

Parable of the Good Samaritan

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Transcript Sample by Faithful Transcript

If you have your Bible, turn with me to Luke chapter ten. We are going to look at a story most of us know so well that the title has become part of everyday language. You do not even have to be a Christian to know what somebody means when they call a person a "good Samaritan." It means they stopped; they helped; they got involved.

But when Jesus first told this story, "Samaritan" did not sound warm and sentimental. It was not the name of a hospital or a charity. For the people listening to Jesus, that word carried history, suspicion and prejudice. So when we hear this parable, we need to let it recover some of its sharp edges.

The story begins because a lawyer asks Jesus a question about eternal life. Jesus points him back to the law: love God, love your neighbor. The man answers correctly. And then Luke tells us he wanted to justify himself, so he asked, "And who is my neighbor?"

That is such a human question, isn't it? Not, "How can I become more loving?" but, "Could we define the minimum requirement?" (*congregation laughs*) How far does this responsibility go? Who exactly counts? Where is the line?

Jesus answers him with a story.

A man is traveling from Jerusalem down to Jericho. He is attacked by thieves, stripped, beaten and left half dead by the roadside. Then a priest comes by. He sees the man, but he passes on the other side. A Levite comes. He sees him too, but he also passes by.

And then Jesus introduces the person nobody in the crowd expects to become the hero:

³³ But a certain Samaritan, as he journeyed, came where he was: and when he saw him, he had compassion on him, ³⁴ And went to him, and bound up his wounds, pouring in oil and wine, and set him on his own beast, and brought him to an inn, and took care of him. ³⁵ And on the morrow when he departed, he took out two pence, and gave them to the host, and said unto him, Take care of him; and whatsoever thou spendest more, when I come again, I will repay thee. ³⁶ Which now of these three, thinkest thou, was neighbour unto him that fell among the thieves? ³⁷ And he said, He that shewed mercy on him. Then said Jesus unto him, Go, and do thou likewise.

I want you to notice something simple. All three travelers saw the wounded man. The difference was not information; the difference was what happened after they saw him.

The priest saw. The Levite saw. The Samaritan saw — and had compassion.

We live in an age where we can see almost everything. We can see suffering from around the world before breakfast. We can see needs in our own community. We can see the lonely person at work. We can see the exhausted mother trying to manage three children in the grocery store. We can see the elderly neighbor whose trash bins are still at the curb two days later. We can see a lot.

But seeing is not the same thing as loving.

Compassion in this story becomes movement. The Samaritan goes to the man. That sounds obvious, but it is the first cost. He changes direction.

Have you noticed that many opportunities to love people arrive as interruptions? Nobody schedules inconvenience for 2:15 on Thursday. (*congregation chuckles*) You are trying to get somewhere. You have your list. You have your plan. Then a person needs something.

And I am not saying wisdom and boundaries do not matter. They do. You cannot meet every need. You are not the Messiah; that position has already been filled. (*congregation laughs*) But sometimes we use the fact that we cannot do everything as permission to do nothing.

The Samaritan does what is in front of him.

He binds the wounds. He pours in oil and wine. He puts the injured man on his own animal, which means the Samaritan is probably walking. He brings him to an inn. He stays with him. He pays. He promises to return.

Mercy costs him time. Mercy costs him comfort. Mercy costs him money. Mercy rearranges his day.

That is where this parable begins to press on us, because we prefer compassion as a feeling. We like to feel moved. We like to say, "That is heartbreaking." Jesus describes compassion with hands and feet attached to it.

James says faith without works is dead. John asks how the love of God can dwell in us if we see a brother or sister in need, have the means to help and close our hearts. Again and again, Scripture refuses to let love remain theoretical.

Now let me point out something else. Jesus could have made the hero anybody. He could have said, "A third religious leader came by, and this one got it right." But He made the hero a Samaritan.

Why? Because the lawyer's question was, "Who is my neighbor?" He wanted a category. Jesus gave him a person he would have been tempted to exclude.

Sometimes our definition of neighbor quietly becomes, "people I naturally like." People who vote like me, talk like me, worship like me, raise their children like me, understand my jokes, do

not make me uncomfortable and return my texts in a reasonable amount of time. (*congregation laughs*) That is a very convenient neighborhood.

Jesus blows the fence down.

The question is not, "Does this person qualify for my mercy?" The question becomes, "Am I willing to become a neighbor?"

Look again at Jesus' final question: "*Which now of these three, thinkest thou, was neighbour unto him that fell among the thieves?*"

The lawyer answers, "*He that shewed mercy on him.*" He cannot even quite bring himself to say, "the Samaritan." He says, "the one who showed mercy." And Jesus says, "*Go, and do thou likewise.*"

That is not complicated. It is difficult, but it is not complicated.

Go and do likewise.

There are moments when we want God to give us a five-year plan, and God gives us a person. We ask, "Lord, what is Your will for my life?" and sometimes the answer is, "Start with the person bleeding beside your road." Start with the need you already see. Start with the mercy you already know how to give.

Maybe for you that means making a phone call you have been putting off. Maybe it means bringing a meal. Maybe it means sitting down with somebody and letting them talk without trying to fix them in five minutes. Maybe it means giving quietly. Maybe it means offering a ride. Maybe it means noticing the person everybody else walks past.

And sometimes mercy is simply refusing to turn another person's pain into a lesson about how they should have avoided it.

Can you imagine if the Samaritan had stood over the wounded man and said, "You know, this road is dangerous; you really should have planned better." (*congregation laughs*) Maybe that is true. It is also useless while the man is bleeding.

There is a time for wisdom. There is a time for correction. But compassion knows when the wound needs binding before the lecture needs delivering.

Somebody say amen to that. (*congregation says, "Amen."*)

And I want to be careful here, because this parable is not teaching that we earn God's love by collecting enough acts of kindness. The Gospel is that God has shown mercy to us first. We love because He first loved us. We give mercy because we have received mercy.

In fact, when I read this story, I cannot help noticing how often we are the person by the road. Sin has wounded us. Life has wounded us. Other people have wounded us. Sometimes our own choices have wounded us. And Christ did not pass by on the other side.

He came near.

That is the heart of the Gospel. God did not love us from a safe distance. In Jesus, He came near. He entered our condition; He bore our wounds; He paid what we could not pay. Mercy moved toward us.

So Christian compassion is not us trying to become impressive people. It is the overflow of having been loved by Christ.

And when you know you are the recipient of mercy, it gets harder to keep a little scorecard deciding who deserves yours.

Here is the question I want to leave with you this morning: who have you seen lately? Not merely looked at. Who has God allowed you to notice?

Maybe there is a name already in your mind. Maybe there is a situation you have been hoping somebody else would handle. Maybe you have been passing on the other side because getting involved will take time you do not feel you have.

Ask the Lord for wisdom, yes. Ask Him for healthy boundaries, yes. But also ask Him for the kind of compassion that moves.

Jesus does not end the parable by saying, "Go and feel likewise." He says, "*Go, and do thou likewise.*"

So this week, let us become neighbors. Let us become the people who notice, stop, move toward suffering and do what love can do.

Father, thank You that You did not pass us by. Thank You for the mercy we have received in Christ. Give us eyes to see people instead of obstacles, schedules or categories. Give us wisdom about what is ours to do, and when You show us, give us courage not to cross to the other side. Make us generous with mercy because You have been generous with us. In Jesus' name, amen.

(congregation applauds)

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