

The Good Samaritan

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[0 : 00] What's one of the most well-known, or let's put it this way, one of your favorite parables or stories that Jesus told? What's one of your most favorite stories or parables that Jesus told?

Good Samaritan. That's the answer this morning. That's the answer. I know it's not everybody's favorite. But it's always at the top of the list for people who are paying attention and will respond.

It's always at the top of the list. Good Samaritan. You know, the word or phrase there, the Good Samaritan, it has become synonymous with organizations or individuals who offer compassionate help to people in need.

There's a lot of hospitals in this country that are called the Good Samaritan Hospital, or at least that's a part of their name, St. Mark or something, Good Samaritan Hospital.

Here in Pickens County, we have the Samaritan's Health Clinic, which is a part of the Good Samaritan Alliance. That also includes United Christian Ministries.

[1 : 19] They're seeking to offer compassionate help to people in need. Well, I want us to look at this story as it's found in Luke chapter 10 this morning. And let it be sort of a conclusion of our series of studies of how God calls us as His people to relate to all kinds of people.

We've been looking at it mainly from Romans chapter 12, a little bit from the end of Matthew chapter 5, how we as Christians are called to relate to, put up with, show love to all kinds of people, from the ones that are easy to love, like family members, church family members, to those who are very difficult to love, people who don't like us, people who oppose us, even our enemies.

What the Good Samaritan is going to help us discover this morning is how to be a neighbor and do what we're going to look at as show neighborly love to people around about us as we're going to see God would consider or would want us to consider are our neighbors.

The story begins in Luke chapter 10, verse 25. Before we read, I want you to understand the context. Jesus is being questioned by a Jewish lawyer who is an expert on the law.

He's a Jewish religious lawyer, we might think of. Not a civil type lawyer who would be concerned with secular laws, the laws of Rome in that day.

[3 : 10] No, he's an expert in the law. He associates with religious leaders, Jewish leaders, especially the Pharisees. And in this setting, he's not there to try to learn from Jesus.

He's going to ask some questions, but they're not sincere questions. As we begin in verse 25, this lawyer, this expert in Jewish law, he's trying to test Jesus.

He is trying to make him look bad in front of his disciples and others who are sincere inquirers. This man does not have good motives.

And so we need to understand that from the outset as the questions and the banter takes place. Luke 10, 25. And behold, a lawyer stood up to put him to the test, saying, Teacher, what shall I do to inherit eternal life?

And he, Jesus, said to him, What is written in the law? How do you read it? And he answered, 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.

[4 : 31] And he, Jesus, said to him, You have answered correctly. Do this, and you will live. Let's pause there. Luke wants us to understand, as he tells what happened, This lawyer is testing Jesus.

He's not making a sincere or honest inquiry. He's not a seeker of truth. He's trying to find fault with Jesus.

Trying to make him look bad. Trying to show him up, this lawyer, this expert in the law. Well, the question he asks, he already knows the answer.

All well-versed Jews should have known the answer. And Jesus knows that. And so when he asks this question, Look at it in verse 25.

Teacher, what shall I do to inherit eternal life? Jesus doesn't answer. But Jesus responds to his question with another question.

[5 : 42] What is written in the law? You're the expert. Jesus is aware of. You're the expert. How do you read it? Well, the lawyer didn't hesitate.

He knew what he wanted to say. He knew what he expected Jesus to say. So he's ready to let him know. He's quoting from Deuteronomy chapter 6, what every faithful Jew would recite every day.

And from Leviticus chapter 19. Look at what he said. And he answered, that's the lawyer. 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.

New Testament scholar Darrell Bach says that this combination of love for God and love for neighbor was known to Jews of that day as the great commandment.

This is also what Jesus knew. And this is also what Jesus said when he was asked in Matthew chapter 22 and Mark chapter 12 a similar question.

[6 : 49] Jesus gave these two quotes in talking about what the greatest commandment was. But Jesus made a distinction. Jesus distinguished between loving God and loving people.

He said that loving God in Matthew 22 is the first and greatest commandment. And in Matthew or in Mark 12 he said it was the most important one.

So when Jesus is asked about the law, about the greatest, about these kinds of things. He says the same thing the lawyer says, but he says this, it's more important to love God with all your heart, soul, mind and strength.

That is the first and greatest commandment. But in the same breath, Jesus says, and the second is like it. You must love your neighbor as yourself. That's what he said in Matthew 22 and in Mark chapter 12.

Jesus emphasized the priority of loving God. But he also made it clear loving others is vital.

[7 : 55] Loving others is something you've got to do if you love God. In 1 John chapter 4, these two commandments are shown to be interrelated.

Look at verses 7 and 8. John, the disciple of Jesus, he fully got it when Jesus taught about loving God and loving others.

He put it together like this. Beloved, let us love one another. For love is from God and whoever loves has been born of God and knows God.

Anyone who does not love does not know God because God is love. If we really love God, we'll love other people. That's what he's saying. That's why Jesus says it the way he does about the two great commandments.

If we as professing Christians don't love people, we just can't find it in our hearts, it must be that we've never experienced the grace of God ourselves and the love of God that comes with being a child of God, what God gives us.

[9 : 08] I want you to look at how Jesus commended this lawyer's answer in verse 28. And he said to him, Jesus said to this lawyer, you have answered correctly. Do this and you will live.

Now, does that bother you? Is there any kind of red flag that sort of went up? The lawyer asked Jesus, what must I do to inherit eternal life?

What must I do to become a part of the kingdom of heaven? What must I do in order to go to heaven when I die? We might would say. Well, Jesus answered by saying, love God and love others.

Jesus said, you have answered correctly. Do this and you will live.

Now, what was Jesus talking about? Was Jesus saying that you can be saved by doing certain things, even good things like loving God?

[10 : 13] If we have studied the New Testament, if we've studied the Bible, if we have any understanding of what Scripture says about salvation, we know Jesus was not saying to this man, do this and you will be saved.

Do these things and God will reward your good works. God will reward your good efforts by giving you a home in heaven. That's not what Jesus ever taught.

A good example is in John chapter 3 as Jesus spoke with the religious leader, the Pharisee, Nicodemus. He talked to him about the importance of being born from above, born again.

He talked about how flesh and blood cannot inherit the kingdom of God. We've got to be born again of the Spirit of God. Paul, in writing all that he wrote about having a right relationship with God, he talked about it's all by God's grace.

It's not something we deserve or earn. It's by God's grace through faith in Jesus Christ. Our salvation is by the grace of God through faith in what Jesus has done.

[11 : 21] His death on the cross for our sins. His perfect life, not ours. So, what's Jesus talking about here?

Two possibilities. First, Jesus could have said this to the lawyer knowing that everyone knows they don't love God with all their heart, soul, mind, and strength.

Jesus may have been trying to help this guy understand by pointing him to the law, this expert in the law, pointing him to the law and saying, it says, love God with all your heart, soul, mind, and strength.

Love your neighbor as yourself. Do this and you'll live. And the idea should have been in that man's mind is, I don't do that. I mean, most of us in this room were Christians, have been for a long time, and we do love God, but can you honestly say, could you sign on the dotted line, I love God with every ounce of my being.

With all my heart, soul, mind, and strength, I do love God that way. nothing lacking. Could you say, I truly do love my neighbors myself.

[12 : 42] I do look around this room, love everybody in this room just as much, just as sacrificially, just as self-givingly as I do myself.

or we don't. No one does. That's the point. If that lawyer had been wise, had been honest, he would have thought to himself, I come up short.

the purpose of the law of God is to show us we're not perfect, that we are sinners, that we need a Savior, but this guy, he just didn't get it.

That's most likely the point Jesus was making, but it could have been Jesus was making the point here that people who are Christians, people who are true believers, people who, in whom the Spirit of God dwells, they do seek to love God with all their heart, soul, mind, and strength, and their neighbor as their self.

Not that they've achieved that, but that's really the desire of their heart. That's a possibility. But most likely the first is what Jesus was talking about.

[14 : 12] Either way, the lawyer didn't understand what Jesus meant. He may have thought in his erroneous way of thinking that he did love God, but he knew that he had some problems when it came to loving his neighbor as himself, because he had some questions about who his neighbor was.

You see, we've seen in another study last week even, most Jews in that day when they heard love your neighbor as yourself, they automatically thought another Jew. Love your neighbor and my neighbor is someone who is like me, who thinks and lives and acts like me.

It's not everybody. It's not certainly my enemy. It's not certainly people I do not like. It's not certainly Gentiles, non-believers.

And so, it says in verse 29, he's wanting to make sure he's right. And so, in order to justify himself, look at verse 29.

But he, this lawyer, desiring to justify himself, said to Jesus, Jesus, and who is my neighbor? Well, Jesus knows he just doesn't get it.

[15 : 34] And so, rather than trying to give some kind of theological explanation, Jesus gives an answer, but he gives it in the form of a story.

A story that's going to be easy to understand. A parable. The parable of the Good Samaritan. Let's look at it now in verse 30. Jesus replied, A man was going down from Jerusalem to Jericho, and he fell among robbers who stripped him and beat him and departed, leaving him half dead.

Now, by chance, a priest was going down that road, and when he saw him, he passed by on the other side. So likewise, a Levite, when he came to the place and saw him, passed by on the other side.

But a Samaritan, as he journeyed, came to where he was, and when he saw him, he had compassion. He went to him and bound up his wounds, pouring on oil and wine.

Then he set him on his own animal and brought him to an inn and took care of him. And the next day, he took out two denarii and gave them to the innkeeper, saying, Take care of him.

[16 : 59] And whatever more you spend, I will repay you when I come back. End of story. Now Jesus asks the lawyer, Which of these three do you think proved to be a neighbor to the man who fell among the robbers?

He said, The one who showed him mercy. And Jesus said to him, You go and do likewise. Let's look at the story.

Let's look at the parable. The first character in the story is the victim. We don't know anything about him other than he was robbed, he was beaten, he was left half dead on the side of the road.

Envision that. Second character is actually two characters, a priest and a Levite. They're religious leaders.

It says they're coming down from Jerusalem to Jericho. The implication would be they've already done their duties in the temple and they're on their way home. The priest, the Levite, they do the same thing.

[18 : 20] They're walking down the road, they see a man, evidently he's bruised, bleeding, he's been beaten up, left half dead, probably unconscious, stripped, naked.

They've taken everything. They see this heap of a man, probably in a fetal position. They don't even get close enough to look at him to see if he's dead or alive.

Jesus said they just passed on the other side of the road and pretend they never saw him. Now, why would they do something like that?

Well, a lot of commentators say that they did that because the man was half dead, they couldn't tell if he was dead or alive. For them to touch a dead body made them ceremonially unclean, that could be true, but Jesus doesn't say, could have just been, they were in a hurry.

Could have just been, they're tired. They've been in the temple, they've been doing their work, they're ready to go home. Maybe supper's on the table. Maybe they just don't give a rip. Maybe they see this guy just shrug their shoulders and say, poor guy, they just don't care.

[19 : 37] Whatever the reason, there's no excuse. See, that's what Jesus is trying to point out. Neither of these religious leaders who saw the man in need, neither one of them did anything.

them. And the idea is, it's inexcusable. Now, the third character is where the original, for the original audience, it really got interesting.

Many commentators will talk about, as Jesus told stories, and that was a well-known way of communication in his day. It's always been, every day.

But the idea would have been, as Jesus taught, other people would have taught in that day, people would have expected, these two religious leaders, one of them, the priest, he was a more, he had more responsibility, the Levite was more like his assistant, and they would have expected the next person to be a regular church member, what we'll call a regular church member, a regular Jew.

And so the idea would have been, as Jesus was telling the story, people would, you know, you sort of figure out the pattern, as people would have thought, all right, here's for us, here's the pastor comes by, he doesn't care, here's the deacon comes by, he doesn't care, but the guy that's coming next, he's going to be the hero, he's going to be the guy who's just the regular church member.

[21 : 06] He's not any kind of officer, he just loves the Lord, and so he's going to come along and take care of this guy. But that's not what Jesus said. The third character, verse 33, when Jesus said, but a Samaritan, the crowd would have just gasped.

There would have been just, it's just unbelievable for Jesus to say, a Samaritan came next, because Jews absolutely hated Samaritans, they were scum, they were nothing, they were half-blooded Jews.

Samaritan's, there was racial prejudice here, and there was religious prejudice because the Samaritans, they didn't acknowledge that true worship of God was to take place in the temple, they didn't acknowledge Jerusalem as the place where it should take place, they had their own capital, Samaria.

And so for the Jew, historically, looking back at what all had happened in days gone by, when Jews had been held, been captured by other countries, taken into captivity, other people came into the area, intermarried with some of these Jews.

Now these Samaritans, they were not pure-blooded Jews, half-breeds, they didn't worship correctly, they didn't know what they were doing, they didn't know God, and so there was just intense racial, religious bigotry, prejudice that took place between Jews and Gentiles.

[22 : 56] Samaritan was just the very last person that the crowd would have expected to be the good guy of any story. But I want you to look at how Jesus, excuse me, details what the Samaritan did.

This is an important part of the story. It's not that the Samaritan just came by and acknowledged the guy and rendered him a little bit of aid. Look at the great trouble the Samaritan went to to help this guy.

Look at it in verse 33. But a Samaritan, as he journeyed, came to where he was, and when he saw him, this is the wounded guy, he had compassion.

He went to him and bound up his wounds, pouring on oil and wine, trying to, this is their medicine, this is trying to help, heal, take away the pain.

Then he set him on his own animal and brought him to an inn and took care of him. And the next day he took out two denarii and gave them to the innkeeper, saying, take care of him, and whatever more you spend, I will repay you when I come.

[24 : 05] That Samaritan, just think about it. He interrupted his trip. He used his own first aid kit. He took the man back to the inn.

He provided for him best he could right then, personally, then gave money for him to be taken care of until he could come back. Let's look at how Jesus applied this parable.

After he tells the story, all this happened, Jesus asked the lawyer in verse 36, which of these three do you think proved to be a neighbor to the man who fell among the robbers?

The lawyer responded, the one who showed him mercy. Now, do you notice the way the lawyer responds?

He won't use the name Samaritan. You see, Jesus told the story about the priest, the Levite, and the Samaritan. And Jesus asked him, which of the three was the neighbor?

[25 : 09] And the man says, not the Samaritan, as Jesus had used the word. He just couldn't bring himself to describe somebody like a Samaritan.

Trash. Garbage of a person. He just couldn't use his name. That name meant that way. There's another occasion in the life of Jesus, his interaction with Pharisees, those who opposed him.

They cursed him by calling him a Samaritan. They were trying to just, they were just in Jesus' face. They said, you got a demon, you're demon-possessed, and you're a Samaritan.

That's how bad it was to be a Samaritan. This man would not even bring himself to refer to a person of this race in a positive way. He just couldn't do it. Jesus ignored that part.

Verse 37, Jesus concluded by saying, you go and do likewise. Now, did you note the change that took place from the beginning of the story to the end?

[26 : 12] When it begins, the lawyer wants Jesus to define who his neighbor is, and the lawyer asks the question in verse 29, and who is my neighbor? The lawyer wanted Jesus to help him define who he had to treat right, who he had to be neighborly toward, because he didn't want to do it just to anybody.

But the story ends, Jesus asks a different question, not the same one. Which of these three do you think proved to be a neighbor to the man who fell among the robbers?

And then Jesus concludes by saying, you go and do likewise. Jesus ends the parable not telling us who our neighbor is. Instead, he says, you be a neighbor to whoever you come across in life who has a need that you can meet.

If you will. Let's just stop and think about this now. All of us, as we just do our thing, live in life, we come across people that we see that we, it's obvious they have a need that we could meet.

It may be physical, it may be material, financial, it may be something relational, it may be something spiritual we need to say or do. We come across people in our lives, they're like this guy on the side of the road.

[27 : 49] There's an obvious need. We could do something, but we just don't. And we don't for a lot of different reasons.

I can't remember the time, I can't remember times, period. But two or three years ago, I was driving down the road on my way home for lunch, and I passed by a man down in a ditch trying to push a lawnmower up out of the ditch and back onto the side of the road.

The ditch was at least six feet deep, it was head high. As I passed by that man, looked over there, it was obvious what was going on, and the first thing I thought up to myself was, he needs help.

Second thing I thought was, I've got all my good clothes. This was Wednesday, we were having service that night, I had on dress pants just like this, had on these shoes, had on a golf shirt.

It was summer. I thought to myself, if I stop and help him, I'm going to tear up these clothes. I'm going to get all sweaty, I have to go back and take another doggone shower before church tonight.

[29 : 00] But before I could get a fourth of the way down the road, I thought about this story, because I was going to use it as an illustration that very night. And I thought to myself, I can't leave that man beside the road with that lawnmower.

So I turned around, went back, got out. Let me help you. Okay, thank you. Got down in a ditch with him, pushed it up, no problem at all, got it on the side of the road. He thanked me, I said you're welcome, went back and all.

Went back home. Now you think with me, I'm not as, I'm not the only bad guy in this room. We get busy in life.

We've got things to do. We've got places to go. Sometimes we just don't want to get dirty. And sometimes we pass people just as obvious as that man in the ditch needing help with a lawnmower.

Just as obvious as that man who had been beaten nearly to death on the side of the road. Sometimes we're no better than the priest and the Levite. And our excuse doesn't matter.

[30 : 12] That's the thing. It doesn't matter what our excuse is. It doesn't matter why we don't get involved. If we don't get involved, we're wrong. We're failing to be the neighbor that Jesus is teaching this story to say that we as Christians are called to be to whoever it may be that's in our path.

We don't think about this Samaritan stuff. It doesn't ring any kind of bell. But there's things that ring a bell with you. God's called you to be a neighbor to the people in your life as well as others that you just don't think much of.

And you know who that kind of person is. God's called you to be a neighbor to people in this community who are Muslims who are working in this community, going to school in this community.

But because of the atmosphere that we live under today and there are true Muslim terrorists trying to destroy us and our country and the free world, that's true. But every Muslim is not a terrorist.

And there are Muslims who live close to you, who work maybe with you. And if you are a Christian, you have no choice in order to be faithful to God, but to be a neighbor to that Muslim.

[31 : 48] Or to that black person, if that's your problem person. Or to that real rich person, if that's the one you resent the most because they have more than you.

Or to that real poor person that you resent the most. Because you don't think they put forth the effort they ought to. See the hard thing about this story, this is a nice story, but it's not intended to be.

It's not really a feel good story about doing kind things to people in need. The story of the Good Samaritan is really a story about Jesus telling us, you are to be a neighbor who demonstrates God's grace and God's love, compassion, and practical help in the person who has the needs, time of need.

We're called to be neighbors. And we don't get to choose who our neighbors are. I want to ask you, who has God put into your life right now that you need to be a neighbor to?

Just like this Good Samaritan. It may be something very tangible, physical, practical that you know you need to do. You need to help them with.

[33 : 18] You need to give them. You need to serve them in some way. But it could be it's not anything like that. It could be more psychological, emotional, relational. It may be that they need you to be a friend, to notice them, to smile at them, to shake hands with them, to notice and be nice toward their children that you see have to interact with in your neighborhood.

It may be a spiritual need. It may be that you're the person that's in your life you need to be a neighbor to. It may be that what you need to do next is to share the gospel with them.

Because they're not a Christian, they don't know the Lord. And the only way they're going to know Him is if someone like you, a neighbor, Christian neighbor like you, shares the gospel with them. But you know, if they're not a Christian, in order for them to really listen to you or me, they've got to see Christ in us.

They've got to see that we don't just say we believe this stuff, but we live it. And when they see that we live it, when they see that we are serious about loving and being a neighbor like Jesus taught, they'll be more willing to listen when we share the gospel with them.

Who has God put in your life that you need to be a neighbor to this week? Whoever that is, whatever face comes to mind, listen to what Jesus says.

[35 : 03] Go, do like this Samaritan did. Be a real neighbor. Meet their needs with love, with compassion, and whatever practical means you need to use to be that kind of neighbor.

Let's pray together. Dear God, all of us in this room, we struggle at times to love certain people or certain kinds of people.

We find it difficult at times to be a neighbor because we're busy, because there's so many things that demand our attention, or we really just don't care about people or certain kinds of people.

But Lord, help us to know that we don't have an excuse that is acceptable to you to not live in this community and be a neighbor to people that you bring across our path that have needs that we are able to meet.

So show us how we should respond to this message. Show us the, put in our minds right now a picture of the people. Or dear God, just help us to be ready when the need arises this week.

[36 : 41] Help us to be faithful Christian neighbors as Jesus is teaching us in this parable today. Show us how we should respond now.

And in an attitude of prayer, you just, you respond to the Lord. If you would like to pray about your particular issue, you come down to the front and I'd be happy to pray with you right now.

But the main thing, the important thing is you listen to God and obey Him. Thank you.