

## Deeds Not Done.

Text: Luke 10:25-28

1) What is actual sin?

Suggested Hymns:

2) Undone Deeds of the Law

344, 270, 380, 332, 324

The grace of the Lord Jesus Christ, and the love of God, and the fellowship of the Holy Spirit, be with you all. Amen.

The text for our sermon today is Luke 10:25–29, <sup>25</sup> *And behold, a certain lawyer stood up and tested Him, saying, “Teacher, what shall I do to inherit eternal life?”* <sup>26</sup> *He said to him, “What is written in the law? What is your reading of it?”* <sup>27</sup> *So he answered and said, “You shall love the LORD your God with all your heart, with all your soul, with all your strength, and with all your mind,’ and ‘your neighbor as yourself.’”* <sup>28</sup> *And He said to him, “You have answered rightly; do this and you will live.”* <sup>29</sup> *But he, wanting to justify himself, said to Jesus, “And who is my neighbor?”* (NKJV)

Lord God, heavenly Father, sanctify us through Your truth. Your Word is truth. Amen.

Dear friends in Christ,

In Sunday-School the children learn Bible texts and Luther’s Small Catechism. The lessons are opened with a hymn.

First in *Luther’s Small Catechism* are the Ten Commandments. The First Commandment is **You shall have no other gods.** *What does this mean for us?* We are to fear, love, and trust God above anything else.

And so on through the Catechism the children learn the *Ten Commandments*, *The Apostles’ Creed*, *The Lord’s Prayer*, *The Sacrament Of Holy Baptism*, *The Sacrament Of The Altar*, *The Office Of The Keys And Confession*, and also the *Table Of Duties*.

Likewise, the youth of believing Israelites would have known the moral Law (The Ten commandments) and the Ceremonial Laws. When Jesus came upon earth, people knew the Law. They had gained a knowledge of it in Jewish homes and schools.

This we see when a certain lawyer came to Jesus with the question, *“Teacher, what shall I do to inherit eternal life?”* Jesus asked him, *“What is written in the law? What is your reading of it?”*

The man did not mention any particular Commandments, but gave a summary of the whole Law according to Deut. 6 and other parts of Scripture. *“You shall love the LORD your God with all your heart, with all your soul, with all your strength, and with all your mind,’ and ‘your neighbor as yourself.’”*

Every Commandment is important. Every one is God’s word. But more important is the spirit of the Law. For example we read in Matthew 5:21–22, <sup>21</sup> *“You have heard that it was said to those of old, ‘You shall not murder, and whoever murders will be in danger of the judgment.’”* <sup>22</sup> *But I say to you that whoever is angry with his brother without a cause shall be in danger of the judgment.*

And likewise we read in 1 John 3:15 that <sup>15</sup> *Whoever hates his brother is a murderer.*

The Ten Commandments are like ten pearls strung on a silken cord. *“Love is the fulfilling of the Law.”* If this cord breaks, if we do not have the love which God requires, all pearls will be spilt, all the Commandments will be broken. We read in Romans 13:10, <sup>10</sup> *Love does no harm to a neighbor; therefore love is the fulfillment of the law.*

It is also necessary to remember that it is not only sin to do wrong against the Ten Commandments, but it is also sin to omit to do good as God’s Law requires.

Therefore, today let us consider not only the transgression of Ten Commandments, but also the *Undone Deeds of the Law*. May the Lord bless our meditation.

### 1. What Is Actual Sin?

Let us first look at *Luther’s Small Catechism*, Question 98. **What is actual sin?** Actual sin is every act against a commandment of God in thoughts, desires, words, or deeds.

We read in Matthew 15:19, <sup>19</sup> *For out of the heart proceed evil thoughts, murders, adulteries, fornications, thefts, false witness, blasphemies.*

There are sins of commission as we read in James 1:15, <sup>15</sup> *Then, when desire has conceived, it gives birth to sin.* These are sins that we do.

These are called “actual sins”, because we act or do them. We commit them in our hearts by having evil desires, wishes, and longings.<sup>1</sup> We commit them in our minds by having evil thoughts and imaginations.<sup>2</sup> We commit them with our mouths by cursing,<sup>3</sup> swearing, blasphemies, false witness,<sup>4</sup> filthy talking,<sup>5</sup> calling insulting names,<sup>6</sup> and teaching false doctrines.<sup>7</sup> We commit them in our deeds, which spring from the evil lusts of the heart. All these are called sins of commission.

However, there are also sins of omission as we read in James 4:17, <sup>17</sup> *Therefore, to him who knows to do good and does not do it, to him it is sin.* This is the good we fail to do.

We are also guilty of a real sin when we neglect to do what we ought to do, as, when we do not fear, love, and trust in God, do not pray, praise, and give thanks, do not hear and learn His Word, and do not do the many good things we should do for our neighbour.

The priest and Levite sinned, when they passed by the helpless man at the wayside,<sup>8</sup> the rich man sinned in not helping poor Lazarus.<sup>9</sup> These are called sins of omission, and we are guilty of many of them.

It is not enough that we refrain from evil, keeping ourselves unspotted from the world,<sup>10</sup> but we must also do what God has commanded, and be zealous of good works.<sup>11</sup>

We must also acknowledge that we also commit many sins of which we are not aware, as we read in Psalm 19:12, <sup>12</sup> *Who can understand his errors? Cleanse me from secret faults.*

## 2. Undone Deeds Of The Law

“*A certain lawyer,*” yes, this was a man learned in the Law of God, in the Old Testament Scriptures. He came with life’s most transcending question. There are many important questions for us today. How to make a living; how to get an education; how to educate our children; and how to enjoy life. But all of these pale into insignificance beside the question of this lawyer, “*Teacher, what shall I do to inherit eternal life?*”

He “*tested*” Jesus. He may have tried to entangle Jesus in His talk. But on the other hand this man may have been sincere. Nevertheless, he came to test Jesus out, to see whether He would be able to satisfy him on this age-old question.

Jesus does take him seriously, and the man becomes serious, if he had not been before. The noble personality of Jesus may have impressed him. Jesus answers with another question, a question in the field of knowledge in which the lawyer specialised.

And he knew the law well because he answered, “*You shall love the LORD your God with all your heart, with all your soul, with all your strength, and with all your mind, and your neighbor as yourself.*”

The First Table of the Commandments shows us the unlimited love toward God that we should have. They are the First, Second, and Third Commandments. *You shall have no other gods. You shall not take the name of the Lord your God in vain. And Remember the Sabbath day, to keep it holy.*

They all belong under the summary of the First Table. *‘You shall love the LORD your God with all your heart, with all your soul, with all your strength, and with all your mind.’*

The Second Table of Commandments shows us the unselfish love of the neighbour that we should have. Commandments Four to Ten are, *Honour your father and your mother. You shall not kill. You shall not commit adultery. You shall not steal. You shall not bear false witness against your neighbour. You shall not covet your neighbour’s house. And You shall not covet your neighbour’s wife, or his manservant, or his maidservant, or his cattle, or anything that is your neighbour’s.*

They all belong under the summary of the Second Table. *You shall love ... ‘your neighbor as yourself.’*

What is common to both of these tables is love. So “*love is the fulfillment of Law.*” And we read in James 2:10, <sup>10</sup> *For whoever shall keep the whole law, and yet stumble in one point, he is guilty of all.* The breaking of any Commandment offends against this love, the spirit of the Law, and automatically breaks every Commandment.

You may also recall the instance of the certain rich ruler. It is very similar. We read in Luke 18:18–23, <sup>18</sup> *Now a certain ruler asked Him, saying, “Good Teacher, what shall I do to inherit eternal life?”*

<sup>19</sup> *So Jesus said to him, “Why do you call Me good? No one is good but One, that is, God. <sup>20</sup> You know the commandments: ‘Do not commit adultery,’ ‘Do not murder,’ ‘Do not steal,’ ‘Do not bear false witness,’ ‘Honor your father and your mother.’ ”*

<sup>21</sup> *And he said, “All these things I have kept from my youth.”*

<sup>22</sup> *So when Jesus heard these things, He said to him, “You still lack one thing. Sell all that you have and distribute to the poor, and you will have treasure in heaven; and come, follow Me.” <sup>23</sup> But when he heard this, he became very sorrowful, for he was very rich.*

The lawyer in our text today does not say like the certain ruler, *“All these things I have kept from my youth.”*

However, he, too, was *“wanting to justify himself.”* When Jesus said to him *“You have answered rightly; do this and you will live”* he also thought he had kept all this.

He was like the man who saw the ocean for the first time and who exclaimed in disappointment: *“Is that all?”* He could not see the breadth and depth of it and therefore thought that the ocean was only as large as he could see.

So many people will think when they hear the Law of God explained: *“Why, is that all? That is easy. I can do that.”* They do not realise that while it is a true way to inherit eternal life it also is an impossible way.

A perfectly good set of stairs leads to top of the top of a multi-storey building, but it is of no use to a cripple unable to walk, and only an elevator will bring him to top. As we read in Romans 3:20, <sup>20</sup> *Therefore by the deeds of the law no flesh will be justified in His sight.*

However, the lawyer did not agree to this. Therefore *wanting to justify himself, said to Jesus, “And who is my neighbor?”* In answering this question Jesus shows by illustration that not only evil done, but also good deeds not done are sins that condemn and that make earning eternal life impossible.

Jesus, the master Sermon-illustrator, tells the parable of the Good Samaritan.<sup>12</sup> *“A certain man went down from Jerusalem to Jericho, and fell among thieves, who stripped him of his clothing, wounded him, and departed, leaving him half dead. <sup>31</sup> Now by chance a certain priest came down that road. And when he saw him, he passed by on the other side. <sup>32</sup> Likewise a Levite, when he arrived at the place, came and looked, and passed by on the other side.*

*<sup>33</sup> But a certain Samaritan, as he journeyed, came where he was. And when he saw him, he had compassion. <sup>34</sup> So he went to him and bandaged his wounds, pouring on oil and wine; and he set him on his own animal, brought him to an inn, and took care of him.*

*<sup>35</sup> On the next day, when he departed, he took out two denarii, gave them to the innkeeper, and said to him, ‘Take care of him; and whatever more you spend, when I come again, I will repay you.’ <sup>36</sup> So which of these three do you think was neighbor to him who fell among the thieves?” <sup>37</sup> And he said, “He who showed mercy on him.” Then Jesus said to him, “Go and do likewise.”*

The Priest and Levite did nothing to help the man. The do-nothing-policy was their sin. However, the love of the Samaritan was unprejudiced by nationality or religion. This love was love for the enemy and unselfish love, and it did not consider personal inconvenience. It gave practical love.

He did not go on to report the case to Jericho Community Care group or relief agency. He even went the extra mile. He saw the case through, for he said *to the innkeeper, ‘Take care of him; and whatever more you spend, when I come again, I will repay you.’*

A very sick officer went to a mineral spring for the benefit of his health; but the hotel keeper refused to admit him, lest he should die while under their roof. At last a gentleman came forward and said: *“This officer is my near relative. He may have my bed, and I will sleep on the sofa.”* The hotel keeper consented, and the half-fainting man was carried to the gentleman’s room.

When he had rested a little, his first question was, *“May I ask your name, my kind friend? How are you related to me?”* *“Through our Lord Jesus Christ; for I have learned from Him that my neighbour is my brother.”*

The parable of the Good Samaritan ends with these words of Jesus “*Go and do likewise.*” This is a good rule for sanctified lives of those who have found the true way to inherit eternal life.

But eternal life must be received as an inheritance, a free gift. Both our “*deeds done*” and our “*deeds undone*” condemn us. The divine Samaritan must pour the “oil and wine” of His suffering and death into the wounds of our sins. Faith in Jesus is the only way to eternal life, a faith that shows its life by love for God and our neighbour.

Let us close with the words of the hymnist,<sup>13</sup>

Thy works, not mine, O Christ,  
Speak gladness to this heart;  
They tell me all is done;  
They bid my fear depart. Amen.

The peace of God, which passes all understanding, will keep our hearts and minds, in Christ Jesus. Amen.

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<sup>1</sup> Rom 7:7, Matt 5:28

<sup>2</sup> Matt 15:19, Gen 8:21, Zech 8:17

<sup>3</sup> James 3:8-9

<sup>4</sup> Matt 15:19

<sup>5</sup> Eph 5:3-4

<sup>6</sup> Matt. 5:22

<sup>7</sup> Jer 23:31

<sup>8</sup> Luke 10:31-32

<sup>9</sup> Luke 16:19-21

<sup>10</sup> James 1:27

<sup>11</sup> Tit. 2:14

<sup>12</sup> Luke 10:30-37

<sup>13</sup> Hymn 332