

Pastor Jon's Sermon from Sunday, July 10, 2022

Text: Luke 10:25-37

“The Parable of the Good Samaritan”

We all have a “Good Samaritan” story, don't we? A time when someone saw you in need, stopped, and went above and beyond to help you out.

Their timing was perfect.

They were gracious and merciful.

They wanted nothing in return.

You perhaps offered them money and they would say something like, “Just pay it forward.”

Then you wonder for days, why were they so kind to me? Maybe you were that Good Samaritan.

In Jesus' kingdom, all humans, especially those in need, are to be noticed and cared for, just as we would want to be cared for.

This parable makes me think of our neighbors in Ukraine, or Highland Park, or Uvalde, TX... or those in Combined Locks dealing with the Warehouse Specialists fire... or those who are hurting in our own homes or churches. I think it is important to look around whatever space we are in and identify who is on the margins, who is being left out, who is isolated. Maybe it is you. We understand the feeling of being passed by at times in our life.

Yes, this famous lesson, the parable of the Good Samaritan, teaches us that everyone is our neighbor. But it also reminds us that, for a variety of reasons, we humans want to try to limit the definition of a neighbor. We want to find a work around that fits our social, religious, or political views to cast someone aside. This is to make it easier on us to pass by or justify our actions or inaction.

The priest and the Levite found a reason to intentionally cross to the other side of the road to avoid this man who was beaten, robbed, and left for dead. Imagine that, good religious people limited the definition of a neighbor. The Jewish law said if they touched blood, they would become unclean. So, in this case, perhaps following the law prevented them from helping a fellow human in need.

So how did we get here? In our Gospel for today from Luke 10, a lawyer wanted to test Jesus saying, “What must I do to inherit eternal life?” The emphasis here is on “doing”. Can you do anything to earn an inheritance? To a person well-versed in Jewish law, doing is what put you in a right relationship with God... doing the law of God brought blessings, like in our first lesson. This is Old Testament Theology. If you do this, you get this. New Testament theology is because therefore language. Because Jesus did what he did on the cross we are set free from trying to earn God’s acceptance. God just loves us as is.

Like Jesus does in Jesus’ fashion, he responds to a question with a question, “What is written in the law?” The lawyer quoted, and correctly, Deuteronomy 6:5 and Leviticus 19:18... love God and love your neighbor as yourself. Jesus responds, “Do this and you will live.” Interesting. Jesus says that when you love God with all your heart, mind, and soul, and love your neighbor as yourself, you will live. Two of the hardest commandments to follow. But in doing them, you will find life that really is life.

Wanting to justify himself, the lawyer asked Jesus, “And who is my neighbor?” Here we go.

Many scholars believe the beaten and bloodied man in the story was Jewish. He was on his way from Jerusalem to Jericho, two Jewish communities. And the one who stopped to help him was a Samaritan. Samaritans were the ultimate outcasts to Jews because of religious and bloodline differences. The fact that a Samaritan stopped to help makes this parable even more powerful. An enemy to the Jews was the hero of the story. The Samaritan wasn’t afraid to get his hands dirty, use his own resources and time, and make sure this man got to safety. He spent two day’ wages to help the man and planned to check on him the next day. Luke said he did this because he had compassion for him.

The Greek word for compassion, *Splagizomai*, means he felt the man's pain in his bowels.

What is Jesus really getting at when he tells the parable of the Good Samaritan?

Maybe this parable might be less about us and more about God and God's kingdom. God doesn't pass us by in our greatest need. God doesn't wait for us to become clean or get it right before God stoops to our level in Jesus and loves us. After all, Jesus came while we were still sinners according to Romans 5:8.

Of course Jesus is lifting up how to be a neighbor to each other. He wants us to live individually the characteristics we long for collectively according to Joy Moore in [workingpreacher.org](http://workingpreacher.org). What you do in your daily life, your ethics when challenged by a moral dilemma, matter.

At the end of the parable when the lawyer answers Jesus that the Samaritan was the neighbor to the man, Jesus said to him and us today:

“Go and do likewise”