

Luke 10:25-37
“The Good Samaritan”
By Kent Crockett
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We’re always inspired whenever we hear of people being rescued and lives saved. You probably remember a dramatic incident that occurred in January 2009. Captain Sully Sullenberger, the pilot of a US Airways plane, hit a flock of birds on takeoff, which disabled both engines. He miraculously landed the plane in the Hudson River and saved all the passengers.

It’s one thing to rescue your friends, but it’s a different story when you’re rescuing your enemy. That’s what happened in the story of the Good Samaritan. Jesus questioned one of the Pharisees, who was a lawyer, about the Scriptures. The lawyer said,

“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.” And He said to him, “You have answered correctly; do this and you will live.” But wishing to justify himself, he said to Jesus, “And who is my neighbor?” (Luke 10:27-29)

Jesus said the greatest commandment is to “Love God with all your heart, soul, and mind.” (Matt. 22:37-38). And then the second greatest commandment was something they didn’t want to hear—“Love your neighbor as yourself.”

The Pharisees dedicated their lives to studying and memorizing the Scriptures—and yet their hearts were far away from God. The Pharisees spent three hours a day praying, but they never touched God’s heart. The Pharisees studying the Bible and constantly prayed, but they didn’t know how to love God. And they didn’t know how to love their neighbors.

A pastor was preaching about “loving your neighbor as yourself.” To emphasize his point, he asked three times, “And who is my neighbor? Who is MY neighbor? Who IS my neighbor?” Just then a little boy in the congregation yelled back, “Mr. Rogers!”

The passage said to love your neighbor as yourself, so this Pharisee wanted to justify himself. **You only try to justify yourself when you feel guilty.** He knew he didn’t like people, so he asked, “And who is my neighbor?” He wanted to find a loophole, where he could love God without having to love all those disgusting people out there.

Now we need to understand that the Pharisees had already defined the word “neighbor.” They spent a great deal of time defining their words, so there would be no mistake about what they thought God’s Word meant. That’s why they were called “lawyers” (not like a lawyer today, but an expert in defining and interpreting God’s Law).

They had defined a “neighbor” as a fellow Jew. Gentiles and Samaritans were

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not neighbors, according to their definition. And they also excluded any stranger as a neighbor. So Jesus gives His definition of a neighbor by telling a story. We call it the parable of the Good Samaritan.

Luke 10:30 Jesus 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 road from Jericho to Jerusalem was about 17 miles long, and in those days bandits would hide along the road and rob travelers as they passed by. A colony of 12,000 priests lived in Jericho, in the Jordan Valley, and they had appointed times when they would travel to Jerusalem on that road to serve their duty in the temple for one week. So when they went to the temple in Jerusalem, which was about 3,000 feet higher in elevation, they had to go up the road. But when they went home, they traveled down the road.

Luke 10:31 “And by chance a priest was going down on that road, and when he saw him, he passed by on the other side.”

The priests were the ones who offered sacrifices. The priest was going down the road, so what does that mean? It meant **his temple duty was over** and he was on his way home to Jericho.

Do you see the significance of this? If he was going up the road, he could have had a good excuse not to help the man. “I’ve got temple duty, and God comes first.” But because it says he was coming down from Jerusalem, it meant that his temple duty was finished. (Church was over) He had spent one week of his time loving and serving God in the Temple. In his mind, he has fulfilled the greatest commandment—to love God with all his heart, soul, and mind.

But now he is faced with a challenge to fulfill the 2nd greatest commandment, to love his neighbor as himself.

You’d think he would be so full of the love of God leaving church, uh I mean the Temple, that it would overflow to everyone else. And as he travels down this road, he sees a fellow Jew who is lying in the road. He had been jumped by thieves, beaten him up, and left him as half dead. (I can’t tell you the exact medical definition of half-dead, but I think that means he wasn’t able to get up and walk away.) If he didn’t get help soon, he would die.

Now please listen carefully. A lot of people misinterpret this parable. They think the parable requires them to pick up every hitchhiker along the road, and help everyone who has a flat tire. And certainly, God may lead you to help those people. But the context of this parable and the picture Jesus is painting is **helping someone who is about to die**—like someone involved in a bad car wreck who needs immediate help.

So here’s this man lying on the side of the road, and he looks up, and sees someone coming his way. At first, he thinks the thieves are coming back to finish him off. But through blurred vision, he sees it’s not a thief, but a priest! He thinks, *Thank you Lord, for sending this man who loves you SO much to rescue me!*

But as the priest gets closer, he sees this dying man, and he doesn't want to defile himself, so he passes on the other side of the road. He is someone who claims to love God, but doesn't love people.

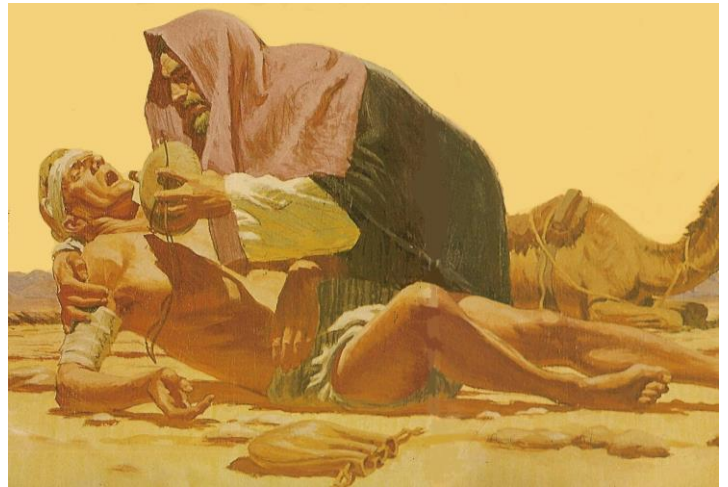
Luke 10:32 “Likewise a Levite also, when he came to the place and saw him, passed by on the other side.”

The Levites assisted the priests in the temple. By coincidence, here's another guy had just come from church, uh I mean the Temple, telling God how much he loved Him, but didn't care about rescuing the life of this wounded man.

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

This was a dangerous road where travelers would get ambushed by robbers. It would be taking a risk to help someone lying in the road because it could be a trap. If you tried to help, you could get jumped and robbed as well.

After the Priest and the Levite bypassed the man, the listening audience would have expected an Israelite to be the next person down the road. Instead, **Jesus throws a twist into the story**. He chose an enemy of the Jews as the next person—a Samaritan.



The Jews hated the Samaritans, and here's why. When the **Assyrians conquered Israel in 722 BC**, they did two things. They deported many of the Jews to other countries, but they brought in heathens from other countries to live there. Over time, the remaining Jews and the pagans intermarried and were called Samaritans.

Because they weren't pure Jews, they weren't permitted to serve in the Temple in Jerusalem. So they built their own temple on Mt. Gerazim, claiming that this was where Abraham offered up Isaac, and not in Jerusalem. So now they have rival worship centers. And that's why the Samaritan woman at the well in John 4 said, “Our fathers worshipped in this mountain, and you people (the Jews) say Jerusalem is the right place.”

So the Jews hated the Samaritans with a passion because they weren't pure Jews and they had a rival temple. The Jewish religious leaders even created a special prayer, asking that God would deliver them that day from seeing a Samaritan. So you can see why the Jews hated the Samaritans.

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Remember, the Pharisees taught that Samaritans and strangers were not neighbors, so Jesus inserts this person into the story who is both a Samaritan and also a stranger.

Luke 10:35 “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.’”

When the Samaritan saw the man lying on the road, he bandaged him up, set him on his animal, (which means the thieves probably stole his donkey), and so he walked the rest of the way to the inn. He gave the innkeeper two denarii, which would pay for a two month’s stay at the inn. The Samaritan rescued this Jew’s life and helped him to recover.

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.” Then Jesus said to him, “Go and do the same.”

Jesus asked which one was the neighbor. Now here’s this lawyer, who had defined the word “neighbor” as a fellow Jew. He couldn’t say that the guy lying in the road was the neighbor because the priest and Levite passed him by. It had to be the Samaritan. But it was too hard for him to say the word “Samaritan” so he says, “The one who showed mercy.” Jesus said, “Go and do the same.”

What does God want us to learn from this? It’s not good enough to go to church and tell God how much we love Him. We’ve got to show God’s love to people on the way home. To the waitress who is taking too long at the restaurant. To the teachers at school who teach our kids. If we only attend a religious service but don’t act like Christians away from church, we are no different from the priest and Levite. And who is my neighbor? Anyone outside of me.

The priest and Levite only cared about themselves. They asked themselves, “**What’s going to happen to ME** if I help this man?” But the Samaritan asked, “**What’s going to happen to this man** if I don’t help him?” Which of those two questions do you ask yourself?

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