

“The Good Samaritan,” Skip Ryan, June 7, 2020.

**Key text** | Luke 10:25-37

**Sermon Outline & Questions.**

*An Opening thought—*

Parables contain **surprises**. The meaning of a parable turns on the surprise. So, look for that which you don't expect.

What are some surprises you've encountered before in parables? How did the surprise impact the meaning of the parable, or flip a truth “on its head”?

*A prelude—*

The lawyer who comes to Jesus is not a criminal or civil lawyer. He is a lawyer in the Jewish sense—an expert on the Torah.

He wants to put Jesus to the test. *What must I do to inherit eternal life?*

Jesus turns the question back on the lawyer. *What does the law say?* He's not looking for information, but he wants to hear the lawyer's interpretation.

The lawyer answers astutely. He brings together two passages which Jewish leaders at the time did not associate.

*Deuteronomy 6:5.* “Love the Lord your God with all your heart and all your soul and all your strength.”

*Leviticus 19:19.* “...but you shall love your neighbor as yourself.”

Jesus commends the lawyer for his insight (*You have answered correctly*). The lawyer saw the importance of ‘loving your neighbor as yourself’ within broader Levitical regulations.

The lawyer inquires further. *Who is my neighbor?* He wants to know the categories of people he can exclude; a limit to his liability.

Jesus tells a story to answer the question. This might have surprised the lawyer. He would have expected the truth to be put in logical form.

Does anything about the encounter between Jesus and the lawyer strike you? Was there anything Skip pointed out that you hadn't considered before?

Skip taught that, in Hebrew, the words for *love* and *obey* go hand-in-hand. How might this shape the way we view the lessons of this parable?

*A note on parables—*

Parables put abstract truth into story form. They cut through our mental defenses. The truth comes through our heart, rises to our thoughts, and shapes correct thinking.

Example: reading about D-Day versus visiting Normandy and *experiencing* it.

*The parable—*

We don't know if the story is true, but it is **realistic**.

Jericho was 17 miles from Jerusalem. The road descended 3,000 feet through the wild Judean hills.

Jesus does not focus on the robbery, but on the condition in which the Jewish man was left—half dead.

The Jewish priest passed by. He was concerned about avoiding ceremonial defilement.

The Levite passed by. Levites served in the temple as assistants to priests. We don't know this Levite's precise motives for not helping the man, but we know he did *not* help.

**A surprise**—it's a Samaritan who helps.

The lawyer would have expected the third person to be a Jewish layman. An anticlerical twist in which the non-professional does the right thing. The lawyer would *never* have expected a Samaritan to stop and help.

The *compassion* accredited to the Samaritan would have been totally surprising.

The Hebrew word for "compassion" means "with passion." The Samaritan not only felt compassion, but he **acted** compassionately.

This Samaritan is not just a neighbor; he becomes a brother.

Consider the parable's **surprise**. How does it change the truth we glean from the story?

*A note on status—*

The priest and Levite possessed status/reputation that could not be tarnished.

Perhaps the Samaritan had no status. He was a societal/cultural non-player to the Jews. "Discounted by those who counted."

He was not materially poor. Rather, he was *status poor*. No reputation to protect. He was **poor in spirit**. Yet he knew how much he needed God. He was blessed in his poverty of spirit.

Out of poverty of respect, he gives away the riches of compassion.

Have you ever considered the Samaritan as one who was "poor in spirit"? How does it change the way we view the Samaritan's actions (i.e., the love he gave)?

*The parable's meaning—*

Jesus shares this parable not to answer the lawyer's question (*Who is my neighbor?*), but to show that it is the **wrong question**.

What is the right question? *To whom am I a neighbor?*

Jesus has turned the question (and the commandment to love) upside down. The point is not *How much can I love God?* Rather, it is *How much God loves us!*

The lawyer wants to quantify the amount of love he gives. God calls us to give immeasurable love that flows from an overflowing source.

“We love because he first loved us” | *I John 4:19*

Have you had experiences in which you loved others from your own effort? Have you had experiences in which you loved as an outflow of God’s love for you? How did each look?

*The storyteller and our response—*

Jesus, the storyteller, is the fullest expression of God’s compassion.

He came with no status, and he used the riches of heaven to save us when we were on the other side of the road. He treated us, carried us, paid for our healing. Jesus is the world’s Samaritan.

We need to live in and out of Jesus’s compassion.

Read and pray *Philippians 2:5-11*. What does it show to be true of Jesus? How is this passage a picture of the Gospel?

Our response is often to approach the Christian life out of a sense of duty with no joy.

We believe it is important to have faith in God’s grace *and* to live by that grace.

Recall Mother Theresa speaking to the monk, “Your duty is to know how much Jesus loves you, and to love other people with the overflow of that love.” The Samaritan understood this.

Our gestures mean so little when done out of obligation. Jesus wants them to come from a broken and contrite heart. Broken by the love of Christ.

Have you experienced your heart being ‘broken’ by God’s love for you? If so, what came of it? How did it change the way you love others?

*Our moment today—*

The background of the parable was the relationship between Jews and Samaritans. What divided the Jew from the Samaritan was not solely (or primarily) a road. It was **race**.

The Samaritan crossed a historic cultural divide that was centuries old.

The current need our country faces is one for which our hearts need to be broken.

Americans love to have answers and think rationally. The parable does not work this way. It asks us to cross the road to love someone who is different. And to **reflect** on certain questions:

Let us tell the Lord we do not understand how racism works. We must stop trying to understand it only in purely personal terms. Racism is a structural thing, deeply embedded in the American psyche. It has become the air we breathe.

Let us not rush to judgement. Rather, let us think, read, and talk. We must study and ask, do we understand? (Check out [Coracle’s website](#) for resources.)

Let us listen to what African Americans are saying inside and outside the church.

Let us ask the Lord to manifest the spirit and gift of love for everyone. We cannot do it without God. We must know how much we've been loved.

Let us mourn and lament that we don't have this kind of love. Our lives often shrink into caring about ourselves. Let us beg for God's love.

*Skip's challenge:* Beg the Lord for love that comes from him for five minutes every day for two weeks.

Let us act in some concrete way to cross the road. Do something, even if it's uncomfortable.

Let us ask African Americans to help us. To help us with a problem, and to help us understand what's going on in our society.

Let us understand that our compassion is not primarily a matter of possessions and money. It has more to do with our time and energy. **Are we too busy to receive the compassion of God?**

Let us recognize that the problem for most of us is that we must cross the road to even *find* a need and the needy. We're so insulated. We simply do not see the needs.

Let us all think of one thing we can do to share the compassion of Jesus.

Take these reflections to God in prayer. Ask for ears to hear.

*Final points—*

What difference does my little gesture make? Mother Theresa said, "Do small things with great love" and "Because God is so big, there are no small kindnesses."

Someone once asked Gandhi, "When will you become a Christian?" He responded, "When Christians begin to look like their master."

When we begin to know the love Jesus gives we begin to share the love Jesus gives.

***Additional Questions:***

What might Christ be saying to you through this passage, sermon, discussion?

How might you live differently in light of this passage and sermon?