

*Sermon by Terry Trivette*  
***That's a Good Question – 12***  
**Luke 10:25-28**  
**“Listening to the Law”**

1. Are you a law-abiding citizen? Are you sure? Did you know that there are now over 4,000 federal crimes filling some 27,000 pages in the U.S. Code?<sup>1</sup> That is not to mention the tens of thousands of state and local laws that are currently on the books.
2. While you may not be a hardened criminal, chances are that many of you are in fact law-breakers. For instance, those of you who made a copy of your favorite CD for your friend are guilty of breaking the 1997 NET act, which prohibits reproduction of copyrighted materials. It is punishable by imprisonment and a fine of up to \$250,000.
3. Many of you broke the law on your way to church today, when your right foot led you astray by causing your car to exceed the posted speed limit. Did you realize there were so many outlaws in your church?
4. In Luke chapter 10, an expert in Jewish religious law crafted a clever question he thought would entrap Jesus. In verse 25 it says, “And, behold, a certain lawyer stood up, and tempted him, saying, Master, what shall I do to inherit eternal life?”
5. The Lord Jesus responded to this theological quiz with a question of His own. He asked the religious lawyer, “What is written in the law? how readest thou?”
6. The law to which Jesus was referring was not the Roman law which ruled at that time, but the eternal, moral law of God as revealed in the Scriptures. Jesus pointed this man toward the Law of God in order to answer his question about eternal life.
7. I want us to consider the question Jesus posed to this man. What *does* the Law say? What do we learn when we listen to the Law.
8. In the New Testament, we are taught that the Old Testament Law plays a very important role in our lives. As we examine this text, and consider this question from the Lord, we learn something about ourselves and our need for the salvation that is found in Jesus Christ.
9. When we listen to the Law, we find first of all that:

**I. THE LAW COMMANDS US**

1. Jesus asked this religious lawyer to speak about the subject with which he was most familiar. This man knew the Law of God intimately.

2. The Jews had carefully studied the Law as contained in the Old Testament, and they had broken it down into 238 positive laws and 365 negative laws for a total of 613.

3. Rather than recite them all, the lawyer gave a summation which most agreed was the essence of the Mosaic Law. In verse 27, the lawyer abbreviated the Law into two, broad commands. He said, "Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy strength, and with all thy mind; and thy neighbour as thyself."

4. When we consider these two "greatest" commands, we learn something about the expectations and demands of God's Law. Notice with me a couple of things the Law commands for us. First of all, the Law commands:

#### **A. A complete love**

1. In verse 27, the religious lawyer gave a synopsis of the Mosaic Law, beginning with the command, "Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy strength, and with all thy mind..."

2. Jesus agreed with this man's assessment, and therefore we know that when the entirety of Old Testament Law is distilled down to its essence, what it demands from man, and commands for man is a total, complete, unadulterated, unmitigated, undiluted love for God.

3. Notice in verse 27, the four elements that are to be completely consumed with love for God. The law calls for men to love God with all their heart, soul, strength, and mind.

4. In other words, the Law demands that a man love God with all his emotional, spiritual, physical, and mental capacities. His entire being is to be enamored with His Creator.

5. The Law of God makes no provision for a lukewarm, casual, inconsistent, incomplete devotion to God. Lazy love is not permitted under the eternal edicts of God.

6. According to the Law, a man either completely loves God, or he completely disobeys God. The Law commands a complete and pure love for God.

7. When you turn on the tap at your kitchen sink, the water may be clear, but is it pure? A recent survey of 19 major U.S. Cities, including Atlanta, found that the

tap water was anything but pure. Among other things, the water coming through the pipes included toxins such as rocket fuel, arsenic, lead, and pesticides.<sup>ii</sup>

8. The Law of God calls for a pure love towards Him that is untainted by any sinful toxin. Notice something else about the commands of the Law. Notice not only that the Law commands a pure love, but also further, it commands:

### **B. A compassionate life**

1. Notice the rest of verse 27. The second half of this abbreviated Torah is, "...love...thy neighbor as thyself."

2. The Law not only addresses man's relationship to God, but also His relationship with his fellow man. The Law deals not only with vertical issues, but horizontal ones as well.

3. To love your neighbor as yourself is to treat them with the same respect and care that you would take with your own life.

4. The humanitarian love that is called for by the Law of God requires a compassionate and caring life in which you would do nothing to someone else that you would not subject yourself to as well.

5. The Law of God offers no haven for selfishness. The Law of God knows nothing about the survival of the fittest, and the dog-eat-dog culture that pervades much of our world.

6. Last week on Interstate 10 in Phoenix, a young man named Nick Comeione stopped to see if he could help with a tractor trailer that had crashed. When he got closer to the scene, he realized that the truck was on fire, and the driver was trapped inside. Nick grabbed a six-foot long pipe from his truck and busted out the windshield of the crashed rig, allowing the driver to escape. Later, Nick told the local paper, "Everyone was shaking my hand and calling me a hero. I just hope someone would do the same thing for me."<sup>iii</sup>

7. According to the Law of God, living with compassion for others is not heroic; it's holy. Treating others as you would yourself is nothing short of what God's Law commands.

8. Jesus asked, "What is written in the Law?" As we listen to what the Law says, we find that the Law does speak to us. It issues commands for our lives.

9. Notice something else we learn when we listen to the Law. We find not only that *the Law commands us*, but we find also that:

## **II. THE LAW CONDEMNS US**

1. The religious lawyer gave his summation of the Mosaic Law, and in verse 28, Jesus said to him, "...Thou hast answered right..."

2. No doubt, for a brief second, the lawyer was proud of his answer, until Jesus finished his statement and said, "...this do, and thou shalt live..."

3. The Law of God speaks to mankind and commands and demands certain things from them. Standing before the righteous commands of the Law, we find ourselves condemned by its decrees.

4. Notice with me a couple of ways in which the Law condemns us. We are condemned by:

#### **A. The perfection the Law demands**

1. The Lawyer was correct to say that the Law requires a complete love for God and compassionate life towards others. Jesus affirmed His answer, and then he said two very important words – "this do".

2. The problem with mankind is not the knowing of the Law; it is the doing. Men are conscious of God's demands; they are just unable to fully comply with them.

3. The Law says that we are to love God with a complete love, and yet, no man can continually and completely love God. All men have failed in their devotion and duty to their Creator.

4. The Law says that we are to love our neighbors as ourselves, and yet all men are possessed with a natural tendency toward selfishness.

5. The Law of God is not pliable, compromising, or soft. It is rigid, hard, and exacting. It calls for perfection and obedience, and therefore, it condemns fallen men who fail to keep it.

6. The Apostle Paul said in Romans 3:10 says, "There is none righteous, no, not one." He goes on in verse 23 to say, "For all have sinned, and come short of the glory of God."

7. This year the scoring has changed, but it used to be the Olympics scored on a scale in which a 10 was a perfect score. The "perfect 10" was rare, but in some cases an athlete's performance was deemed by the judges as flawless.

8. The Law demands a perfect 10, and yet fallen man is incapable of achieving that perfect obedience. The Law condemns us by the perfection it demands. Notice also further that the Law also condemns us by:

## **B. The punishment the Law declares**

1. By its nature, a law will not only establish an expectation, but it will also declare a punishment or a penalty if that law is not kept.
2. This is no less true when it comes to the Law of God. Ezekiel 18:20 says, "The soul that sinneth, it shall die." Romans 6:23 says, "The wages of sin is death."
3. The Law tells us what an absolutely holy God expects from us. It also tells us what is required when we fail to meet those expectations. The Law condemns us because it declares the punishment and judgment of God upon sin.
4. Increasingly today, people don't like to hear about the judgment of God. They are uncomfortable with concepts such as the wrath of God. They would rather hear about a god that overlooks sin, and winks at the evils of humanity.
5. Unfortunately, that grandfatherly, permissive god is no god at all. If God is not just, and does not punish unrighteousness and sin, then He is not God.
6. Hillsboro County Superior Court Justice Gillian Abramson passed a tough sentence on a convicted burglar, sentencing the thief to upwards of nine years in prison. Even in New Hampshire, where Hillsboro County is located, the people were grateful for her strong ruling. Over 100 people posted comments on the local paper's web site, and they were overwhelmingly in support of the judge. One woman said, "I could not agree more with the judge. Good for her."<sup>iv</sup>
7. It is interesting that in our day people want their judges to be tough on crime, but they want their god to be soft on sin.
8. Because the God of the Bible is impeccably holy, and perfectly just, the Law declares the punishment of sin, and condemns all those who commit it.
9. The Lord Jesus asked, "What is written in the Law? How readest thou?" When we listen to the Law we find that it condemns us.
10. Notice a third and final truth that we draw from this text. We find not only that *the Law commands us*, and *the Law condemns us*, but notice also that when we listen to the Law, we find that:

## **III. THE LAW CONFRONTS US**

1. Jesus said to his questioner, "Do what the Law says, and you will have the eternal life you seek."
2. While that is a true statement, in that statement, the lawyer was confronted with a couple of truths that every man needs to face.

3. The Law gives us the expectations of a holy God. It condemns us in our failures to meet those expectations. However, it does not stop there. The Law commands us and condemns us that it might confront us with two most important truths.

4. Notice the two truths that we are confronted with in the Law. First of all, the Law confronts us with:

#### **A. The grimness of our situation**

1. Someone may ask why the Law demands from man what man is unable to give. Is God just playing games with us?

2. In the book of Romans, the Apostle Paul explains the true reason for the Law. The Law was not given in order to give men a way through which they could reach heaven. No, the Law was given to show men that they were *not* going to heaven.

3. In Romans 3:19, Paul says, "Now we know that what things soever the law saith, it saith to them who are under the law: that every mouth may be stopped, and all the world may become guilty before God."

4. The Law was given to confront men with their guilty condition before God. The Law is not just direction for men; it is a diagnosis of their condition.

5. Imagine a man who goes to his doctor, has blood work done, and then the doctor informs him that he has cancer. Imagine that man becoming angry with the doctor because of his diagnosis. The man should not be offended that the doctor told him about his disease. The man should be grateful that the doctor revealed the reality of his situation.

6. In much the same way, the Law of God does not exist merely to insult men, or taunt them. The Law of God exists to point men to the depravity and desperation of their guilty standing before God.

7. Men who are angered by the stringency and perfect demands of the Law miss the point of its existence. The Law confronts us with the grimness of our situation.

8. Notice not only that the Law confronts us with the grimness of our situation, but notice also further that it also confronts us with:

#### **B. The glory of our Savior**

1. The Law says “do”, but man’s depravity and sin impair him, and prevent him from doing what the righteous law demands.
2. Justice calls for man’s punishment, and God would be right to judge all sinners for their rebellion and disobedience to His Law.
3. Yet, rather than condemn the world He loved to an eternal hell, God provided a way in which the just demands of the law could be met, and sinful men could be justified before God.
4. If a man could keep the Law perfectly, and then that man would die in the stead of guilty sinners, sin would be punished, and the righteousness of the substitute could be transferred to the guilty.
5. On the cross, 2,000 years ago, God’s only Son, the sinless Lord Jesus Christ offered His innocent life up in the place of guilty sinners.
6. Jesus bore on His back the sins of fallen humanity, and as God poured out His righteous wrath upon His beloved Son, mankind was offered the only hope that is available to Him.
7. When you understand what transpired on the cross, and the work that Christ accomplished there, you begin to understand why all of heaven is filled with praise to the Lamb that was slain.

*Praise Him, Praise Him,  
Praise the Lamb for sinners slain,  
Give Him glory all ye people,  
For His blood has washed away each stain!*

1. Look again at the question this shady lawyer posed to Jesus. He asked in verse 25, “What shall I do to inherit eternal life?”
2. The real answer to that question is nothing. There is nothing you can “do” to inherit eternal life. No man finds eternal life in something they do. Eternal life can only be found in something that has already been done.
3. What does the Law say? When we listen to it, we hear God give His righteous demands. We realize that we cannot keep them. Then, we are confronted with the need for a Savior.
4. The demands of Mt. Sinai can only be met by the death at Mt. Calvary.

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<sup>i</sup> Krause, Mike, How Many Laws Did You Break Today?, Opinion Editorial, 8/13/08, [http://www.i2i.org/main/article.php?article\\_id=1156](http://www.i2i.org/main/article.php?article_id=1156)

<sup>ii</sup> Study Finds Safety of Drinking Water in U.S. Cities at Risk, National Resources Defense Council Website, 8/13/08, <http://www.nrdc.org/water/drinking/uscities.asp>

<sup>iii</sup> McGrath, Kelly, Goodyear Man Rescues Driver from Burning Truck, 8/8/08, *The Arizona Republic*, accessed 8/13/08, <http://www.azcentral.com/12news/news/articles/2008/08/08/20080808abrkmovingtruck0808-CP.html>

<sup>iv</sup> Rayno, Garry, Tough Sentence Wins High Praise, 8/1/08, *UnionLeader.Com*, 8/13/08, <http://www.unionleader.com/article.aspx?headline=Tough+sentence+wins+high+praise&articleId=14dd9a02-671a-44b3-8554-de403042cd94>