

## 63. Being a Good Samaritan

January 29, 2017

I heard of an experiment three seminary students carried out on fellow members of their class several years ago. It is a true story. The class was given an assignment on Luke 10:30-37, the familiar account of the "Good Samaritan." The assignment was due the next day.

Most of the men in that class traveled along the same pathway leading to the classroom the next morning. One of the seminarians in the experiment wore old, torn clothing, disguised himself as though he had been beaten and bruised, and placed himself along the path, clearly in view of all the young students, who were hoping to be pastors one day, making their way back to class. While the other two hid and recorded, he groaned and moaned, simulating great pain.

With their assignments neatly written, carefully documented, and tucked under their arms, not one seminary student, these future pastors, so much as paused to come to his assistance or wipe the catsup off his neck and chest. Intellectually, the assignment on love and caring was completed. But personally and practically? I think not.

What's happening? Why the passivity? Whatever happened to the idea of "Good Samaritan"? Wasn't that something we all are supposed to do – helping someone who is in need? How can we explain the gross lack of involvement in our world today, especially among Christians? You may say, "Oh, I would be different." Really? I hope so. The Lord might test you someday to show you what you have.

This morning we are going to learn that famous parable of Jesus, "the Good Samaritan." Many of us are familiar with the story so much that you can even quote the verses without any problem. But would being a good Samaritan be one of those intellectual things or would we respond practically like the Samaritan in the Bible? Let's hear from the Lord.

### A. ANOTHER QUESTION TO TRAP JESUS

*Luke 10:25-29 And behold, a certain lawyer stood up and tested Him, saying, "Teacher, what shall I do to inherit eternal life?" 26 He said to him, "What is written in the law? What is your reading of it?" 27 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.' " 28 And He said to him, "You have answered rightly; do this and you will live." 29 But he, wanting to justify himself, said to Jesus, "And who is my neighbor?"*

It was a good question to ask. But this lawyer had a bad motive, because he hoped to trap our Lord. However, Jesus is the One who trapped him. Imagine that!

It is one thing to seek the truth of God honestly. One can even have doubts because he or she does not understand. The Lord will faithfully make Himself known to those who diligently seek Him. But it is a completely different story to mock God. By doing so, unbelievers will never find Him. Additionally, they put themselves in a very dangerous situation.

This lawyer knew what the answer to his own question was. As a matter of fact, he physically had it with him. Strict orthodox Jews wore round their wrist straps and lit-

the leather boxes called phylacteries on their foreheads, which contained certain passages of Scripture – Exodus 13 and Deuteronomy 6. So Jesus could have said to the lawyer, “Look at the phylactery on your own wrist and forehead and they will answer your question.”

Let’s go back to v27. Jesus summed up the entire Ten Commandments, as well as the spirit of all the criminal and civil laws in one verse – Love the Lord and love other people and don’t do anything bad to them. If that was not clear enough, Jesus gave an application to this man in v28.

I see two major mistakes this man made when he decided to test Jesus:

**1) Like many unbelievers, his self-evaluation was insurmountably higher than what it is and it was on a false premise.**

For some self-justifying reasons, he thought that he loved God enough by being decent, religious, and law abiding citizen. None of us loves the Lord with all our soul, with all our strength, and with all our mind.

**2) Like many of us, believers and unbeliever alike, we somehow assume that loving our neighbors is limited to those who are nice to us.**

I’ve violated this a lot while I watch the evening news. Do you have any grudge against any of your brothers and sisters in the Lord? Your obedience to the Lord starts right after this service by mending your relationship with that person. Be obedient to Him and don’t come up with an excuse.

*1 John 4:20-21 If someone says, “I love God,” and hates his brother, he is a liar; for he who does not love his brother whom he has seen, how can he love God whom he has not seen? 21 And this commandment we have from Him: that he who loves God must love his brother also.*

But being a lawyer, this man couldn’t walk away without having the last word. Most of all, he wanted to justify himself. He tried to shift it back to Jesus and tries to squirm off the hook of responsibility by arguing over the meaning of a word. This is not limited to this man only, but also all the other humans who don’t want to do what the Lord God tells us to do.

Jesus nailed this man with the following profound story which even many unbelievers have heard.

## **B. THE GOOD SAMARITAN**

*Luke 10:30-35 Then Jesus answered and said: “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. 31 Now by chance a certain priest came down that road. And when he saw him, he passed by on the other side. 32 Likewise a Levite, when he arrived at the place, came and looked, and passed by on the other side. 33 But a certain Samaritan, as he journeyed, came where he was. And when he saw him, he had compassion. 34 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. 35 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.’”*

According to Josephus, the ancient Jewish historian, the road from Jerusalem to Jericho during Jesus’ day was difficult and steep. The altitude dropped three thou-

sand six hundred feet over a distance of twenty miles. Robbers loved that lonely stretch of road. They could mug, murder, and rape without fear of intervention by the authority. It was called "The Bloody Way," because it was a threatening and dangerous road for a person traveling alone.

Generally speaking, Jews and Samaritans despised each other both racially and religiously. The culture gave the Samaritan plenty of reasons to hate this wounded Jewish man and pass him by.

Unlike the two Jewish religious people, the Samaritan loved him with a sacrificial love. He didn't wait to be asked by the wounded man. Seeing the need right in front of him was enough to compel him to action. He also gave freely of both his time and his resources. Two denarii would have provided for the man's needs in the inn for at least two or three weeks.

Some of you have heard a different take on this parable of the Good Samaritan. The worst thing we can do with any parable, especially this one, is turning it into an allegory and make everything stand for something. You can say: the victim becomes the lost sinner who is half dead, helplessly left on the road of life. The priest and Levite represent the Law and the sacrifices, neither of which can save the sinner. The Samaritan is Jesus Christ who saves the man, pays the bill, and promises to come again. The problem is that if we take this approach to Scripture, we can make the Bible say almost anything we please, and we are sure to miss the messages God wants us to hear.

Most of us can come up with excuses, like these two, the priest and the Levite, as they ignored the victim. "I don't want to get involved," or "If I help that bloody person with my good clothing, it is going to be ruined," or "This might be a bait to hurt me," or "I might get sued, if something goes wrong." My favorite British preacher of yesteryear, Charles Spurgeon said, "I never knew a man refuse to help the poor who failed to give at least one admirable excuse."

By the way, there are Good Samaritan laws in the United States and Canada that are laws/acts protecting from blame those who choose to aid others who are injured or ill. They are intended to reduce bystanders' hesitation to assist, for fear of being prosecuted for unintentional injury or wrongful death.

May I make an example very close to home for us? Let's say while you are driving on I-19, you saw a group of illegal aliens on the side of the highway. They are starving, thirsty, dusty, and some of them are hurt. You are on your way to a very important meeting in your nice clothing. What would you do? Zipping by at 75 plus miles per hour and say, "God, help them," or call 911 and report it, but without stopping. Praying and calling for the emergency crew both are important and the right things to do.

I am NOT going to tell you what you need to do for this kind of situation. But I know what I would do. I would stop, call 911 and help them with the first aid kit that I have in my truck. Am I taking a chance? Possibly. But my God is able to protect me from any harm. If it is my time to go, I am outta here to heaven.

Let me bring this much closer. Do you know a brother or sister in Christ who is in need, especially in this church? Maybe you do. Ask the Lord what you can do to

help that person. Maybe you don't know anyone in need. Ask the Lord to show you and lead you to a person who is in need. You might ask, "Wouldn't it take time and my effort to be involved with someone's life?" We just studied the lesson from the Good Samaritan.

Being a Good Samaritan is being an extension of God's love, compassion, and mercy. You are becoming a channel of God's blessings to that person. If you were that person, wouldn't you be glad that someone is reaching out to you? Pray that you might be used by the Lord to be a Good Samaritan.

Here is another way to explain this: To row a boat, we need two oars. If I only use one oar to row, I would continue in a circle and go nowhere. In this illustration, one oar is our faith in Christ, the other our work for Him. It takes two of them to make a true Christian life. The work we do for the Lord does not make us Christians, but it proves that we are born-again followers of Jesus Christ.

*James 2:26 For as the body without the spirit is dead, so faith without works is dead also*

### **C. YOU GOT IT, NOW GET AT IT**

*Luke 10:36-37 So which of these three do you think was neighbor to him who fell among the thieves?" 37 And he said, "He who showed mercy on him." Then Jesus said to him, "Go and do likewise."*

The lawyer wanted to make the issue somewhat complex and philosophical, but Jesus made it simple and practical. He moved it from duty to love, from debating to doing. Jesus is warning us not to use these things as excuses for doing nothing.

If we all simply do what Jesus tells us to do regarding loving our neighbors – believers and unbelievers alike, we would not have any church fight. Not only that, but also there will not be enough room in any Bible teaching church, because all the unbelievers will be attracted to the love of Christians and they would come to those churches.

So, who is my neighbor? The one you know who is in need. Not all 4 billion people on the other side of the world. We can get there when we start to love and help one person who is near you at a time.

### **D. APPLICATIONS**

**1) When the Lord lays helping others on your heart, stop coming up with excuses, because our excuses are nothing more than an ugly disobedience to God.**

**2) Your obedience to the Lord starts right now.**