



HG228: Parables And Possessions
The Parable Of The Good Samaritan

Luke 10:25-37

Home Group Study Notes

26 September 2021 - Revd Paul A. Carr



PLEASE COMPLETE AS MUCH AS YOU CAN
ON THIS WORKSHEET IN PREPARATION
BEFORE THE MEETING!

*Don't forget to take your Bible to Home Group
with you, along with any previous notes and other
resources which might be helpful for your discussions.*



Welcome (10 mins)
Ice Breaker

Can you think of a situation when you were touched by
someone's exceptional kindness?



Looking Upwards (10 mins)
Worship

In your time of worship, you may want to sing Songs
of Praise; listen to a Worship CD, as well as using
Meditations; Bible Readings; Prayers ...



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Introduction

The telling of this parable, as we have heard, was the result of a conversation between Jesus and a scribe. A scribe was someone who made copies of the Scriptures by hand. However, they weren't just copyists; they were scholars and teachers. And, because of their expertise, they were looked upon as authorities in the interpretation and application of the OT Law/Torah. They were respected as men of wisdom and had great influence in the regulation of Jewish life – both civil and religious. So, it was nothing out of the ordinary that one of these experts should test Jesus about his orthodoxy, vs25: *Teacher ... what shall I do to inherit eternal life?* It's not the first time that a lawyer has phrased a trick question – I saw that many times through the trials I sat through in Crown Courts. However, the wording of the lawyer's question is quite revealing. He didn't see the contradiction of his own words: *What shall I do to inherit eternal life?* Nobody inherits anything by doing things. An inheritance is something we receive because we have a relationship with someone, such as a parent, it's not something we achieve by something we've done.

Wrong Motivation

I think Jesus showed great discernment here. Although the question was put to him respectfully and thoughtfully, Jesus sensed the inner motive wasn't spiritual illumination and so he didn't enter into a theoretical debate with the lawyer but, rather, asked a question in return: *What is written in the Law? How do you read it?* (vs26). The lawyer had no hesitation in quoting from Deuteronomy and Leviticus (Deut 6:5; Lev 19:18) part of the Shema, a confession regularly used in Jewish worship: *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 neighbour as yourself* Jesus approves the lawyer's reply: *Excellent! You have answered correctly* (vs28). This shows that Jesus didn't deny the moral demands of the Old Testament law.

The lawyer thought knowing and keeping every rule and regulation would make him 'right' in God's sight, Can our efforts to do the right thing ever make us holy in God's sight? God says that we should love him with all of our heart, soul, mind, and strength and, the truth is we don't. We fail to do that; we redefine the command to mean that we should love God to the best of our ability. To love him most of the time. To love him with exceptions for extenuating circumstances. And the lawyer knew this. However, Jesus complimented the lawyer on his answer, which was theological-sound - the law of love towards God and neighbour. *Do this, said Jesus, and you will live*, vs28. When the lawyer heard this, I guess he was a bit sheepish.

He'd asked, what seemed to be, a profound question but now it was apparent to the crowd who were listening that he already knew the answer. And so, he did some quick thinking to restore his dignity, and came up with another question, vs29: *Who is my neighbour?* The lawyer wanted to make the issue complex and philosophical, but Jesus made it simple and practical. The lawyer wanted to define and limit his obligations. But it seems to me that he was only digging a hole for himself. He wanted to restrict the number of people he was required to love. He wanted to make up a list of his neighbours, so that he could love only those and ignore everyone else.

And that's just what people do today isn't it? It's human nature. We want to know the minimum requirement and what's the least we can do and still consider ourselves to be good Christians. Some may set that standard high, and others may set it low. But that doesn't matter when God sets the standard we are to follow.

Setting The Scene

So, let's set the scene: The hatred between the Jews and the Samaritans had gone on for hundreds of years and is still related to the tensions between Israel and Palestine today. Both sides claimed to be the true inheritors of the promises to Abraham and Moses, and both regard themselves as the rightful possessors of the land. And today few Israelis will travel from Galilee to Jerusalem by the direct route because it will take them through the West Bank and risk violence. The road from Jerusalem to Jericho was a notoriously dangerous road. Within a 20 mile stretch the road drops 3,600 feet; through narrow rocky gullies; sudden turns and it was full of robbers – this path was called the Bloody Way! I wonder why!

The interesting thing in this passage is that Jesus didn't actually say that this story was a parable, and so it could well be the story of an actual event that took place. For Jesus to tell a story that made the Jews look bad and the Samaritans look good would either be dangerous or self-defeating. They could say: "You just made that up and we know nothing like that would ever happen." And so, it is possible that some of his listeners, as well as the lawyer, knew that such a thing had really happened.

The Characters

Let's take a closer look at the characters in this story:

The Traveller. He could be viewed as a reckless and foolhardy character. I say this because no one would travel this route alone - they always travelled in groups. He had no one to blame but himself for his plight. But notice that we are told nothing about this man; not his nationality, or his occupation, or whether he was rich or poor. Which points to an important principle: Love doesn't depend on any distinguishing qualities of the one being served except their need. If the man had been wealthy, he might have been able to reward the person who helped him. If he had been a person of high status, the motivation may be respect to his position. If the injured man had been a Samaritan himself, you could explain the rescuers response as an example of ethnic solidarity (helping out one of your own).

The Priest and the Levite. Then we have the two who passed by – a Priest and a Levite. This really stings being a minister, and they both represent something that isn't good about religious service. I am sure Jesus used these two to drive home a point to all those who want to serve God from a religious point of view. They were both busy in religious service—this is a real problem, there is a difference between religious service and Christianity. Sometimes in our quest for the good, we bypass the best. The goal isn't theology, or spiritual recognition, our goal is to be like Jesus. There is a real danger that ministry can become what others can do for us, rather what we can do for others.

The Samaritan. Then there was the Samaritan. The listeners of the story – the Jews- would expect that the villain of the story had arrived when they heard about the Samaritan approaching. After all he was a heretic - Surely, he too would pass by.

So, what do we learn about this man? We learn he was prepared to help. The love of God was in his heart – he was filled with compassion – he acted. He helped the man by cleaning his wounds as best he could; put him on his donkey and took him to an inn. He paid for the innkeeper to look after him until he is well and promises to pay the balance on his return. He didn't know this man; he had no idea what he was like and whether he was a good person or not; he probably never had a conversation with him; but he recognised this man was his neighbour and he loved him and he acted.

The Meaning Of The Parable

If you were to ask someone the meaning of this parable, they would probably say that it teaches that we ought to be kind towards those who are our neighbours. It's simple, isn't it? Wouldn't the world be a completely different place if everyone did just this? When you see someone in trouble – help them. Easy.

If Jesus had told the story of a Jew helping out a Samaritan, it would have made a powerful point, but to turn it on its head as he did and portray two pillars of the Jewish establishment as "non-neighbours" and a Samaritan as a true "neighbour" was radical teaching. This was a classic case in which Jesus reverses the expectations of his hearers. It left the Jewish legal expert speechless. Priests and Levites were respected and honoured, while Samaritans were held in contempt. There is still this hostility between neighbours in modern times, isn't there, between: Palestinians and Jews; Serbs and Croats; Sunni and Shi'ite; IRA and UVF; Black and White; Christians and Muslims; Upper Class and Working Class; Travellers and the settled community and many more besides. Yet, ignoring history, racial and social differences, the Samaritan, vs33: *took pity* on this man. There was such a compelling power in the Samaritan's heart that he couldn't just stand still. He had to do something. A heart of compassion is always followed by action.

The nationality and borders bill currently before parliament would criminalise not only those attempting to cross the English channel, and those involved in people smuggling, but those who take part in the rescue of boats in distress at sea. This new law would require those who see asylum seekers at risk to choose between ignoring a moral imperative (also established in maritime law) to assist them, or to risk prosecution and imprisonment. The new "turn back" policy, which will see boats forcibly returned to France, also raises significant moral concerns. In a letter to the Guardian last week, several Bishops wrote: "*This amounts to a criminalisation of the Good Samaritan who did not pass by on the other side, and an affront to justice to put the saving of lives under any sort of legal penalty.*"

The Samaritan broke through the racial barrier, putting the priest and the Levite to shame. He didn't see a Jew but a fellow human being in need and the help he gave was costly. He would have ripped his own clothing to make the bandages, used his own wine to disinfect the wounds, his oil to soothe, his donkey to transport the man, and his money to pay for his keep. His love wasn't limited - it was practical with no thought for any return. It was the Samaritan who acted in accordance with the true meaning of the law, not the Priest or Levite. They used the letter of the law to justify their lack of love. The Samaritan, on the other hand, lived out the spirit and intention of the law by loving sacrificially. He took pity on the man, where the others thought only of themselves.

There are stories in the Bible where we all cheer the hero of the story, go home rejoicing in what they had done, but then go back to our ordinary lives. One of those stories is the parable of the Good Samaritan. Jesus tells this story to show the difference between heroes and the ordinary, between being religious or making a difference for God.

As many of you know I went to the Leeds Festival over the August Bank Holiday weekend with Festival Angels along with 8 others from Emmanuel). I was a prayer chaplain in the prayer tent and organised daily prayer events. It was an amazing opportunity to pray with so many individuals, but heart-breaking at the same time to hear the stories of neglect and abuse from so many young people. Along with talking to those who came into the tent, I also made the effort to speak to the traders who were working there. One trader, Angie, who asked me what we were praying for, said 'I don't do religion' and I said neither do I! I do God! She let me pray for her and was weeping as I did so.

Conclusion

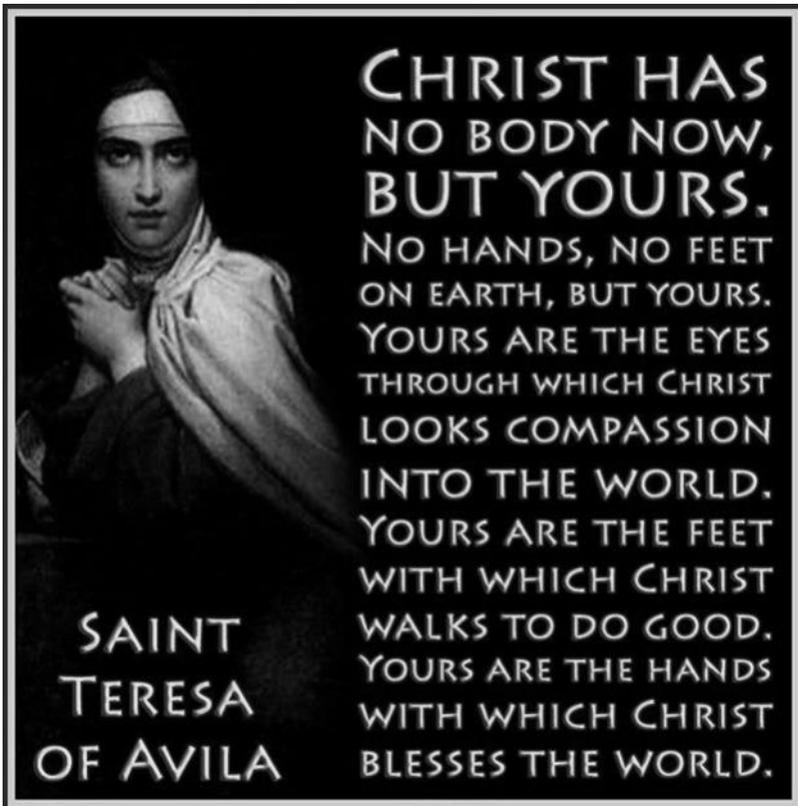
Although Jesus didn't say anything disapproving to the lawyer, he questioned his thinking when he asked him: *Which of these three do you think proved a neighbour to the man who fell among robbers* (36). The only answer the lawyer could possibly give was: *The one who showed mercy on him* (37). He couldn't bring himself to say the word Samaritan.

The lawyer asked the question: *Who is my neighbour?* But Jesus turned this around and asked: "Who can you be a neighbour to?" Who can you love? And the answer to that question is: anyone. Everyone. If you're concerned with showing love, as Jesus did, then your focus won't be on yourself at all, but on those who need you, those God has given you the opportunity to bless and care for. That's the difference between false and true Christianity. And the obvious question to ask is this: which kind of Christianity is yours?

We live in a suffering world. There are people everywhere who are wounded and hurting. Some have been robbed by parental failure; others find their lives being destroyed as a result of their own decision-making and choices. Others continue to struggle with mental health issues as a result of the pandemic. Some have been damaged by false teaching or let down by so-called Christians. We come across them daily. We never know when our opportunity will come to be their "neighbour". What should we do? The words of Jesus to the lawyer, are the same words spoken to us: *Go and do likewise* (37). It's not always popular or convenient to follow the example of the Samaritan, but it is, without any shadow of a doubt, the right thing for each one of us to do.

Who might God be calling you to be a Samaritan to this coming week? Why not think about ways in the coming week you can show God's love to someone like this unnamed traveller. Just imagine the difference you can make to their life if you were to reach out to them?

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Looking Upwards (40 mins)

Bible Study

Read the text for this study, and any references given, then answer the following questions. You may find it helpful to listen to the sermon and/or read through the sermon notes as you do so. Discuss some, or all, your answers with your Home Group and, remember, these questions are only a guide to start your discussions.

1: Have you ever been guilty of engaging with God (just like the lawyer) on an intellectual level rather than from the heart? What, for you, changed your attitude/approach?

2. Have you ever deliberately avoided helping someone either by walking away, or by not responding in the way you know you should?

3. The Samaritans, to the Jews, were outcasts and were not to be befriended at all. Who is the Samaritan/outcast in your life? What steps can you take to restore and build a bridge in that relationship?

4. Can you think of a situation when you have ‘gone out of your way’ to help someone and God has used this to His glory?

5. The Samaritan had compassion on the man, and this showed itself in practical help. Name one thing that you could do this next week (perhaps something you’ve avoided doing in the past) as you seek to show the love of God to someone that society ignores and treats as an outcast?

6. Are we, as a church, guilty of not doing all we can to reach out to the neglected and rejected in our community? Give one or two examples. What can you/we do to address these issues? What could be put in place?



Is there anything you most want to put into practice as a result of this study?



Looking Inwards (15 mins) *Caring For Each Other*

Reflecting on your life at the moment, is there anything you would like to share with other members of your home group which you feel is appropriate (this is an opportunity to share, not something you have to do, however, 'It's the sharing that enables the caring!') for:

Thanksgiving?

Prayer?

Encouragement?

Support in any way?



Looking Outwards (15 mins) *Concern For Others*

Is there anything concerning someone in your: family; circle of friends; neighbours or church, which you would like to share (please be sure not pass on anything that is confidential or which you think the person concerned would not wish to be shared) for:

Thanksgiving?

Prayer?

Encouragement?

Support in any way?

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