

Parables of Jesus #5
Good Samaritan
Luke 10:25-37

10.16.2016

BIG Idea: We love like Jesus when we have been loved by Jesus.

INTRODUCTION

- The parable of the Good Samaritan is one of the most famous parables of Jesus. It is known not just by Christians but by those outside the church as well.
- Just a quick google search of the term came up 10million hits with everything from hospitals named "Good Samaritan" like the one in Brockton, to organizations like Samaritan's Purse, which focuses on medical missions and their operation Christmas Child, where they deliver millions of shoeboxes full of Christmas toys to the worlds most impoverished children.
- Other google hits referred to "Good Samaritans" as neighbors who stepped up to help someone in need. Just the other day in Miami a gentleman was driving down the road when he saw an older man with a cane fall into a highway at a busy intersection. He quickly stopped his car and got out to help the man. He flagged down a couple of other drivers to help him. The elderly man was ok. The good Samaritan was quick to respond when he saw the need it may have very well saved the older man from being run over. ([Huffington Post Link](#))
- One thing all of these references to the Good Samaritan have in common – they all get that the Good Samaritan is an image of loving others as a good neighbor. And this is typically the message of the Good Samaritan. Jesus tells this amazing story and tells us to "go do likewise." BAM – close in prayer, sing some songs, and go home! We all get challenged and inspired and hopefully take some steps to be better neighbors.
- So, if the message we all walk away with today is simply, "Let's all be better neighbors! Let's all look out for each other! Let's all help those around us who are in need. If we all do this, our world will be a better place!"
- While that is part of the message of the story, its not the full picture of what is happening nor does it answer the questions, "Why am I NOT doing that now?" and "How can I find the help to actually live it out?" And this is where the context of the parable comes in. Most people only know the story itself, but not the context of why Jesus told it or who he told it to.
- To reduce this story to the moral of "be a good neighbor" is to miss the real depth, beauty, and power of this story. It is to miss the gospel message in this story. We all might walk out feeling guilty that we don't help those in need but Jesus NEVER makes guilt the motivation for loving others. That is not real love, it is a guilt-ridden love. Real love flows from our heart, which gets at why we don't find ourselves radically loving our neighbors all the time... we don't have it in us.
- Hidden in this parable and its context is a message that HAS to frame out the Good Samaritan. The lawyer would have gotten it by the time Jesus was done and we can easily miss it if we aren't careful. It is simply this we love others when we have been loved deeply.
- More specifically "We love others like Jesus when we have been loved by Jesus." When we have experienced the transforming love of Jesus, it moves us to love others.
- In our text today, Jesus is getting at the call to be a loving neighbor but he does far more than call us to do it. This passage reveals the mandate, the magnitude of the call, the motivation to do it, and then we'll see some methods for "gospel-neighboring."
- CREDIT** - Keller - sermon "Neighboring" (2.23.2003) on this text.

1. The mandate - it's required

- The context for the parable is a very important interaction between a lawyer and Jesus. Now, when you hear "lawyer" just think expert in the law and in this case, he was an expert in the laws of the OT. He shows up and wants to test Jesus. Now, we don't know the exact reason but it may have been because Jesus hang out with sinners who seemed to have no regard for the law. He may have wanted to trap Jesus but the term "test" is not specifically evil so there is a small possibility that this religious lawyer wanted to ask Jesus a question to see how he would answer so he could really evaluate Jesus and his teaching.
- The question is a BIG one: "*what must I do to inherit eternal life?*" Now, at this point I think the religious leader and many religious people today might expect Jesus to answer with some thoughtful reference to believing in God, going to church, and following all the rules of the Bible. The secular person might think he would simply say, "God loves and accepts you as you are so all you have to do it go to him."
- Jesus doesn't answer the question at all but asks a question in return. This is often Jesus' method. It was impossible to corner Jesus. He never does it when genuine questions are asked. He always does it to turn the tables on those who are seeking to corner him.
- vv.26 "*What is written in the Law? How do you read it?*" Jesus knows this guy is a theologian lawyer. He is an expert. He knows there are 613 laws in the Pentateuch (the first 5 books of the OT). Jesus is asking him to summarize and he does.
- In vv.27 *And he answered, "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."*
- The lawyer answers well but don't think he came up with this. It is well documented that Jewish theologians of the time had concluded that these two statements summarized the whole law. But these two are big. The first calls us to love God with ALL of us as human beings.
- The second is weighty as well. To care about your neighbor as yourself. This doesn't mean simply meeting their needs but wanting their absolute well-being as much as you want your own. So put all the energy, focus, and determination into the well-being of your neighbor as you do yourself.
- Quick question... Anyone here got either one of these down? Just killing it?
- Jesus answers the man, v.28 "*You have answered correctly; do this, and you will live.*" Jesus is answering truly in one sense. This is what REAL life is. It is a life 100% pleasing and honoring to God. But Jesus isn't just affirming this as a way to eternal life, he's holding it up as a mirror for the guy. On the one hand Jesus holds up these commands as the perfect requirement of God. "If you can do these, you will live." But the weight of these commands weren't lost on the lawyer.
- As soon as he senses it he immediately follows up with another question in order to justify himself: "Who is my neighbor?" He's saying, "Ok, we both agree that these are commands are legit but let's make this a little more attainable, a little more reasonable. Who is my actual neighbor? What's the limit, Jesus???" This tells us so much about this guy. He felt that he already *ACTUALLY* followed these commands. He was relating to God on the basis of his moral performance – I obey, therefore God accepts me. "Jesus, I love God fully and I love my neighbor but let's just be more specific on this. How do you define who my neighbor is?"
- So the mandate is to love God fully and love your neighbor like you love yourself. The lawyer's question leads to a story that reveals the magnitude of the mandate.

2. The magnitude - the dimensions of it

- In response to the question by the lawyer, "*who is my neighbor*," Jesus tells the story we know as the Good Samaritan. And this is where our passage begins to take on a deeper meaning. So, Jesus said, "Love your neighbor."
- We would all be good with that, right? Christians and secular people in Boston would agree that helping our neighbors and caring for the poor is good, right? The truth is not only would Christianity agree, but every major world religion would agree as well.
- So, here's a simple question: If we all agree that loving your neighbor and helping the poor is a good thing, why aren't we doing it? One reason is that we all set our own limits on what that means. We all have an internal limit for who, when and how much when it comes to neighboring.
- The Lawyer had set limits. Truth is that he probably was a good neighbor to his family and friends. It was built into Judaism to care for the poor so maybe he gave some money to help people out. But he had limits just like we all do.
- Jesus tells the parable of the Good Samaritan to expose his limits and reveal the MAGNITUDE of the call to love our neighbor. The truth is, the lawyer limits our idea of neighboring and so do we.
- FIRST, we limit the who – we like to limit who we will help. Some of us have a bigger definition than others, but we ALL limit who we will help.
- For example, a pastor friend of mine in NH had ministered to a man in prison. When this man got out he let the man live with him for a while because his family didn't take him back, he couldn't find anywhere to live and was having a problem finding a job. Now, we all might think, "what a great thing. I think I could do that if the circumstances presented itself." Now, let me add that the guy was a convicted child molester. Everyone feel the same way? I know it would challenge me as well. And that's Jesus point.
- Jesus tells the story of a man who had traveled down the road away from Jerusalem to Jericho. The old road, even more than the present one, curved through rugged, bleak, rocky terrain where robbers could easily hide. It was considered especially dangerous, even in a day when travel was normally full of hazards.
- The man was attacked, beaten, robbed, and left for dead. Jesus uses two types of people in this parable – Jews and Samaritans. The two groups distasted each other and Jews, in particular, thought Samaritans were defiled, half-breads who God should not even forgive when they repent. There are some records of Jewish prayers that revealed this level of contempt.
- Jesus says we can't limit who will be a neighbor to. We are called to love our neighbor no matter who they are. "The law asked who is my neighbor? Jesus asks, who is behaving like one?" DA Carson
- SECOND, we limit the when – we don't mind helping when there is a need we agree with. What do I mean by that? In my church in KY, there was a family who's home burned to the ground and they lost everything except their lives. The entire community came together and helped them. Why? We don't mind stepping in and helping when the situation isn't the person's own doing. They didn't contribute to it and they are in need so of course we'll step in and help.
- But the Samaritans and Jews hated each other. When the Samaritan saw the Jew he could have thought, "Well, that's what he deserves. His people have oppressed me so what comes around goes around."
- So, Jesus is trying to say, being a good neighbor means you meet your neighbor's need no matter the circumstances. The reason Jesus blows this out of the water is because he himself served our need even though none of us deserve it.
- THIRD, we limit how much – we often limit how far we will go to help our neighbor.

- As we have mentioned already, the road was dangerous to travel. A particular area was called the “pass of blood” because so many people were injured and killed there. It was a dangerous road.
- The priest and the Levite were Jewish religious leaders. The priest worked in the temple to help with the daily sacrifices, incense, bread offering and other facets of worship. The Levites were assistants to the priest and oversaw the upkeep of the temple.
- These men were traveling the road they knew was dangerous and they come across a man who has clearly been robbed and beaten. They pass by on the other side. Now, sometimes pastors will say that it was because they would have become ritually unclean but that’s not true. There were provisions for stuff like this and the point of Jesus included them in this story was their excuses were weak.
- In all likelihood these men passed by on the other side because they feared stopping to help him. They feared for their own lives –maybe the robbers are still around and would rob and beat them. They feared for what it would take to actually help this guy since he was so injured, and they feared what it would cost in the long run. Whatever the priest and Levites plans were would have been blown out the water if they stopped. The priest and the Levite feared how much would be involved in helping this man.
- How often is that our excuse? I can’t tell you how many times I have seen a situation where someone needs something and I’ve thought, “I don’t have time to help them.”
- But that’s not how the Samaritan responded. He took on the risk of being attacked by the same robbers. He took on the burden of how badly the man was injured and put him on his own animal. He took on the time commitment and he took on the financial cost. He took the injured man to an inn and gave the innkeeper two denarii to cover the cost of his recovery time.
- This is being a neighbor. It means loving enough to take on the FULL cost needed to seek your neighbors full well-being.
- Jesus’ parable shows the magnitude of the call to love our neighbor as ourselves. It means not limiting the who, the when, or the how much. So we’ve seen the mandate and we’ve seen the magnitude but now Jesus helps us to see the motivation.

3. The motivation -where we get the power for it

- Jesus helps us to see two different motivations for helping the poor. One is a secular or moral version and one is found only in Jesus. The secular or moral version goes like this... We should all help our neighbor because it is the right thing to do. When we see a need we should all step in to meet it and help our neighbor. All progressive human beings should be concerned with being good neighbors. That’s the secular version. The moral version is, you should be a good neighbor because the Old Testament Law says it or the Quran says it.
- Jesus helps us see this position by putting the Priest and Levite into the story. He could have picked a number of other characters like a Pharisee or a tax collector or just an average person but he chose these two characters precisely because they both had a moral responsibility to the poor. They were responsible for looking out for the poor and distributing alms to the poor.
- But the problem with the moral or religious motivation is that it ALWAYS has a limit. It is motivated by religious duty or responsibility and so it can’t sustain the call to love our neighbor which Jesus commands. We will ALWAYS come to the end of our rope. We won’t help a certain type of person or people in a certain situation or we will limit the cost. This moral approach can take you a ways down the road of being a good neighbor but it will always run into its limits.

- This is one of the central points Jesus was trying to make to the Lawyer. You AREN'T loving your neighbor. ANYONE FEELING GUILTY that you aren't loving your neighbor as you should?
- This is where those teaching and preached on the parable seem to stop. We feel guilty for failing to be the good Samaritan. Jesus says, "*Go and do likewise*" so we give money to every homeless person we see for a month.
- This is why the point of the parable is NOT to make us feel guilty for failing to be a good neighbor. That is not the point because it is not simply that you aren't loving your neighbor perfectly, in fact, YOU CAN'T.
- This is why we need another motivation. Jesus includes this one in a way that the Lawyer would not have missed but we do if we are not careful. One of the keys is that every character in the parable gets a description EXCEPT the man who was robbed and beaten nearly to death. Did you notice that?

Why? Because Jesus wanted the lawyer to identify with him. Jesus said, "A man was going down from Jerusalem to Jericho" – the lawyer would have perceived this was meant to be him.

- If Jesus had made the Samaritan the injured man, the lawyer would have thought, "now you're just being crazy, Jesus. Of course, I'm not supposed to help the blaspheming, unclean Samaritan. I'd let him die or maybe even run over him on my horse... twice...just to finish the job."
- But instead, Jesus makes the lawyer the robbed, beaten, and half-dead man. And he is saying to him, "If you were in this position would you want mercy? Would you want the Samaritan to be a good neighbor?"
- So when Jesus says, "Go and do likewise" do you get the subtle NEW motivation Jesus is talking about? He isn't guilt-ing him, "Go do it because it's the right thing." He's telling him you have received mercy, now, go be merciful. You have had a good neighbor, now go be a good neighbor.
- We fall short of this real neighbor love because this love is not a mere "to do" item and can't simply be commanded or taught. It can only be experienced and that experience changes us forever.
- You see, Jesus is the Good Samaritan. He comes to us in our lives wrecked by sin and destroyed by Satan and he is our True Neighbor. Despite the fact that we had sinned and rebelled against God, Jesus came. Despite the fact that we take the life he gives us and live for ourselves instead of him. Despite the fact that we hated God, Jesus came for us.
- Romans 5:8 "*God shows his love for us in that while we were still sinners, Christ died for us.*" Christ was our True Neighbor and now we can go and be one to others. We have a new motivation.
- So our motivation to "go and do likewise" like Jesus said, is not that God will get us if we fail and its not because we all feel guilty for not doing it. Its because Jesus has been a loving neighbor to us that we can go be loving neighbors to those around us.

4. The methods - how to do it

- A few observations on methods to being a good neighbor.

FIRST – See with new eyes. The text says that the Priest, the Levite, and the Samaritan all "saw" the man on the road. But the Samaritan actually SAW the man. It says he had compassion on him. This word is most often used to describe Jesus himself, which is one of the reasons why we know he was putting himself in the parable.

- We NEED to see our neighbors. We need to see not with physical eyes but with the compassion of Christ. This step is hard in the midst of our crazy, insanely busy culture. We HAVE to take space to connect with Christ if we are going to love others in his name. I have realized how busy my own soul gets and I don't take time to LOOK with the eyes of Christ. Sometimes our

neighbors deepest need may not be something physical. Maybe they are struggling with depression or loneliness. We have to be close enough to see that.

SECOND – Gospel Words and Actions go together

- The preaching of the gospel is central in the gospels and the NT church, but this parable doesn't talk about preaching. It talks about meeting the needs of our neighbors. It means it is not enough for us to say we have the way to eternal life and invite people to Alpha. How we serve others will either strengthen our gospel witness or it will conflict with it.
- Emperor Julian of the Roman Empire...
"The religion of the Greeks does not yet prosper as I would wish.... Why then do we think that this is sufficient and do not observe how the kindness of Christians to strangers, their care for the burial of their dead, and the sobriety of their lifestyle has done the most to advance their cause?... For it is disgraceful" that there are no poor among them because of their generosity and they "support our poor in addition to their own."
<http://www.thenagain.info/Classes/Sources/Julian.html>
<http://www.thenagain.info/Classes/Sources/Julian.html>
- Two facets of our Vision as a church for the future... – being a church passionate about JUSTICE in the city. Going to the least, the last, and the lost. We aren't there yet, nor will we ever be but because Christ has been the true Good Samaritan to us we can go and be gospel neighbors to those across this city who are in need.
- Also, want to be known for GENEROSITY...
- The challenge of Jesus is "to go and do likewise." We don't do it out of guilt or shame or as a moral performance but because we have had the ultimate Good Samaritan come to us on the road and we will never be the same...

COMMUNION

PEOPLE IN BACK TO PRAY WITH YOU

***Unless otherwise notes, all verses are taken from the *English Standard Version*, copyright 2000, Crossway Books; material used from D.A. Carson sermon "The Parable of The Good Samaritan;" Tim Keller sermon "Neighboring" (2.23.2013)