

**JESUS SET HIS FACE TO GO TO JERUSALEM:
DISCIPLESHIP LESSONS FROM THE CALVARY ROAD
THE GREAT SAMARITAN
CAMPBELL BAPTIST CHURCH (03/22/2020)**

A man was going down from Jerusalem to Jericho, and he fell among robbers, who stripped him and beat him and departed, leaving him half dead. Now by chance a priest was going down that road, and when he saw him he passed by on the other side. So likewise a Levite, when he came to the place and saw him, passed by on the other side. But a Samaritan, as he journeyed, came to where he was, and when he saw him, he had compassion. He went to him and bound up his wounds, pouring on oil and wine. Then he set him on his own animal and brought him to an inn and took care of him. And the next day he took out two denarii and gave them to the innkeeper, saying, 'Take care of him, and whatever more you spend, I will repay you when I come back.' Which of these three, do you think, proved to be a neighbor to the man who fell among the robbers?

This story, the story of the Good Samaritan, may be a familiar one to you. In fact, the term “Good Samaritan” has entered into the English language and refers to anyone who risks themselves to help another. The risk taken by the Samaritan in Jesus’ story would have been immediately apparent to the story’s original listeners. As Darrell Bock says,

JESUS PICKS THE TREACHEROUS ROAD FROM JERICHO TO JERUSALEM AS THE SITE OF THE INCIDENT. THIS SEVENTEEN-MILE JOURNEY WAS WELL KNOWN FOR ITS DANGER. THE CULTURAL EQUIVALENT TODAY MIGHT BE A TRIP THROUGH PARTS OF THE INNER CITY IN THE MIDDLE OF THE NIGHT. THIS ROAD WAS HAZARDOUS, AS THE MAN WHO FALLS AMONG ROBBERS FINDS OUT. THIEVES TOOK ADVANTAGE OF THE CAVES THAT LINED THE ROAD AS IT WOUND THROUGH THE DESERT, JUMPING TRAVELERS AS THEY PASSED THROUGH.¹

Stopping to help someone left for dead on the side of the road was a risky move. The same robbers who had beaten the man you were looking to help might still be lurking about ready to pounce on you

¹ Darrell L. Bock, *Luke in The NIV Application Commentary* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 1998), 300.

as well. The Samaritan, then, took his life into his own hands as he sought to help this man who had been beaten and left for dead

Jesus ends his story by asking, “Which of these three, do you think, proved to be a neighbour to the man who fell among the robbers?” The correct answer, of course, is the Samaritan, the one who showed mercy. And when Jesus hears this correct response, in answer to his question, he quickly adds, “You go, and do likewise.”

Go and do likewise. Risk yourself for the good of another.

Now, such an admonition will inevitably raise questions. In fact, Jesus tells this story in answer to a question that he himself was asked by a lawyer seeking to test him. So we need to be careful in terms of how we go about applying this text to our lives today. But before asking those questions, let the force of Jesus’ words land on you for a second: “You go, and do likewise.” You go, and do likewise.

What does that mean for us today? To answer that question, it’s important to consider Jesus’ story within its proper context. To that end, I am going to read, now, from Luke chapter 10—Luke chapter 10, verses 25 to 37. Hear, now, the Word of the Lord:

And behold, a lawyer stood up to put him to the test, saying, “Teacher, what shall I do to inherit eternal life?” He said to him, “What is written in the Law? How do you read it?” 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.” And he said to him, “You have answered correctly; do this, and you will live.”

But he, desiring to justify himself, said to Jesus, “And who is my neighbor?” Jesus replied, “A man was going down from Jerusalem to Jericho ...

The immediate context, for the story of the Good Samaritan, is this interchange between Jesus and the lawyer who is seeking to test him. But that’s only one of three contexts that we need to keep in mind as we seek to apply this story to our lives today. The other

two contexts are the wider context of the Gospel of Luke where this story is told by Jesus after he has set his face to go to Jerusalem and our immediate context, today, faced as we are by a corona virus pandemic that is keeping us from gathering for worship.

What do we do? How can we go and do likewise?

First, let's consider the context in which we find ourselves today.

I find it particularly interesting that, in God's providence, we were scheduled to study the parable of the Good Samaritan this Sunday as part of our ongoing series in the Gospel of Luke for months now. That's just the nature of expositional preaching: one text after another after another. But God stands behind it all and he knows what we need to hear when we need to hear it. And right now, what the church needs, is a lesson in risky love.

Remember, Jesus told this story to answer the question, "Who is my neighbour?" If I am to love my neighbour as myself, who is it that I am to love this way. And Jesus' answer is whoever is in need, right? "Which of these three proved to be a neighbour to the man who fell among the robbers?" The focus here is love, loving our neighbours as ourselves.

What does that look like in the midst of a corona virus pandemic?

Desiring God staff writer, Marshall Segal, answers this question in an article entitled, "What Courage Might Corona Unleash?" In it, he asks,

WILL THE CHURCH, AT THE RIGHT MOMENTS AND WITH GREAT WISDOM, RALLY TO MEET THE NEEDS AROUND US, AND IN DOING SO, SERVE THE PROGRESS AND JOY OF OTHERS' FAITH IN JESUS? [SEGAL THINKS SO, SAYING THAT] THIS KIND OF COURAGE WILL NOT BE RECKLESS OR DISMISSIVE, IGNORING WISE PUBLIC PRECAUTIONS. ONE OF THE MOST LOVING THINGS WE CAN DO NOW IS LIMIT AND SLOW THE SPREAD OF THE VIRUS. BUT THIS KIND OF COURAGE ALSO WILL BE READY, IN THE DAYS TO COME, TO STEP IN WHERE NEEDED WHEN FEW OTHERS WILL.

DAVID BROOKS REMINDS US THAT DURING...

THE SPANISH FLU PANDEMIC THAT BATTERED AMERICA IN 1918 ... AS CONDITIONS WORSENERED, HEALTH WORKERS IN CITY AFTER CITY PLEADED FOR VOLUNTEERS TO CARE FOR THE SICK. FEW STEPPED FORWARD. IN PHILADELPHIA, THE HEAD OF EMERGENCY AID PLEADED FOR HELP IN TAKING CARE OF SICK CHILDREN. NOBODY ANSWERED.

IF SUCH TIMES ARE AHEAD, CHRISTIANS, FREED FROM THE FEAR OF DEATH, COULD BE THE FIRST TO STEP FORWARD. WILL WE ANSWER IF THAT CALL COMES, IF CLINICS AND HOSPITALS, FILLED AND OVERFLOWING, CANNOT CARE FOR EVERYONE?²

Or will we walk right on past the need the way that the priest and the Levite did in Jesus' story? I'm sure they had reasons that seemed justifiable to them in the moment but, in the end, they walked right on by and didn't help. No doubt, you will ask, "How do we balance bold risk-taking on the one hand with wise safety on the other?" Interestingly, John Piper was recently asked this question without any reference to the corona virus. His answer—I found—was tremendously helpful.

I HAVE STRUGGLED WITH THIS QUESTION A LOT OVER THE YEARS, [HE SAYS] PARTLY BECAUSE OF WHERE I LIVE AND PARTLY BECAUSE OF TRYING TO UNDERSTAND TEXTS IN THE BIBLE. AND I DON'T WANT TO GIVE THE IMPRESSION THAT THE BIBLE DISREGARDS A FATHER'S CALLING TO PROTECT HIS FAMILY (1 TIMOTHY 5:8), OR A DISCIPLE'S OBEDIENCE IN FLEEING FROM PERSECUTION (MATTHEW 10:23). BUT I AM GOING TO ARGUE THAT THE OVERWHELMING THRUST OF THE NEW TESTAMENT IS THAT THE DISCIPLES OF JESUS INCLINE FROM THE HEART TOWARD MEETING NEEDS AT THE RISK OF LOSS MORE REGULARLY—AT LEAST WE OUGHT TO—THAN WE INCLINE TOWARD STAYING SAFE AND COMFORTABLE BY NEGLECTING RISKY HELPFULNESS.

OR TO PUT IT ANOTHER WAY, I DON'T WANT TO PRESCRIBE PRECISELY WHEN LOVE CALLS FOR SELF-PROTECTION AND WHEN LOVE CALLS FOR SELF-RISK, BUT THE BURDEN OF THE NEW TESTAMENT IS TO INFUSE THE FAITH AND LOVE THAT LEANS TOWARD SELF-RISK RATHER THAN TOWARD SELF-PROTECTION. AND I SUSPECT THE DOUBLE REASON FOR THAT IS THAT, ON THE ONE HAND, WE ARE SELFISH BY NATURE. AND WE NEED—I NEED, ANYWAY—FAR MORE HELP TO BREAK FREE FROM THAT SELFISHNESS THAN I NEED HELP WITH LIVING IN SYNC WITH IT.

² Marshall Segal, "What Courage Might Corona Unleash?" blog post dated 15 March 2020 [www.desiringgod.org/articles/what-courage-might-corona-unleash] accessed 18 March 2020.

AND ON THE OTHER HAND, THE SECOND OF THE DOUBLE REASON FOR WHY THE NEW TESTAMENT LEANS THIS WAY IS THAT THE GLORY OF GOD SHINES MUCH MORE BRIGHTLY IN THE COUNTERCULTURAL, COUNTERINTUITIVE RISK-TAKING OF GOD'S PEOPLE FOR THE SAKE OF LOVE THAN IT SHINES IN SELF-PROTECTION, WHICH PRETTY MUCH LOOKS JUST LIKE THE WAY THE UNBELIEVING WORLD WOULD ACT. WHY WOULD THEY BE IMPRESSED AND GIVE GOD GLORY FOR US ACTING JUST LIKE THEM?³

Now, again, I'm not saying that we need to run out and be foolhardy. Right now, the loving thing to do is to self isolate and practice social distancing as we've been encouraged. But the time may come when this disease is everywhere and the loving thing to do will be to risk your own health and safety to care for others who are suffering. My word to you, in light of this text, is: Be ready, church. Be ready.

But, of course, the 19 in COVID-19 stands for 2019, the year in which the first case was identified so no one was thinking about the corona virus when Jesus first told this story. Instead, they were thinking about how they might be able to secure a place in heaven. After all, that was the focus of the lawyer's question in the immediate biblical context.

“Teacher,” he asked, “what shall I do to inherit eternal life?”

[And Jesus] said to him, “What is written in the Law? How do you read it?” 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.” And he said to him, “You have answered correctly; do this, and you will live.”

But he, desiring to justify himself, said to Jesus, “And who is my neighbor?” Jesus replied, “A man was going down from Jerusalem to Jericho ...

And there we have our story. Everyone present for this conversation is thinking, “What do I need to do in order to inherit eternal life?” And, in a time with such fear and uncertainty, this is a good question: “What must I do to inherit eternal life?”

When Jesus turns the question around on the lawyer and the

³ John Piper, “How Do I Take Risks Without Being Unwise?” Ask Pastor John segment, 13 March 2020 [www.desiringgod.org/interviews/how-do-i-take-risks-without-being-unwise] accessed 18 March 2020.

lawyer answers with the Bible's two greatest commandments, Jesus says that he has answered correctly. "Do this and you will live," he says. "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." The question is, "How are we doing at that?" How are you doing? Do you love God with all your heart, soul, strength, and mind—in other words, with the fullness of every faculty that you have? How about loving your neighbour? Do you love your neighbour enough to risk your life to comfort him or her in their distress?

Now you can see where the lawyer's question, "And who is my neighbour?" comes from. If I need to love my neighbour like that in order to inherit eternal life, then I'd better hope that I only have a few neighbours to have to potentially lay down my life for, right? Already, the lawyer has a sinking feeling that he doesn't measure up. And then, of course, Jesus comes along with the story of the Good Samaritan and erases all doubt.

As Jesus told the story, the lawyer and his hearers were expecting something other than what they got. They expected the threefold rhythm of the Semitic story form to reveal that an Israelite layman came by and helped the man. Many people were unhappy with the clergy, and they expected Jesus to say that an average good-guy Jew came along and showed the clergy up. That would be a slap at the establishment, but many, perhaps most, would applaud it.

No one expected Jesus to finish the story the way he did: "But a Samaritan, as he traveled, came where the man was; and when he saw him, he took pity on him" (v. 33). A Samaritan?⁴

As Kent Hughes reminds us,

THE MUTUAL HATRED BETWEEN THE JEWS AND THE SAMARITANS WENT BACK FOR CENTURIES, WHEN THE SAMARITANS INTERMARRIED WITH THEIR ASSYRIAN CONQUERORS. THE JEWS CONSIDERED THEM RACIAL HALF-BREEDS AND RELIGIOUS APOSTATES. SO THE SAMARITANS RESPONDED BY CALLING THE JEWS APOSTATES—FULL-BLOODED BUT APOSTATE. THE

⁴ R. Kent Hughes, *Luke: That You May Know the Truth, Volume One in Preaching the Word* (Wheaton, IL: Crossway Books, 1998), 390–391.

SAMARITANS SET UP A RIVAL TEMPLE ON MOUNT GERIZIM (LATER DESTROYED BY THE JEWS), PUBLISHED THEIR OWN EDITION OF THE PENTATEUCH, AND ESTABLISHED A RIVAL LITURGY. THE JEWS RESPONDED BY PUBLICLY CURSING THE SAMARITANS IN THE SYNAGOGUES AND PRAYING DAILY THAT THEY MIGHT NOT ENTER ETERNAL LIFE.⁵

As Philip Ryken says, “It is difficult to come up with a contemporary comparison that conveys the same sense of social surprise, but we do not really understand this story until we make a racial and religious comparison that seems to go too far. Maybe it would be something like an Islamic fundamentalist helping an evangelical Christian who was injured in a terrorist attack. It was the last thing anyone would expect, and in fact if the injured man had not been so desperate, he may have refused the Samaritan’s help altogether. These men were not neighbors at all; they were enemies.”⁶

And yet Jesus says, the Samaritan proved to be a neighbour to the Jew and you need to go and do likewise. If you want to earn eternal life, then you need to love God with the fullness of every faculty of your being and you need to be willing to risk your health, wellbeing, and life for even an enemy who is in need. How do you measure up?

I know I fall short again and again and again and again, which, by the way, was Jesus’ point. You *can’t* earn eternal life by anything that you do. It’s all of grace.

You see, there’s another context we need to keep in mind as we consider the parable of the Good Samaritan and that is the wider context of the Gospel of Luke.

As D. A. Carson says,

OH, THE PARABLE IS PRETTY STRAIGHTFORWARD IN [ITS IMMEDIATE] CONTEXT. BUT NOW REMEMBER THAT THIS IS ON THE WAY TO THE CROSS. WHO IS THE ULTIMATE GOOD SAMARITAN? OH, IN THE ACCOUNT BEFORE US, AS JESUS TELLS US, THE GOOD SAMARITAN IS A FIGURE WHO REPRESENTS SOMEONE WHO ACTUALLY LOOKS AFTER A BROKEN, BRUISED, UNKNOWN MAN AT THE SIDE OF THE ROAD. HE HAS NO KINSHIP WITH

⁵ *Ibid.*, 370.

⁶ Philip Graham Ryken, *Luke Volume 1: Chapters 1-12 in the Reformed Expository Commentary* (Phillipsburg, NJ: P & R Publishing, 2009), 545.

HIM AND DOESN'T KNOW HIM, BUT HE SACRIFICES HIS GOOD AND RISKS HIS LIFE.

HE LOOKS AFTER HIM AND PAYS FOR HIS EXPENSES. THIS ACTUALLY SAVES THE MAN FROM SLAVERY BECAUSE THE MAN DIDN'T HAVE ANY RESOURCES OF HIS OWN. HE'S NAKED, AFTER ALL. THEN SIX WEEKS LATER, LONG AFTER THE SAMARITAN HAS MOVED ON, IF THE MAN WANTS TO LEAVE THE HOTEL AND CAN'T PAY THE BILL HE WOULD HAVE TO SELL HIMSELF INTO SLAVERY. (BECAUSE, AFTER ALL, IN THOSE DAYS, THERE WAS NO CHAPTER 11 OR CHAPTER 13.) THE SAMARITAN'S GENEROSITY HAS SAVED HIM FROM DEATH AND FROM SLAVERY, AND IT'S A WAY OF ASKING THE QUESTION, IN THE CONTEXT, "WHO IS ACTING LIKE A NEIGHBOR?"

BUT NOW READ IT ON THE WAY TO THE CROSS. THE ULTIMATE GOOD SAMARITAN ... WHO COMES TO BROKEN PEOPLE CONDEMNED TO DEATH, BINDS UP THEIR WOUNDS, SAVES THEIR LIVES, AND FREES THEM FOREVER FROM SLAVERY, BECAUSE HE PAYS IT ALL ... IS JESUS.⁷

Through his substitutionary death and subsequent resurrection, Jesus rescues us from our slavery to sin and from the death sentence that was ours because of our sin. Not only that but, by being the ultimate Good Samaritan, Jesus fulfills the law that we could not, thereby earning eternal life, which he then freely gives to all who will believe. As Phil Ryken puts it, "The good news of the gospel is that through the death and resurrection of Jesus Christ, God has loving grace for law-breaking sinners who are not good neighbors."⁸ Jesus is the Great Samaritan, the Great Samaritan who says to you and me, "You go, and do likewise" (Luke 10:37). Go, be a Good Samaritan to the people you meet along life's way.

DO NOT MAKE EXCUSES, BUT ACCEPT THE RESPONSIBILITY TO BE A GOOD NEIGHBOR FOR CHRIST. DO NOT LOOK AWAY, BUT SEE WHAT NEEDS TO BE DONE. DO NOT CROSS OVER TO THE OTHER SIDE, BUT TAKE THE TIME TO STOP AND HELP. DO NOT QUIT BEFORE THE JOB IS DONE, BUT BY THE GRACE OF GOD, CARRY THINGS ALL THE WAY THROUGH. DO NOT DO THESE THINGS TO GAIN ETERNAL LIFE, BUT BECAUSE WHEN YOU WERE BEATEN, BLOODIED, AND LEFT FOR DEAD, JESUS CAME AND SHOWED MERCY TO YOU.⁹

7 Don Carson, "Jesus' Resolve to Head toward Jerusalem," sermon preached at the Gospel Coalition's 2013 National Conference, Orlando, FL [https://www.thegospelcoalition.org/conference_media/jesus-resolve-head-toward-jerusalem/] accessed 21 February 2020.

8 Ryken, 549.

89 Ibid., 550-51.