

JESUS THE STORYTELLER

The Good Samaritan

NOVEMBER 18, 2018

TODAY'S TEXT

Text: **Luke 10:30-37**

In reply Jesus said: "A man was going down from Jerusalem to Jericho, when he was attacked by robbers. They stripped him of his clothes, beat him and went away, leaving him half dead. ³¹ A priest happened to be going down the same road, and when he saw the man, he passed by on the other side. ³² So too, a Levite, when he came to the place and saw him, passed by on the other side. ³³ But a Samaritan, as he traveled, came where the man was; and when he saw him, he took pity on him. ³⁴ He went to him and bandaged his wounds, pouring on oil and wine. Then he put the man on his own donkey, brought him to an inn and took care of him. ³⁵ The next day he took out two denarii[a] and gave them to the innkeeper. 'Look after him,' he said, 'and when I return, I will reimburse you for any extra expense you may have.' ³⁶ "Which of these three do you think was a neighbor to the man who fell into the hands of robbers?" ³⁷ The expert in the law replied, "The one who had mercy on him." Jesus told him, "Go and do likewise."

FIRST THOUGHTS

"If God's Word became visible, our words must too. We cannot announce God's love with credibility unless we also exhibit It in action" John Stott

"You're asking the wrong question." That's a phrase you hear every now and then during a contentious debate, when two sides are trying to come to an agreement. Asking the wrong question is different than giving the wrong answer. Whenever someone says, "You're asking the wrong question," they are implying that the framework for the conversation need to change. A new window of imagination needs to open up.

- When have you been in a situation in which you needed to "change the question" so you could look at things from a different angle?
- How did changing the question affect your thinking?

UNDERSTAND THE CONTEXT

In this session, we will study the parable of the good Samaritan. When asked how to gain eternal life, Jesus summed up the message of the Old Testament in the commandments to love God and love one's neighbor. In response to the question, "Who is my neighbor?" Jesus told the story of a man in distress and an unexpected act of compassion.

An expert in the Law of Moses asked Jesus a question in order to test Him and see what His answer might be. "What must I do to inherit eternal life?" The question itself is fine, a common question, a good question – one that we have seen before and will see again.

Some readers immediately think the question is about going to heaven after you die. But in its first-century context, the question would have had a different shade of meaning. Asking about "inheriting eternal life" meant something like this: "Teacher, how can I make sure I will be part of God's kingdom when the Messiah comes and establishes His reign on earth? How can I make sure that whenever God returns to us, His people, and makes everything right, I am going to be part of that inheritance?"

EXPLORE THE TEXT

> Read Luke 10:25-28

On a regular basis in the Gospels, people spoke to Jesus in order to "test Him." That is, they asked questions intended to trip Him up somehow or to trap Him in inconsistencies. Let's take a look at one of these occasions and see how Jesus responded.

- What do you think about the man's answer to Jesus' question?

Look how Jesus responded: "What is written in the law? ... How do you read it?" In other words, "You're the expert in the law, so tell me what you find there." Jesus often responded to a question by asking another question. It is a way to reveal the heart behind the question. And that is what He did here.

- What do you think these different aspects of loving God (heart, soul, strength, mind) refer to, and why do they matter?
- Put yourself in this scene. If Jesus had told you that the way to inherit eternal life is by loving God and loving others, how would you have responded? What questions would you have asked?

> Read Luke 10:29-35

- Why do you think the two religious leaders passed by the man in distress?
- What reasons do we give when we want to “pass by on the other side” and not show compassion?

We should ask ourselves why Jesus decided to tell a story instead of just saying, “To be a neighbor, show compassion.” There is something powerful in the way Jesus delivered this truth in the form of a story. The parable stirs our hearts in a way that shows us, not just tells us, the truth. And the truth Jesus showed in this story is that compassion and neighbor-love crosses boundaries and overcomes obstacles.

- What can we learn from the Samaritan’s sacrificial actions on behalf of the wounded man?
- What are some practical ways we too can show compassion to people in need?

> Read Luke 10:36-37

- What is the difference between doing acts of compassion and being a compassionate person?

In the centuries following the telling of this story, many Bible readers saw the good Samaritan as an allegory for the story of Jesus. But to read and interpret this parable in an allegorical fashion is to ignore its context and the type of literature this is.

At the same time, however, I don’t think Luke would have ruled out the possibility that this story hints at Jesus being the One who comes and, at great cost to Himself, shows us compassion. There is a sense in which Jesus is “the great Samaritan”—the One who takes charge of our welfare and shows us compassion when we are helpless.

- What does it say about us as Christians if we fail to be compassionate?
- How does our ministry of mercy back up what we say we believe about God’s mercy to us?

SUMMARIZE AND CHALLENGE

Stories help us ask questions. Telling a story opens up windows of our imagination and changes the frame so we can see things differently. Having read the story Jesus told and having considered the way Jesus changed the question of the expert in the law, we are now in the position to ask new questions about our own hearts and lives.

How can our churches be places where we show the scandalous, pursuing love of God for humanity? How can we reach across ethnic and cultural boundaries to show that God shows mercy and compassion to anyone in need: how can we make sure that our attempts at “loving our neighbor” are not just ways to justify ourselves and show off our righteousness? How can we move from doing acts of compassion to being compassionate people who cannot help but overflow for those in need? How can we ensure that we are not offering excuses as we “pass by” those who need help the most?

UPCOMING LESSONS

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| 11/25/18 | No LifeGroups |
| 12/02/18 | Jesus the Storyteller Week 4: The Father of Two Lost Sons |
| 12/09/18 | Jesus the Storyteller Week 5: The Pharisee and the Tax Collector |
| 12/16/18 | Jesus the Storyteller Week 6: The Wicked Tenants |

READ THROUGH THE BIBLE

19th – Matthew 1-4 | 20th – Matthew 5-7 | 21st – Matthew 8-10 | 22nd – Matthew 11-13 | 23rd – Matthew 14-16 | 24th – Matthew 17-19 | 25th – Matthew 20-22