

**Parables of Jesus// Portraits of the Kingdom
Part Nine - The Good Samaritan**

**September 1, 2024
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Luke 10:25-37

²⁵ On one occasion an expert in the law stood up to test Jesus. "Teacher," he asked, "what must I do to inherit eternal life?"

²⁶ "What is written in the Law?" he replied. "How do you read it?"

²⁷ He answered, "'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 'Love your neighbor as yourself.'"

²⁸ "You have answered correctly," Jesus replied. "Do this and you will live."

²⁹ But he wanted to justify himself, so he asked Jesus, "And who is my neighbor?"

³⁰ 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 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.**"*

I. Categorizing

We categorize and organize things all the time.

But when it comes to our relationships with other human beings, that categorizing process often continues to apply, and sometimes the way we categorize other people in our minds has... well... mixed effects on how we end up treating them.

The expert in the law wants to be able to categorize others as "neighbour" and "non-neighbour."

Jesus' parable comes in response to the key question that the expert in the law asks in verse 29.

But he wanted to justify himself, so he asked Jesus, "And who is my neighbor?" (verse 29).

The expert in the law wants to limit the category "neighbour," and perhaps we can sometimes do the same.

II. A True Neighbour

Jesus tells the expert in the law who his neighbour is and what it means to be a true neighbour.

In the story, the priest and Levite both “passed by.”

These were the “good guys” who had no excuse to act in this way.

The Samaritan, on the other hand, came to where the man was. Saw him. Took pity on him. He bandaged the man’s wounds, cleaned him up, and brought him to an inn where he would be taken care of.

At the end of the parable, Jesus asks: “Which of these three do you think was a neighbour to the man who fell into the hands of robbers?” (verse 36).

Jesus shifts the focus away from “who fits into the category of neighbour?” to “why don’t you go and just be a neighbour?”

“Go and do likewise” (verse 37b).

Part of what Jesus is doing through this parable is giving us the ethics of the Kingdom. He’s telling us that in God’s Kingdom, this is the sort of way that people show neighbourly love to others.

Therefore, as God’s chosen people, holy and dearly loved, clothe yourselves with compassion, kindness, humility, gentleness and patience. (Colossians 3:12)

By God’s grace, he is calling us to be a people who embody true neighbourly love.

III. A Surprising Neighbour

Who’s the person who does the “good deed” in the parable? Well, it’s the Samaritan, of course.

John Mark Comer, in one of his sermons, says that to say “the Good Samaritan” in that context would be like saying “the Good ISIS fighter” in the United States. To the first-century Jewish person, “Good Samaritan” is an oxymoron.

The expert in the law can’t bring himself to say “Samaritan,” but instead says, “the one who had mercy on him” (verse 37).

Through the parable, Jesus is saying, “the Samaritan fits in the ‘neighbour’ category too,” but more... “the Samaritan is your example to follow.”

A couple of things that Jesus’ use of the Samaritan should cause us to consider...

1. The parable calls us to examine our prejudices.

Who are the groups of people whom you have a hard time even acknowledging? Which people do you think could never possibly do anything truly good for another?

2. The parable suggests that help can come from surprising places.

If we don't recognize the Samaritan as our neighbour, we might be left for dead!

IV. The Greatest Neighbour of All

In an allegorical reading of this text, it could be said that we are all like the man who fell in the ditch and Jesus is the Samaritan who comes to rescue us.

Jesus is the greatest neighbour of all, who cleans us up when we were in desperate need. He rescues us at great cost to himself.

At the table, we remember the ultimate neighbourly act of love.

Questions for Reflection

1. What are some of the ways that you tend to categorize who is a 'neighbour' and who isn't? Said differently, how do you often determine whether someone is worthy of your love, time, and attention?
2. What might be some things you need to shift in your life in order to be a better neighbour to others? Are there ways that you need to slow down?
3. If you're honest with yourself, are there people or groups of people that you tend to think of as morally inferior? How does this parable challenge your assumptions? Are there things that you might be able to learn from those who are wildly different than you are?