

Parables Lesson 17: What is your personal responsibility? Doing!

THE GOOD SAMARITAN

Luke 10:25-37

Introduction:

The *Good Samaritan* and the *Prodigal Son* are two parables that are indelibly printed in on mankind. Virtually everyone in the western world knows these stories and they are often referred to in conversation, media, and literature.

What is the term used in the newspaper when a rebellious athlete returns to his team? *Prodigal Son Returns!* What is the name of the biggest recreational travel club in the world? *The Good Sam Club!*

Men often came to Jesus with questions:

In Matthew 19:16-22 a rich young man came to Jesus and ask,

"Teacher, what good thing shall I do that I may obtain eternal life?"

Jesus responded, " . . . if you wish to enter into life, keep the commandments."

He answered, *"All these things I have kept; what am I still lacking?"*

I can do that!

Jesus then said, *"If you wish to be complete, go {and} sell your possessions and give to {the} poor, and you shall have treasure in heaven; and come, follow Me."*

"But when the young man heard this statement, he went away grieved; for he was one who owned much property."

I can't do that!

In Mathew 22:35-40 a Lawyer (Scribe) came and asked Jesus, *"Teacher, which is the great commandment in the Law?"*

There were more than 300 positive and 300 negative commandments in the law as accepted by the New Testament leaders.

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Jesus answered, "‘YOU SHALL LOVE THE LORD *your God with all your heart, and with all your soul, and WITH ALL YOUR MIND.*’ " *This is the great and foremost commandment. "The second is like it, ‘YOU SHALL LOVE YOUR NEIGHBOR AS YOURSELF. On these two commandments depend the whole Law and the Prophets.*"

In Luke 10:25-37 a Lawyer or expert in the Old Testament Law again came to Jesus.

Verse 25 " *And behold, a certain lawyer stood up and put Him to the test, saying, "Teacher, what shall I do to inherit eternal life?"*

This time Jesus, as he often did, answered a question with a question, " *What is written in the Law? How does it read to you?"*

"You're the expert why don't you tell me?"

This is the seed of today's parable. Big city lawyer confronts small town carpenter.

The Lawyer replies by quoting Scripture from Deut 6:5 and Lev. 19:18, " *YOU SHALL 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 YOUR NEIGHBOR AS YOURSELF.*" (The Shema) This is how to have a perfect relationship with God and man.

Jesus answered with Scripture as well, " *You have answered correctly; DO THIS, AND YOU WILL LIVE.*"

"You're right, now all you have to do is DO IT!"

The writer April Armstrong commented so well on this answer:

" *Do this, Jesus was saying, and you will find you have obeyed every law that God has made. The laws are complicated because men require them to be. The Ten Commandments are only another way of saying: 'Love God and your neighbor.'*

" *'Love!' is a command like 'Live!' To live your body must fulfill a million small rules--but you do not think of all those rules unless you are a doctor or in need of one. To love, you must obey a million small commands of duty and service--but you need not focus on those commands if you have learned to love.*"

Often this kind of answer would end the debate, but this lawyer wants the last word. Verse 29, "*But wishing to justify himself, he said to Jesus, "And who is my neighbor?"*"

This question rings down throughout history:

"WHO IS MY NEIGHBOR?"

This was one of the sharpest debates of among the Jews of Jesus' time.

The religious Jewish leaders were very careful about who they hung out with. They didn't consider even non-practicing Jews to be their neighbors, let alone any Gentiles who were referred to as "dogs."

The term neighbor referred only to persons committed to Orthodox Judaism, followers of The Law and The Traditions. In fact, in early Jewish writings the Ten Commandment were sometimes written:

"You shall not kill a Jew."

"You shall not steal from a Jew."

In light of this spirit, what will be Jesus' definition?

His definition is presented in the Parable He told to that lawyer.

Christianity at its deepest level is not a philosophy, but an action;

Not a theory, but an encounter.

I. VIEWING THE STORY Read Luke 10:25-37

The Location The road ran between Jerusalem and Jericho. *(DRAW MAP)*

Jesus and His audience had made this trip many times.

The road was fondly known as the "Bloody Pass."

The road was narrow, winding, rough, and steep.

Jerusalem is in the hills at 2300 feet above sea level.

Jericho is on the plain at 1300 feet below sea level.

In seventeen miles the road drops 3600 feet.

The road was desolate and dangerous.

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Josephus, the historian writing in the 1st century called the road "desolate and rocky"

Jerome writing in the 4th century said it was "a road infested with bandits," "a red and bloody way."

A newspaper item written in the 30's reported this:

"Even now (while Bonnie and Clyde are terrorizing our western states), Abu Jidah--outlaw, builds walls of stone across the Jericho Road to stop cars and rob people, shooting any who resist. After shooting several police officers he has a high price on his head.

In one day recently, he robbed fourteen cars on that road, threatening the people and still escaped into the hills before the police even heard about it."

The Cast of Characters

The Traveler

Perhaps he was a wealthy merchant but, according to historians who have studied the text and "traditional literature" from Jesus' times, he was most likely an Essene.

The Essenes were Jewish but were bitter opponents of the religious establishment who lived a monastic lifestyle in the hills outside of Jerusalem. (The Dead Sea Scrolls)

The Robbers

Robbers always flourished in the hills of Palestine but scholars think these were a peculiar kind of bandit.

Josephus tells of 40,000 workmen who were dismissed from the Temple by King Herod just before Jesus was in Jerusalem.

This group opposed Roman occupation and "protected" the Jewish religion with a total zeal, thus the name Zealot. The Dead Sea and other scrolls tell of a burning hatred between the two groups and report savage attacks by the Zealots on the Essenes.

The audience would understand this because:

They stripped him. Common robbers would not generally strip their victims, but Essenes wore robes of white linen which were supposed to be reserved for the Temple priests.

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The beat him nearly to death. Robbers tended not to take the time to beat a man beyond getting him to submit to the robbery.

The word robber was a euphemistic word for Zealot and Essenes tended to have no money and there is no mention of a robbery.

The Priest

There were many orders of priests, in fact there were 24 courses serving in the Temple by rotation for one week two times a year. Many of them lived in Jericho and commuted.

One of the great ironies of this story is that these "Servant of the Law" showed no mercy. Their own rules stated in Ex. 23:4-5 *"If you meet your enemy's ox or his donkey wandering away, you shall surely return it to him. "If you see the donkey of one who hates you lying {helpless} under its load, you shall refrain from leaving it to him, you shall surely release {it} with him.* How much more were they bound to help a man.

The Levite

The Levites were the doorkeepers in the House of the Lord. They were the Ministers of Religious Worship. They assisted the priests, took care of the physical facility of the Temple, and sang in the choir.

The prophets warned these servants of God not to put service ahead of people:

I Samuel 15:22, "And Samuel said, Has the LORD as much delight in burnt offerings and sacrifices As in obeying the voice of the LORD? Behold, to obey is better than sacrifice, {And} to heed than the fat of rams."

Micah 6:8, "He has told you, O man, what is good; And what does the LORD require of you But to do justice, to love kindness, And to walk humbly with your God?"

The Samaritan

The Samaritans were considered renegade half-breads.

Some of you may remember from our Bible survey class that the Jews in the Northern Kingdom was captured in 722 BC by the Assyrians.

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They were allowed to function as a tax paying community

And were even encouraged to intermarry with the local Babylonians, meaning their children were half Jewish and half heathen.

In 440 BC Ezra and Nehemiah began to rebuild the Temple in Jerusalem and the Northern Jews offered help. They refused to let them help so they built their own temple on Mt. Gerzin in the North.

The Southern Jews hated the Samaritans for intermarrying impure gentiles and the Northern Jews hated the Southern Jews for refusing to let them help build the Temple.

The hatred was so intense that that the Jews from Galilee crossed over to the eastern side of the Jordan River rather than pass through Samaria. (Remember, when Jesus broke that rule and met the Samaritan woman at the well.)

B. The Action

1. ACT I: The Priest Passes By

To us the Priest is always the main villain but in his own mind he may have had good reasons. He may have been afraid.

It may have been a trap. Thieves often used members of their bands as decoys. Much as we would like to stop to help people on the road, we do it far less than we used to because of the danger.

The victim may have been dead. If so touching it would have rendered the priest unclean and disqualify him for his round of service in the Temple. He would have to wait seven days then go through a purification ritual.

Or perhaps he just felt someone else would deal with the problem. Maybe a soldier would come by on patrol.

ACT II: The Levite Passes By

The Levite would have the same reasons or perhaps he had important business, was in a hurry, or feared catching a disease. Or maybe he just didn't feel led to help.

There are no surprises yet. So far the travelers did just what the audience would expect them to.

ACT III: The Samaritan Passes--Will he stop to help? NO WAY!

To the audience the true villain has arrived. It is time to hiss and boo and throw tomatoes. Five centuries of hatred says he will not stop to help. He has all of the same reasons and risks as the others and much, much more. *He has the race card!*

But, he does stop. He not only stops but he gives of himself:

He gave his emotional energy, verse 33--"*But a certain Samaritan, who was on a journey, came upon him; and when he saw him, he felt compassion, . . .*"

He gave his time and resources, verse 34--"*. . . and came to him, and bandaged up his wounds, pouring oil and wine on {them;} and he put him on his own beast, and brought him to an inn, and took care of him.*"

He gave his money and commitment, verse 35--"*And on the next day he took out two denarii and gave them to the innkeeper and said, 'Take care of him; and whatever more you spend, when I return, I will repay you.'*"

VIEWING THE STORY FROM GOD'S PERSPETIVE

In Matthew 5:38-47 Jesus taught "You have heard that it was said, 'AN EYE FOR AN EYE, AND A TOOTH FOR A TOOTH.' But I say to you, do not resist him who is evil; but whoever slaps you on your right cheek, turn to him the other also. And if anyone wants to sue you, and take your shirt, let him have your coat also. And whoever shall force you to go one mile, go with him two."

"Give to him who asks of you, and do not turn away from him who wants to borrow from you. You have heard that it was said, 'YOU SHALL LOVE YOUR NEIGHBOR, and hate your enemy.' But I say to you, love your enemies, and pray for those who persecute you in order that you may be sons of your Father who is in heaven; for He causes His sun to rise on {the} evil and {the} good, and sends rain on {the} righteous and {the} unrighteous. For if you love those who love you, what reward have you? Do not even the tax-gatherers do the same?"

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A. Rules of Conduct

The Iron Rule--"Might makes right!"

The robbers assembled in force, armed themselves and ambushed the lone man. Plato said in *The Republic*, "Justice is nothing but the interest of the stronger"

"What's yours is mine, I'll take it"

The Silver Rule--"Do not to others as you would not have them do to you."

The Priest and the Levite practice this negative rule. They did no harm to the victim. They did not add to his plight or take advantage of him in his misery. They just didn't do anything for him. They ignored him. They just didn't want to get involved.

Their religiosity meant not doing anything.

"What's mine is mine, I'll keep it!"

3. The Golden Rule--Luke 6:31 "And just as you want people to treat you, treat them in the same way."

The Samaritan acted in a positive way. He stopped, he gave aid, he moved him out of harms way, he stayed with him, and he made arrangements for his care.

His True Religion (Christianity) meant doing.

"What's mine is yours, I'll give it!"

Christian Conduct--THE BOTTON LINE

Instant Action

The world remembers the "Good Samaritan because his compassion led him to instant action.--Compassion affects conduct. **Perfect compassion demands action!**

Broad Responsibility

Our responsibility is for our entire sphere of influence, not just those who we like, or those who deserve it, but those who need it. Niel Lightfoot puts it this way,

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"It is easy for us today to find fault with the seemingly petty prejudices of the Jews, but the fact remains that most of the people who get are help are our friends. Whom do we invite to dinner? To whom do we grant favors? To whom do we render aid? For whom do we pray?"

We do not love and act with compassion because we are obligated to a given group, or type, or race of people, but because as sons of our Father, God, we have inherited His character traits.

No Exceptions

Our responsibility begins where we are. We cannot solve the problem of world hunger, but we can see that none of our "neighbors" are hungry. *We can solve our world's problem.*

There is an inscription on a tombstone in England that reads, "To Tomas Cobb, who made shoes in this village for forty years to the glory of God."

Practical Lessons From the Good Samaritan

He had good eyes

Last week we learned that we need good ears. This week we learn that we need good eyes. We need eyes that see people in need. It is an old but true saying, "Look for trouble, and you'll always find it."

He got personal

He didn't get professional and look for the paramedics. He got down in the dirt and administered first aid. We can't always just give people in need the name of a government agency or a public clinic.

It is my great joy to see our new President appeal to the church to reestablish its role in meeting the needs of people even though he's getting flack for it.

He took time

Bad things seldom happen when we are free and ready to help. We need to be flexible, adjustable, always prepared (financial management) because helping is usually inconvenient.

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He paid the price

Helping cost him time, materials, and money. Some times we even get taken advantage of. So what. Do it unto the Lord rather than unto men. The pays is much better.

He gave himself

Paul said in 1Cor. 13:3-- "*. . . if I give all my possessions to feed {the poor,} and if I deliver my body to be burned, but do not have love, it profits me nothing.*"

D.L. Moody said, *I may hire a man to do some work, but I can never hire a man to do my work.*"

And Jesus ended the story with this exchange:

Luke 10:36-37-- "Which of these three do you think proved to be a neighbor to the man who fell into the robbers' {hands?} " And he said, "The one who showed mercy toward him."

And Jesus said to him (and to us), "Go and do the same."