



The Good Samaritan

Feb. 19, 2017

Luke 10:30-37. Scripture Reading)

Who is my Neighbor???

Introduction:

Jesus was ready to go from Jericho to Jerusalem after healing the blind man. This is a very historic route! The distance is only about 20 miles. Many people hike, but it is a dangerous path for two reasons. First reason, there can be a sudden flash flood calamity. Second, during Jesus' time, there were a lot of robbers in that way. The whole country, Palestine was plagued with robbers. As a matter of fact, the Roman soldiers had a very tough time containing them. Herod the great, who was the king when Jesus was born, did an excellent job, trying to eradicate these pests, and he dealt with them as a no.1 public enemy. We must look at Barabas from this angle also. Even though Mark and Luke portray Barabbas as one who caused sedition and murder, Gospel of John describes him as a Robber in 18:40! Perhaps he was both robber and murderer. Romans had captured this heinous thief and were ready to execute him publicly so that the punishment of cross be a deterrence for other future thieves and seditionist. He was a prime candidate for capital punishment. But unfortunately, the Romans had to let this notorious criminal go and slaughter the innocent Lamb of God, Jesus our Lord! So there is a historical truth behind it.

We tend to call this kind of real stories as parables, and that can be misleading. Most of the time Jesus was using current news, and current daily activities, to illustrate his points! He always teaches us through real life situations. The context of this story is an interesting one.

Luke 10: 25And a lawyer stood up and put Him to the test, saying, "Teacher, what shall I do to inherit eternal life?" 26And He said to him, "What is written in the Law? How does it read to you?" 27And he answered, "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." 28And He said to him, "You have answered correctly; DO THIS, AND YOU WILL LIVE." 29But wishing to justify himself, he said to Jesus, "And who is my neighbor?"

A lawyer came to Jesus. But he came with a wrong motive! He came to test the Lord of wisdom and righteousness. He wanted to see if Jesus has more knowledge than he had. A lawyer is equivalent to a biblical scholar. Just imagine someone who has done Ph.D in theology, and who is an expert in Hebrew exegetical study. These lawyers were experts in interpreting each law. But such knowledge sometimes makes us puff up! He wanted just to probe and see how much Jesus knew, but he did not realize that Jesus is the Word of God Himself! So he



The Good Samaritan

Feb. 19, 2017

came up with the best question of that day, "Teacher, what shall I do to inherit eternal life? This question may sound like a very mundane question for us but not for those who lived during Jesus' time. They were not too sure about life beyond death. But this lawyer was very sure about the eternal life because he had known all the right scripture passages that pointed to eternal life,

I love it when Jesus asks this question:

what is written in the law?

How readest thou?

or

how do you read it?

or in colloquial term, or in this day and time

what is your take on this subject?

If you want to go real deep in theology, what is your understanding of the Scripture concerning eternal life? Jesus was particular about a certain portion of the Scripture - the Law or Torah portion of first five books in the Bible. What does the Law (Torah) say about eternal life?

The lawyer gave the right answer. If we love God with all our heart, all our soul, with all our mind and all our strength, and if we love our neighbor we will obtain eternal life! Jesus commended him for the right answer, and then He told him to do just that so that he may obtain eternal life. Yes, here is a proof that eternal life can be achieved through the works of the law also. But who can obtain it? Who is so righteous to love God so much? If some say they do that, they deceive themselves! They just do not see the intensity of sin's effect on their lives. They just deceive themselves. These laws can be fulfilled only through the presence and power of the Holy Spirit.

But this lawyer tried to be too smart. He tried to test Jesus to see His interpretation of who His neighbor is. The Jews took the meaning of neighbor literally, the one who is next to them, and that must be a Jew and a righteous person. If they didn't meet these conditions, they became publicans, sinners, and pagans. A gentile is definitely not a neighbor.



The Good Samaritan

Feb. 19, 2017

There was a serious hostility and racial tension between Jews and Samaritans. The Jews had nothing to do with Samaritans. They avoided them as plagues. In this context, we must interpret this beautiful parable. Let us see who our real neighbor is!

Luke 10:30 Jesus replied and said, "A man was going down from Jerusalem to Jericho, and fell among robbers, and they stripped him and beat him, and went away leaving him half dead.

The direction of the travel is very important. It is from Jerusalem to Jericho and not the other way. Whoever went to Jerusalem, they had finished all their time-sensitive tasks, and now they are returning to their rural house. Here a man, (we do not know the identity of this wounded person). He fell among some cruel robbers, who not only robbed him, but also beat him and left him half dead. This was very common in those days. There was no strong central police force to protect people.

Luke 10:31,32. "And by chance, a priest was going down on that road, and when he saw him, he passed by on the other side. 32"Likewise a Levite also, when he came to the place and saw him, passed by on the other side.

Now we come across two people who passed by this wounded man. One is a priest, and the other is a Levite, and they both were the servants of the Lord, and they had come to Jerusalem to serve the Lord! A very noble profession. They both had finished their tasks and were returning home. This is why I said, the direction is important. If they were heading toward Jerusalem, they had some excuse not to do it. They could say that they did not want to be late for the sacrifices. They would have argued; God comes first. On the other hand, they have an excuse for not doing. Once we pass Jerusalem, there is not much life until we reach Jericho. We will see even today, mile after mile Judean dessert. There is no inn toward Jericho even today! So the Levite or the priest may have to take this man back to Jerusalem, and then come back home. Imagine if they had come out of Jerusalem 6 or 7 miles already, then they have to travel back and forth again 12 to 14 miles, a total of 20 miles already, and if the sun goes down, they become targets of wild animals, snakes, and the robbers! I would like you to see the obstacles from every angle! The priest had the privilege and opportunity to help this man first. But he carefully passed him by on the other side. Likewise, Levite did also! Then a third man came!

Luke 10: 33-36. 33"But a Samaritan, who was on a journey, came upon him; and when he saw him, he felt compassion, 34and 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.



The Good Samaritan

Feb. 19, 2017

35“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.’”

A Samaritan! Samaritans are more like a mixed breed. They have some Jewish blood mixed with other gentile races. Jews hated them. They will not even walk through their territories. If they have to do that, they will shake off the dust from their feet when they cross the border. This wounded person could very well be a Jew. We are not sure also which direction he was heading but the Scripture says that this person was moved with compassion. It is good to have a compassionate heart. But that is only the first step. After that, we must move to help the person!

Here we see compassion in action! He "bandaged up his wounds, pouring oil and wine on them; and he put him on his beast, and brought him to an inn and took care of him."

He did the first aid of stopping the blood flow through the bandage. Then he poured oil on his wounds, which would have acted as a pain relief. He poured wine also to prevent any kind of infection. He then put the wounded man on his donkey and walked. He took him to an inn and stayed with him and took care of him! These are items that are essential for one's journey. But this Samaritan sacrificed all he had and used it to save a stranger. Remarkable!

He not only stopped with that act.

The Samaritan showed an unconditional divine love.

He did not care who that person was, race, color, gender, age?

He gave it all that he had! It was not given out of his abundance but out of his limited resources! He went above and beyond to take care of his future also.

Vs 35 says, 35“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.’”

The Samaritan was concerned about the future of the victim also. He gave two denarii, and if more was to be spent on the victim, he was willing to pay more also. What can I say? This is what I call the total care. Can we try to follow this method? If you are going to help somebody, go all the way. It is ok to pass the person to someone else's care, but follow up and continue to be as helpful as this Samaritan was. Don't walk away in the middle. Don't just pass the buck and forget about the victim.



The Good Samaritan

Feb. 19, 2017

This reminds us of the love of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ and God the Father. He gave it all. God gave us everything! He spared not His own Son and offered Him as our atonement for our sins. Likewise, His Son emptied Himself, and took the form of a servant, and gave His life for us! God is expecting this kind of self-sacrificial love from us. That is one of the reasons we have communion week after week. It is not just time for us to examine ourselves and confess our sins but to invoke this self-sacrificial love within us. This is the most important mandate for every communion meditation. The person who gives the meditation must challenge the congregation to empty themselves and share their self-sacrificial love of time, talents, and treasure every time they stand at the pulpit.

After Jesus shared this touching story, He asked the lawyer the same question: who is my neighbor in a different way:

Luke 10: 36“Which of these three do you think proved to be a neighbor to the man who fell into the robbers’ hands?” **37**And he said, “The one who showed mercy toward him.” Then Jesus said to him, “Go and do the same.”

Jesus asked, who was the actual neighbor to the victim. The lawyer replied correctly, the one who showed mercy toward him! And Jesus said, Go and do the same! What a great story! What a great answer. Here the lawyer who tried to show off his knowledge about Scripture was dumbfounded by Christ's answer!

There are many things that point to Jesus as the Lord of Lords, The Son of God indeed, and through whom all things were created! One of those areas is the Wisdom. Christ is the wisdom, Righteousness.....

If you notice the sharpness of Jesus' answer to every question, that itself can reveal to us that He is indeed the Wisdom Himself and He is the Lord of the universe, and the author and the finisher of our faith.

Conclusion: We have so much to take from this story.

First of all, we are never too busy to help a dying person. We must stop and help a dying person. We cannot and must not bypass a dying person.

But there is a huge difference between a dying person and a so-called daily, functional homeless people or elderly.



The Good Samaritan

Feb. 19, 2017

Last Friday, Samantha, my daughter and I were coming out of McDonald's. Samantha spotted an old lady pushing a small shopping cart and she was slowly heading toward Giant. My daughter was compassionate. Immediately she wanted me to give ride for the old lady. Have you noticed that? Some people will feel compassionate toward somebody, but they will make you do the work of compassion!

I tried to swing toward that lady, but then my daughter said that's ok and so I came back to my original position and started moving in the direction of my house. Then again she started saying, let's go back and help that lady. To get back to her, I had to wait for the red light to turn green, maneuver my big van to come to the left lane, and try to make a sharp U-turn to reach that lady. I was very much hard pressed for Time. Also, she already started crossing the road and headed toward the parking lot. Now I had to go around two blocks to enter the parking lot to find her. I said, no we are not going to help this time. I do not have enough time! Also, there is a good possibility, that exercise of a walk would strengthen her muscles and bring her better health.

My daughter was unhappy, but I had to be firm. This kind of experience takes place among homeless also. Many of them spend their money on drugs, and beg for more money so that they can have more drugs. Some people may be genuinely hungry. In that case, we must get them a sandwich rather than money.

Our help toward others should not be driven emotionally alone; it must be prompted by the Spirit of God Himself. We must help those who cannot help themselves totally. If they can help themselves, encourage them to push themselves to meet their need.

The second lesson is that we sacrifice our time, talents, treasure to help that person! We offer ourselves totally to meet the dire need of the individual.

Third, we help all the way and give a total care, and not partially! Go all the way, and help. Don't pass the buck to someone else, and You must be engaged fully if you want to help someone. It is all about total care!

Finally, we must all ask ourselves who our neighbors are! Our neighbors are those who come to help us when they are in real need! Also, we become the neighbors for those who are in critical need.



The Good Samaritan

Feb. 19, 2017

Let us love our neighbors who are in deep need. Let us focus on total care!

TOTAL CARE

Pastor Daniel Israel