

Pecking Order

Luke 10:25-37

What is a pecking order?

a ranking of chickens: who gets to peck whom, and who gets more and better things

How do pecking orders show up in people?

what determines our rank?

What does God think about our pecking orders?

My (selfish, proud) hope: find out that God agrees with my rankings

My humble prayer: please show us your ways and help us to accept them

Luke

The Good News is for all peoples

Jewish and Gentile

Men and women, children and adults

Outcasts and the honored

The high and the low

What it means to be God's people

How God's people are to live their lives

Jewish Pecking Order in the First Century

God

Holy, unapproachable

Religious elite

Pharisees, Sadducees, Law scholars (God's Law+human tradition), priests, Levites

"Good" Jewish people

Followed the Law and the teachings of the elite

"Good" foreigners: converts to Judaism

By fully adopting the Law (God's Law+human tradition), as if Jewish

"Pretty good" foreigners: God fearers

By mostly adopting the Law (God's Law+human tradition), almost Jewish

"Bad" Jewish people plus foreigners (Samaritans)

Broke key rules of the Law and tradition, or they worshiped other gods

Samaritans: more problematic since they claimed Yahweh (the Jewish God)



Luke 10:25-37

25-28: How God's people are to live

Love God with the whole of your being

Recognizes the dignity of the whole human: spiritual, physical, emotional, intellectual, ...

Love your neighbor as yourself

Includes the whole human...not just their souls!

Neighbor: literally, someone close to you

Geographically: "neighborhood"

Socially: friends, similar "circles"

Societally: similar place in the pecking order

Politically: overlap of policies and perspectives and celebrities

Cooperatively: Shared problems and enemies

"Do I not hate those who hate you, Lord, and abhor those who are in rebellion against you?"

I have nothing but hatred for them; I count them my enemies." Psalm 139:21-22

Everyone agrees: Love your neighbors

= "a person who lives close beside others and who thus by implication is part of a so-called 'in-group', that is, the group with which an individual identifies both ethnically and culturally"

homophily: we naturally 'love' people who are like us

The only debate is this: as the distance increases, when does a neighbor (whom we naturally love) become an enemy (whom we shouldn't love)

29: The law expert wanted to prove his own goodness

This law expert didn't want to change

He wanted to show that he had drawn the line between neighbor and enemy in the right place

We tend not to learn what we don't want to learn

First step in discipleship: want to be more like God

Knowing I so often don't actually want to be more like God!

Jesus had a reputation for drawing the line too far out

"A friend of tax collectors and sinners" [the bottom]

Being a friend of people too low in the pecking order meant you were no longer a friend of the people higher in the pecking order

30-35: Jesus' story had an unexpected and unwanted hero!

A **priest** and a **Levite** [highest] saw and passed by

Both seemingly did nothing wrong culturally

This half-dead, unclean person had no known 'closeness' with them, so *he was not a neighbor*

To help him could lower their rank

Yet like the robbers, *they departed and left him half dead!*

Samaritan [lowest rank] saw and took pity

Shocking surprise in the story

"Did mercy": Jesus gave great emphasis to actions!

36-37: Jesus' definition of 'neighbor' to be loved

Love whoever needs a neighbor

No pecking order

Mercy is an action, not only an attitude

"Go and do likewise"

Meeting human need: spiritual, physical, emotional, intellectual, ...

The expert in the law (highest human category) is to follow the Samaritan (lowest human category)

The Big Idea

**An essential part of loving God
is doing mercy for and with the whole of people
without human ranking**

Application

Genuinely desire to follow God's ways

Don't expect God to reveal His ways

if we don't intend to follow what He reveals

Neither of this law experts' 2 questions was focused on realigning himself with God.

First: test Jesus

Second: show I don't need to change

This calls for repentance

Genuine confession includes sorrow over my sin

When we fail to be fully like God...

We dishonor the God who made the people we belittle

We dishonor and hurt the people who are made in His image

But what about grace and forgiveness?

Salvation by grace through faith does not change God's design for what it is to truly live

Love God with all that we are

Love people as ourselves, especially those in need in every social category and level

There is no excuse for Christians who are not growing in these things!

What is OUR pecking order? What is YOUR pecking order?

Both explicit and implicit (hidden from myself)

What do I use to justify not being merciful or patient or kind to people, or to justify judging or slandering people?

politics or perspectives, “woke” or not “woke”, LGBTQIA, religion, race / ethnicity / nationality, weight or disability or (mental) illness, life choices, how they treat me

God has a design and standard, yet I am not the judge!

When people judge me, I tend to return the favor...

Our role in the pecking order...

Some of us regularly find ourselves in the upper part of society’s pecking order

Some of us regularly find ourselves in the lower part of society’s pecking order

Most of us are a mixture...

Our peers (people at our level in the pecking order, as well as the media we follow) tend to justify us for not being merciful, patient or kind to others, whether above or below us in the pecking order

> Sometimes they even judge us if we do show mercy

Jesus commands us to be merciful, patient, and kind without consideration of rank!

Do not judge! Do not condemn!

“Do not judge, and you will not be judged. Do not condemn, and you will not be condemned.” Luke 6:37

I justify not being merciful, or being judgmental, or assuming the worst, or slandering people, or ..., when...

The person is ‘far’ from me in any of number of ways

The person is not being very neighborly to me

“You can safely assume you’ve created God in your own image when it turns out that God hates all the same people you do.”

“Love always protects, always trusts, always hopes, always perseveres” 1 Corinthians 13:7

Do mercy without human ranking

= Compassion in action with honor

For the whole of people: the Gospel includes...

Heart: relational, social, psychological well-being

Soul: identity, hope, courage

Mind: knowledge and understanding

Strength: health and safety, ability to provide; as the Samaritan did

In a way that sees the image of God in people, and honors and empowers them

In a way that fosters their growth as whole people in Christ

What are the needs for mercy around you today?

Reflection Questions for later today or this week...

1. What human ranking are you working to dismantle in yourself? Where should you begin?
2. What human ranking are you working to dismantle in society? Where should you begin?
3. Where is God calling you to do “compassion in action with honor” for others?
 - a. This is certainly to happen with people you can already see who are in need. Who are those people? What will you do?
 - b. This also is to happen with people we are not currently seeing. Our eyes and hearts need to be opened to people beyond ourselves. What will you do to expand your vision for the people in need of God’s mercy in our world?