

# Stories Jesus Told

## What Kind of Neighbor Are You?

Luke 10:30  
January 30, 2021

### The Context:

The religious Leaders were always looking for ways to trap Jesus --- either by getting him in trouble religiously or getting him in trouble politically. This was one of those occasions

It starts with a question from an expert on the law who stood up to test Jesus, *"Teacher, what must I do to inherit eternal life?"*

Jesus skipped right over the question and asked one of his own, *"What is written in the Law?"*

Lawyer: *"Love the Lord your God with all your heart, soul, strength and mind and love your neighbor as yourself"* {Deut. 6:5 and Leviticus 19:18}.

Jesus: *"Correct! If you do that you will live."*

Seems clear enough. However, having the correct answer from Scripture and living the truth of Scripture are 2 different things and here is where the cracks begin to show. The Lawyer knew his life and Scripture did not match. He knew that his definition of *"neighbor"* was narrow {same nationality, same religion, same political party, same social standing}, so to justify himself he asked another question, *"Who is my neighbor?"*

In other words, *"If eternal life requires that I love my neighbor, whom, exactly does that include?"*

Jesus: *"Let me tell you a story" ---*

### The Parable {Luke 10:30-37}:

**A man was going down from Jerusalem to Jericho, when he fell into the hands of robbers. They stripped him of his clothes, beat him and went away, leaving him half dead. <sup>31</sup> A priest happened to be going down the same road, and when he saw the man, he passed by on the other side. <sup>32</sup> So too, a Levite, when he came to the place and saw him, passed by on the other side. <sup>33</sup> But a Samaritan, as he traveled, came where the man was; and when he saw him, he took pity on him. <sup>34</sup> He went to him and bandaged his wounds, pouring on oil and wine. Then he put the man on his own donkey, took him to an inn and took care of him. <sup>35</sup> The next day he took out two silver coins 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.'**

<sup>36</sup> **"Which of these three do you think was a neighbor to the man who fell into the hands of robbers?"** <sup>37</sup> **The expert in the law replied, "The one who had mercy on him." Jesus told him, "Go and do likewise."**

### The Lesson:

The key to the whole conversation is, *"Wanting to justify himself..."* The lawyer desires to reap the rewards of his law keeping, but he wants to do the bare minimum required because that's what a legalist does.

**It is not legalistic to keep God's Laws correctly. To be legalistic is to misuse God's Laws in a way He never intended.**

This is what Jesus is addressing in His story. The focus of the story is not the guy in the ditch, the *"guy in need"*. The victim in the story is nameless and faceless – he could be anyone – we don't even know if he recovers – his identity is irrelevant to the story, because the focus of the story is **WHO** is walking past and **HOW** they **RESPOND** to the guy in the ditch.

**Priest:** The priests were direct descendants of Aaron from the tribe of Levi. They performed the animal sacrifices on behalf of the people. Only the priests were permitted to enter the Holy Place and only the High Priest was allowed enter the Most Holy Place on the Day of Atonement. No one other group was to fill the role of priest – upon penalty of death.

**Levite:** All priests were Levites, but not all Levites were priests. Most Levites, descended from Gershon, Kohath and Merari, served as the caretakers of the Temple - playing music, opening and closing the gates, and standing guard, etc. {see Number 4}. They did this on a rotational basis. Likely the Levite in our story was returning home after his service in the Temple was over.

**Ritual Cleanliness was important to both groups and they “used” the laws regarding ritual cleanliness to “get out of” other requirements of God.**

**Samaritan:** The Samaritans were a hybrid between the northern tribes of Israel and people groups from other nations brought into the area by the Assyrians after 722 BC. Over time these outsiders came to follow parts of the local culture and religion. Centuries later, when the Jews returned to Judah after the Babylonian Exile, they would not accept help from this group in rebuilding the Temple, so the Samaritans built their own temple. This is where the conflict between Jews and Samaritans began. Samaritans were hated by Jews ... and the feeling was mutual. By introducing a Samaritan into the parable Jesus is making a powerful point.

The Priest and the Levite - the religious leaders - should have stopped, but didn't. The Samaritan, who was the lowest of the low, did stop.

Scum = 1

Religious people = 0

So, what did the Samaritan have that the other 2 did not? Verse 36 gives us a clue, **“the one who had mercy”** The Samaritan had mercy / compassion for the guy in the ditch.

The lawyer had no choice but to concede that the Samaritan and **NOT** the religious leaders was the one in the right, but he was so prejudiced he could not even say **“the Samaritan”** ... all he could say was, **“the one who had mercy”**.

There is something about the actions of the Samaritan that clearly demonstrate what it means to love God with all your heart and your neighbor as yourself:

**Pity / Compassion:** Every time the word is used in the New Testament it is only used by Jesus, or to describe the character of Jesus.

- Jesus had compassion and pity on the crowds (Matthew 14:13-14)
- Out of compassion and pity Jesus fed the 4000 (Matthew 15:32)
- It is because of compassion and pity that Jesus healed the two blind men (Matthew 20:34).
- Compassion and pity led Jesus to raise the widow of Nain's son (Luke 7:13)
- The master had compassion for his servant and cancelled his huge debt (Matthew 18:27).
- The father was filled with compassion when his lost son came home and threw a party (Luke 15:20).

To have compassion and pity are a part of who Jesus is. The Samaritan had that quality. And just like Jesus, the Samaritan didn't stop at feeling sorry for the guy in the ditch. His compassion drove him to action.

He got off his donkey, got out his first-aid kit, got down in the dirt and bandaged the man's wounds. But he didn't leave him there, because next he put the man on his own donkey and took him to a safe place and continued to care for him there. After the Samaritan had done what he could he paid for the continued care of this nameless man and he did so not knowing if the man would recover or if he would ever be paid back.

However, being a neighbor is not about resources it's about compassion that leads to action. We don't know what resources the priest and the Levite had but we know the one thing they **DID NOT** have = compassion.

- **James 2:14-22** - What good is it, my brothers, if a man claims to have faith but has no deeds? Can such faith save him? <sup>15</sup> Suppose a brother or sister is without clothes and daily food. <sup>16</sup> If one of you says to him, "Go, I wish you well; keep warm and well fed," but does nothing about his physical needs, what good is it? <sup>17</sup> In the same way, faith by itself, if it is not accompanied by action, is dead. <sup>18</sup> But someone will say, "You have faith; I have deeds." Show me your faith without deeds, and I will show you my faith by what I do. <sup>19</sup> You believe that there is one God. Good! Even the demons believe that-- and shudder. <sup>20</sup> You foolish man, do you want evidence that faith without deeds is useless? <sup>21</sup> Was not our ancestor Abraham considered righteous for what he did when he offered his son Isaac on the altar? <sup>22</sup> You see that his faith and his actions were working together, and his faith was made complete by what he did.

We are not called to define who our neighbors are ---- we are called to love them:

- **Matthew 22:36-40** - Teacher, which is the greatest commandment in the Law?" <sup>37</sup> Jesus replied: "'Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind.' <sup>38</sup> This is the first and greatest commandment. <sup>39</sup> And the second is like it: **'Love your neighbor as yourself.'** <sup>40</sup> All the Law and the Prophets hang on these two commandments.

- **Matthew 5:43-48** - You have heard that it was said, 'Love your neighbor and hate your enemy.'<sup>44</sup> But I tell you: **Love your enemies** and pray for those who persecute you,<sup>45</sup> that you may be sons of your Father in heaven. He causes his sun to rise on the evil and the good, and sends rain on the righteous and the unrighteous.<sup>46</sup> If you love those who love you, what reward will you get? Are not even the tax collectors doing that?<sup>47</sup> And if you greet only your brothers, what are you doing more than others? Do not even pagans do that?<sup>48</sup> Be perfect, therefore, as your heavenly Father is perfect.
- **Romans 13:9-10** - The commandments, "Do not commit adultery," "Do not murder," "Do not steal," "Do not covet," and whatever other commandment there may be, are summed up in this one rule: "**Love your neighbor as yourself.**"<sup>10</sup> **Love does no harm to its neighbor.** Therefore, love is the fulfillment of the law.
- **Romans 15:1-2** - We who are strong ought to bear with the failings of the weak and not to please ourselves.<sup>2</sup> Each of us should **please his neighbor for his good, to build him up.**
- **Galatians 5:13-23** - You, my brothers, were called to be free. But do not use your freedom to indulge the sinful nature; rather, **serve one another in love.**<sup>14</sup> **The entire law is summed up in a single command: "Love your neighbor as yourself."** .....<sup>22</sup> But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness,<sup>23</sup> gentleness and self-control. Against such things there is no law.
- **Colossians 3:12-14** - Therefore, as God's chosen people, holy and dearly loved, clothe yourselves with **compassion, kindness, humility, gentleness and patience.**<sup>13</sup> **Bear with each other and forgive whatever grievances you may have against one another. Forgive as the Lord forgave you.**<sup>14</sup> **And over all these virtues put on love, which binds them all together in perfect unity.**

COMPASSION is LOVE in action and if we don't have this Jesus quality:

- we will never see the need.
- we will never stop to help the unidentifiable nameless and faceless people in the crowd.
- we will always try to justify our in-action.
- we will always walk to the other side of the street.

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