

The Good Samaritan

Read: Luke 10:25-37

Jesus often used parables as a method of teaching. This was an effective method since it revealed a truth to the spiritual and ready mind while the message was concealed from others. A parable has often been described as an earthly message with a heavenly meaning.

Let's look at the parable of the Good Samaritan. As with other parables, this one was based on a place or an action with which the listeners would be familiar. There was an actual stretch of road that many of the people traveled. The road from Jerusalem to Jericho carried the people 'down'---down a rocky road known as the Red or Bloody Way because it was known to be infested with robbers. Notice that the road is said to go 'down'. As sinners, we were all traveling a road that went 'down'.

The parable begins when a lawyer asked Jesus a question concerning who was his neighbor. The Jews regarded only other Jews as neighbors----not anyone in need as Jesus was stating. To the Jew, the Gentiles and Samaritans were not 'neighbors', but 'dogs'. The dog was an unclean animal and the 'name' was used as a term of reproach.

Would Jesus be able to change the mind of the lawyer? Would He be able to change the mind of _____? (place your name there)

The parable begins as a priest walks by a wounded man. The priests officiated in the public worship services, and were very careful of each ceremonial duty that they needed to perform. No doubt, he was returning from one of these services. But as he sees the wounded man, he decides the man is not worthy of his attention----after all, he is a priest! Perhaps, too, he might have been afraid that the robbers were still nearby, and would attempt to rob him. Or, perhaps he was just in a hurry. (Does that sound familiar?)

The next man is a Levite. These men were employed in some of the lower services of the temple. When he came by, he took a closer look (but the Greek does not imply that he came very close). He was inquisitive, but not compassionate. (Does that, too, sound familiar? We want to know what happened----but we often do not want to help.) The Levite did what many of us do----he committed the sin of omission.

Next came a Samaritan. The NT name 'Samaritan' refers to a race of people who were originally a mixture of Gentiles with the members of the 10 tribes. Thus, people might have expected the priest or the Levite to assist the wounded man----but would not have expected compassion from a Samaritan. But, the Good Samaritan did not allow prejudices of any kind to hinder his helping his 'neighbor'. He asked no questions; made no excuses. He assisted with TLC (tender loving care).

Let's look at the TLC given by the Samaritan.

1. It was immediate-----he sprang into action, and did not wait to ask questions, nor to check his surroundings. (The robbers could have still been 'hiding in the shadows', but this did not deter his actions.)

2. It was practical-----before binding the wounds, he poured oil and wine into the area, providing cleansing and healing. (Note: some people feel that they should not go to a doctor. But, nowhere in the Scripture does Jesus state that it is a good thing not to get proper care. Had it been wrong to use medicine, this would have been the perfect place for Jesus to give that lesson. However, instead of a rebuke for the use of medical care, Jesus commended the Samaritan. Remember, too, Luke was a physician, and was follower of and a believer in Jesus. Again, nowhere do we see that Jesus rebuked him for his chosen profession.)

3. It was unselfish----he placed the man on his own beast, and by doing so, he slowed his journey. And, now with the extra person, and extra load for his beast, and his new need for slower travel, he could not have escaped the robbers if they appeared again.

4. It was thorough---his care for the wounded man continued. He took the man to a place where he could receive further care. He, himself, cared for him a while longer, and then made provisions for his further care, and agreed to pay more, if needed, when he returned.

The Samaritan showed a genuine love for his fellowman. He gave of his time, his service, and his money. People all around us need love, compassion, and understanding---and most of all they need Christ. We need to mix our faith and our works, and allow others to see Christ in us.

It seems that the lawyer who asked the initial question is still having difficulty with understanding the message. At the end of the parable, Jesus asks "Which now of these three, thinkest thou, was neighbor unto him that fell among the thieves?" (vs. 36). Take note of the lawyer's answer: "...he that showed mercy on him." 'He that showed mercy'----the lawyer does not seem to be able to even mention the name 'Samaritan'.

So which of these three men are we like (and ladies, we can be included in this, too)? The priest represents ritualism and ceremonialism; the Levite represents legalism; and the Samaritan represents love and compassion. Or, perhaps we are like the fourth man----the lawyer who asks a question, but does not necessarily like the answer. Or, perhaps we are like the fifth man----the wounded man who needed to be shown compassion. He was helpless and alone. If he were conscious enough to note the men passing by, how do you think he would have felt to see the ceremonial priest, or the temple Levite just pass him by because they thought he was not worthy of their attention? Perhaps that is a thought to ponder for the coming week.

"Lord, may my words and my actions combine to show forth Your love to others. Amen."