

The Parable of the Good Samaritan

Luke 10.25-37

²⁵ And now a lawyer stood up and, to test him, asked, 'Master, what must I do to inherit eternal life?' ²⁶ He said to him, 'What is written in the Law? What is your reading of it?' ²⁷ He replied, 'You must love the Lord your God with all your heart, with all your soul, with all your strength, and with all your mind, and your neighbour as yourself.'

²⁸ Jesus said to him, 'You have answered right, do this and life is yours.'

²⁹ But the man was anxious to justify himself and said to Jesus, 'And who is my neighbour?'

³⁰ In answer Jesus said, 'A man was once on his way down from Jerusalem to Jericho and fell into the hands of bandits; they stripped him, beat him and then made off, leaving him half dead.'

³¹ Now a priest happened to be travelling down the same road, but when he saw the man, he passed by on the other side. ³² In the same way a Levite who came to the place saw him, and passed by on the other side.

³³ But a Samaritan traveller who came on him was moved with compassion when he saw him.

³⁴ He went up to him and bandaged his wounds, pouring oil and wine on them. He then lifted him onto his own mount and took him to an inn and looked after him. ³⁵ Next day, he took out two denarii and handed them to the innkeeper and said, 'Look after him, and on my way back I will make good any extra expense you have.'

³⁶ Which of these three, do you think, proved himself a neighbour to the man who fell into the bandits' hands?'

³⁷ He replied, 'The one who showed pity towards him.' Jesus said to him, 'Go, and do the same yourself.'



What does the Parable Teach Us?

The parable identifies our neighbours as all people, even those with whom we would not normally associate. It answers the question, 'Who is my neighbour?' in its broadest interpretation.

It defines what our relationship should be with our neighbours – our duty of care. It focusses on relationships and what it means to love. We are to set aside our prejudices and selfish concerns and give generously without expectation of return.

The parable reaffirms the need to "practice what we preach". It juxtaposes law and compassion and points to the primacy of the latter. The Priest would have known God's law, but failed to live it by failing to love. The Levite put the law above compassion. Both the Priest and the Levite would have been unable to enter the Temple if they had contact with a ritually unclean person. Here, Jesus is drawing a strong contrast between those who speak God's law with their words and those who actually follow it in their conduct. It is interesting to note that poor Jews were despised, as were Jews with disabilities or diseases, who were considered ritually impure for life. Their plight would also have been ignored by both the Priest and the Levite. Therefore, the Samaritan treated his enemy the way every poor Jew in Jesus' audience would want to be treated.

Jews were taught to hate Samaritans. So the Samaritan would have been a surprising and confusing character in the story. Samaritans were considered a very low class of person. This Samaritan did not consider the injured man's ethnicity or religion – the parable does not tell us if the victim was a Gentile or Jew and we know that he was stripped naked – this good Samaritan saw only a person in need of assistance and he assisted him above and beyond the minimum requirement. The Samaritan's heart was free of the constraints of law and differences in theology. Jesus is telling us that these things are irrelevant at the core of what it means to be human. The Samaritan, an impure heretic, was the truly righteous man.

The innkeeper, too, was a good neighbour. He accepted the word of the Samaritan that he would come back and pay the expenses for the injured man. Without question, he joined with the Samaritan in his act of kindness.

Through his final instruction to the lawyer, Jesus is also telling us to 'Go, and do the same'.

How can we follow Jesus' instructions to 'Go, and do the same' in our everyday lives at Stella Maris?

The first question which the Priest and the Levite asked was: "If I stop to help this man, what will happen to me?" But the good Samaritan reversed the question: "If I do not stop to help this man, what will happen to him?"

- Martin Luther King Jr