disciples away from finding their identity in ministry success, authority, or visible results, and anchors their joy in saving grace: their names are written in heaven.

This is the foundation of Christian identity and joy. We rejoice not first in what we do for God, but in what He has done for us in Christ. That guards us from pride in success and despair in failure, because our standing with God does not rise or fall with ministry outcomes.

Luke deepens this by showing Jesus rejoicing in these things. The greatest privilege is being known and saved by the Father through the Son. The disciples get to see all this happening through Jesus. Not even the prophets and kings of the Old Testament knew this wonder.

❶ Read Luke 10:25–37. Who is it that puts Jesus to the test, and what do we know about this kind of person?

The one who tests Jesus is a lawyer—not a modern attorney, but an expert in the Torah, the Law of Moses. This is someone highly trained in Scripture, skilled in interpreting God's commands, and respected as a religious authority. He is not asking an innocent question for personal growth; Luke tells us plainly that he stood up "to test" Jesus. That means his question is not neutral. He wants to probe Jesus, perhaps to expose Him, challenge Him, or force Him into a theological mistake. But he is ultimately on who Jesus is referring to in the previous verses—one who Jesus says the Father has "hidden these things from the wise and understanding and revealed them to little children" (Luke 10:21).

✝ What answer is the lawyer looking for?

The lawyer asks, "What shall I do to inherit eternal life?" Already the question reveals his assumptions. He is looking for a deed-centered answer—something to perform, accomplish, or achieve. The answer he likely expects is: keep the Torah. In other words, eternal life would come through proper obedience to God's Law.

And in one sense, that is exactly where Jesus directs him: "What is written in the Law? How do you read it?" The lawyer responds correctly by summarizing the Law as love for God and neighbor. But the real issue is not whether he knows the right words. The deeper issue is **how he reads the Torah**.

✝ Why does interpretation matter so much here?

The Torah—meaning "instruction," often referring to the first five books of the Bible—is often reduced to a rulebook, a system of moral achievement. Read that way, it becomes a ladder: obey enough, and perhaps God will reward you.

But that is not the deepest message of the Torah.

The Torah is first the story of **God's gracious choice of Israel**, His mercy toward a sinful and stubborn people, and His faithfulness despite their failures. God's grace comes first. His mercy is primary. His commands are given within that relationship of grace, not as a way for sinners to earn His love.

If that central truth is lost, everything changes. Then the focus shifts:
- from what God gives to what people do,
- from inheritance to achievement,
- from mercy to merit.

That is exactly the trap in Luke 10.

† How does this affect the way we read the Good Samaritan?

If we read the Torah mainly as a manual for moral effort, then the parable of the Good Samaritan becomes a simple lesson: **"Be nicer. Help people in need. Try harder."

That interpretation is not false in the shallowest sense—but it is far too small. Worse, it can turn this parable into pure Law: another burden, another command, another impossible demand to love perfectly.

But this parable is not mainly about giving us one more heroic example to imitate. It is meant to drive us deeper—to expose our self-justification, to shatter our narrow definitions of "neighbor," and to reveal that the heart of God's revelation is mercy.

The lawyer wants limits: Who counts as my neighbor?
Jesus gives him no limits. Instead, Jesus redefines the question. The issue is not, "Whom must I love?" but, "What does mercy look like?"

† So what is the real point of the parable?

The point of the parable is not merely: "Go and do better."
The point is that **mercy stands at the center of God's will and God's revelation.

This mercy is not abstract. It is not sentimental. It is God's concrete compassion for the wounded, helpless, half-dead sinner. And ultimately, this mercy is revealed fully in Christ.

That is why the parable must finally be read Christologically. Jesus is not just giving a moral illustration; He is revealing the very heart of God. The Samaritan's unexpected compassion points us to Christ, who comes near to the broken, the abandoned, and the unclean; who does not merely advise the wounded but rescues them; who binds up wounds, bears cost and gives life.

So yes, the parable challenges us. But first it reveals something far greater:
the center of Scripture is mercy—God's mercy toward sinners, God's mercy toward a fallen world, and that mercy embodied and fulfilled in Jesus Christ. St. Paul takes up this same issue (how the Torah should be interpreted) in Ro. 10. Read Ro. 10:1-13 taking note especially of verses 5-8. Also read Deuteronomy 30:12-14, which is freely quoted in Romans 10:6-8.

5 While the lawyer seems to have a surface understanding of the true purpose of Torah—showing God's love and mercy—the lawyer's next question implies that he still is blind. Why does the lawyer ask, "Who is my neighbor?"

He asks because he is looking for a limit. He wants a definition that will narrow his responsibility. Instead of asking how to love more broadly, he asks in a way that suggests: "Who do I actually have to love?" The sermon explains that this reflects the sinful human tendency to justify ourselves and avoid the full demand of God's law. We want to know who counts and who does not, especially when it comes to enemies, strangers, or people we would rather ignore.

6. What do the priest and Levite show us about the danger of religion without love? And why would everyone have been surprised that the Samaritan was the one who showed mercy?

The priest and the Levite show us something deeply tragic: it is possible to know God's law, speak about holiness, and appear religious, yet have a heart untouched by mercy. They likely knew exactly what God desired. They knew His commands. They knew His will. And yet when they stood before a broken, bleeding man lying helpless on the road, they did not stop. They did not bend down. They did not love.

Their actions reveal the frightening danger of religion without compassion. A faith that knows the words of God but does not reflect the heart of God becomes cold, hollow, and distorted. Human beings were created to bear the image of God, and God is merciful. God sees the hurting. God draws near to the wounded. So when religion passes by suffering with indifferent eyes, it no longer looks like God at all.

That is what makes this story so piercing. The men everyone would have expected to stop and help—the respected, the religious, the outwardly righteous—are the ones who walk away. And the man no one expected to help, the one who was despised and thought of as the enemy, is the one whose heart breaks open with mercy. If anyone seemed least likely to embody the love of God, it was him. No one would have thought that he was a perfect keeper of the Law/Torah—all the rules and regulations of the Old Testament that the pharisees so zealously kept. And yet Jesus makes him the hero of the story.

Why? Because Jesus is exposing the poverty of self-righteousness and the beauty of grace. He is confronting the kind of heart that wants to justify itself, draw narrow boundaries, and love only those who seem deserving. This is further highlighted by the fact that Jesus also seems to make it clear that the man in the ditch is also a Jew. Remember he's leaving Jerusalem and going to Jericho. So not only does the Samaritan do the right thing where as the Priest and Levite do the wrong thing. But he also helps the one he should naturally hate—the Jew dying in the ditch.

And in the Samaritan's mercy, we see a glimpse of the mercy of God Himself. Romans 10:6–11 reminds us that salvation does not come through our own righteousness, our own efforts, or our own worthiness, but through the grace of God given to sinners. God shows mercy to those who could never earn it. He loves those who were far off. He saves those whom He has every reason to reject.

7. So who does each person in the parable represent?

Priest & Levite—Anyone who looks to their own righteous acts and behavior as justification before God. Because it will inevitably make them blind to what God truly wants. Indeed, these two probably thought they "had" to hurry by the wounded man because they were probably on their way to serve at the temple in Jerusalem. They may have thought they had no time to stop and help because they had more important things to do.

The man in the ditch—We know the least about him. But what is most important is that he is the one who receives mercy and total unmerited grace—from the least likely person. He's all of us—all sinners. As Romans 5:12ff says, In Adam, we are all one rebellious man. We are all under a death sentence. We are all ugly with sin in God's eyes. His natural enemies. We are about as bad off as being beaten and left for dead by robbers out in the middle of nowhere. What are the odds that God would care enough to stop and save us?

The Good Samaritan—He is Jesus! The unlikely traveler. The natural enemy of sinners. But He travels into this fallen wilderness world and actually does bother to stoop low—humbling Himself to the point of death—to bind up, heal, and save poor, miserable sinners like us.

That means this parable is not about telling us to be nicer people. It is calling us to repentance. It is showing us that all of us, in one way or another, are the wounded man on the road—helpless, needy, unable to save ourselves. And it is also showing us what a true child of God looks like: one who has received mercy and therefore becomes merciful.

Those who have truly been touched by the grace of God cannot remain hard-hearted. When God's mercy reaches a person, it changes them. It teaches them to see others differently—not as enemies, interruptions, or burdens, but as fellow image-bearers in need of compassion.

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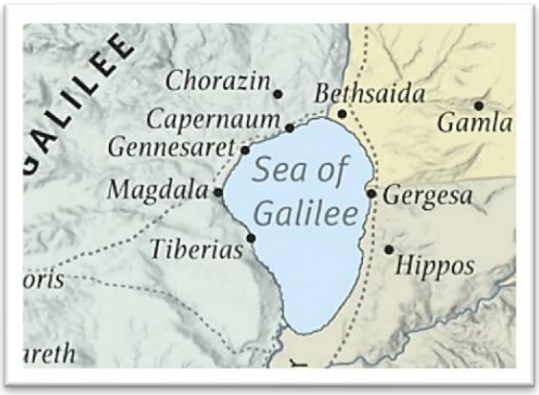

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