

**The Good Samaritan**  
Luke 10:25-37  
**April 29, 2018**

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**Lake Forest, Illinois**

## **Prayer for Illumination**

Lord, open our hearts and minds by the power of your Holy Spirit, that as the scriptures are read and the word proclaimed, we may hear with joy what you say to us today. Amen.

In this parable, Jesus tells us that the neighbor, the Samaritan, who to that Jewish community is not worthy to receive love, is the one who offers it. It's not the religiously correct, or knowledgeable, who cross over the barrier of hate and prejudice to live out the law, but the one who has been the target, the outsider, the Samaritan.

Today's scripture is Luke 10:25-37, the story of the Good Samaritan. We will experience it through a tableau. A tableau is a group of motionless figures representing a scene from a story or from history.

## **Good Samaritan Tableau**

We begin on the occasion when an expert in the law stands up to test Jesus...

**NARRATOR:** Just then a lawyer stood up to test Jesus.

**LAWYER:** "Teacher," he said, "what must I do to inherit eternal life?"

**JESUS:** "What is written in the law? What do you read there?"

**LAWYER:** "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."

**JESUS:** "You have given the right answer; do this, and you will live."

NARRATOR: Lawyer has a question we all struggle with...I wonder what I need to do to get to heaven?

NARRATOR: But wanting to justify himself, he asked Jesus

LAWYER: “And who is my neighbor?”

NARRATOR: Instead of answering him directly, Jesus decides to tell him a story to get him thinking.

JESUS: “A man was going down from Jerusalem to Jericho, and fell into the hands of robbers.

NARRATOR: Everyone knew that this particular road was filled with robbers. I wonder why he took it?

JESUS: They stripped him, beat him, and went away, leaving him half-dead.

NARRATOR: If only he had a neighbor, someone who would walk his way and then stop and help him! I wonder what kind of person will stop and help him. I wonder if the robbers are neighbors of this man?

JESUS: Now by chance a priest was going down that road; and when he saw him, he passed by on the other side.

NARRATOR: If anyone was going to be a neighbor to this man beaten and left on the side of the road, you'd think it would be this priest! If he comes across a dead body, he becomes ceremonially unclean, meaning that he can't lead any religious ceremonies or have any important conversations with any religious people.

JESUS: So likewise a Levite, when he came to the place and saw him, passed by on the other side.

NARRATOR: The Levite, another kind of religious leader, would be considered unclean with the same consequences as the priest if he stopped to help. I wonder if the Levite was a neighbor of the Priest and the robbers?

JESUS: But a Samaritan while traveling came near him; and when he saw him, he was moved with pity. He went to him and bandaged his wounds, having poured oil and wine on them.

NARRATOR: A Samaritan helped him? A Samaritan? The Samaritans and the Jewish people were enemies of each other, so the injured man was shocked that the Samaritan would help him.

JESUS: Then he put him on his own animal, brought him to an inn, and took care of him. The next day he took out two denarii, gave them to the innkeeper, and said, ‘Take care of him; and when I come back, I will repay you whatever more you spend.’

NARRATOR: A SAMARITAN! Who would believe it! That’s the last person the injured man would ever believe would live out the call to care for a neighbor like him! The Samaritan didn’t just know what ought to be done, but actually did care for him.

JESUS: Which of these three, do you think, was a neighbor to the man who fell into the hands of the robbers?”

LAWYER: “The one who showed him mercy.”

JESUS: “Go and do likewise.”

## **Princeton Seminary Good Samaritan Experiment**

There is an incident that every seminary student at Princeton hears in which we see this play out. I heard about it from my speech professor during my first semester. The event took place in 1973, when two social psychologists held an experiment at Princeton Theological Seminary with 40 seminarians. The experiment was to see if these theologically trained future pastors would live out their faith and actually BE good neighbors, or not.

The experiment went like this:

The psychologists gathered the students in a building, and told half of them that they would be going across campus to record a talk about jobs, and the other half were going to talk on the Parable of the Good Samaritan. The 40 students were sent out in 15-minute intervals.

On the route to the other building, a young man who seemed in obvious distress, hunched over, coughing, and moaning laying in a doorway in an alley the students would pass through. The psychologists had planted him there. They were interested to see if the students who were going to give a talk on the Good Samaritan were any more likely to stop and help him than the ones who were giving a talk on job opportunities.

Now, don't forget these were all seminary students...

They discovered that only 16 of the 40 stopped to help the man in distress. 24 didn't even swerve from their path. One future pastor even stepped over the "victim" to get through the doorway that he had mistaken for the one he needed.

It didn't make any difference whether the student was going to give a talk on the Good Samaritan or about job opportunities.

What did make a difference, however, was how hurried the student was. This was a surprising outcome in the experiment.

Here is what they discovered:

- A third of the students were told they would be early for the recording and that they could take their time. 63% of them stopped to help.
- A third of them were told it was time to go. Not urged to hurry and 45% of them stopped.
- A third were told they were already late and should rush to the other building. They were urged to hurry up and get there. 10% of them stopped to help.

Apparently the factor that greatly influenced whether or not the seminarians were able to move from knowing what it means to be a neighbor, to actually BEING a neighbor, was the "hurry factor".

The more of a hurry we are in, the less we take in the details around us, the less we pay attention to things, or others outside our need to get where we are going.

For these seminarians, even the words of Jesus, the words we just heard, did not penetrate their need to follow the instructions, the rules.

Reminds us of Pastor Chip's sermon last week, about the Pharisees... They were unable to put their faith in action, to follow the command of Jesus to, "go and do likewise" as they hurried to do what was "correct."

We all have things that we feel we have to get done, that seem urgent, and we forget to do what is most needed, care for our neighbor, to even be aware of our neighbors need.

I wonder what would happen if this experiment were repeated here in Lake Forest?

What obstacles get in the way, what are the hurry factors that keep you from being a compassionate, caring neighbor? Vigilant to see the needs of the other?

Later in the service, we will have the opportunity to reflect on, and name the obstacles that get in our way as we respond with prayer and ask God to help us overcome them. As we did during Lent, these prayers will be anonymous, giving us the freedom to be vulnerable before God, and each other.

Amen.