

The Good Samaritan

Intro: Well good morning and welcome to church. We're so glad that you're here with us this morning. If you're new here, my name is Seth and I'm one of the pastors here at The Well. Last week JC preached for us and he promised time savings and he got you guys two whole minutes. I think he intentionally gave you a mustard seed's worth of time. But he actually did great and I'm genuinely grateful for the community I've got around me who I can trust to take the Scriptures seriously and challenge even themselves.

But as you know, we're going through this series through the parables. JC mentioned last week that there are some parables that are incredibly confusing, but there are also some pretty simple parables. This week is a simple parable, but it's one that's kind of taken on a life of its own.

I. Mercy Over Sacrifice

- A. This week I received 3 emails in immediate succession with 3 texts at the exact same moment. The reason was that someone was messaging our small group leaders pretending to be me in order to scam them out of money.
- B. I don't know if you guys know this, but we've had something like this happen way too many times since I've been here. I didn't realize how much people would use MY title as pastor to try to take advantage of YOU. And it happens so often because it obviously works. People trust their pastors. These are people who prey on the generous and the vulnerable.
 - 1. Now picture this. You come to church this morning and you say, "Pastor, how do I become a Christian?" And in response I tell you story.
 - 2. I say, "A woman is driving home from a dinner and her car breaks down as she's driving through the airport district. As she gets out of the car and pops the hood to check the engine a group of young men grab her demanding her purse and keys to the car. Rather than waiting for her to hand them over they beat her, and beat her, and beat her. At this point she's left lying on the ground unable to get back to her feet.
 - a) Just then, she sees the CEO of Love Modesto, but he keeps going. A short time later she sees one of your pastors here at The Well drives by and she thinks salvation must finally be here, but the airport district at night is a no-go for all of us so we pass by. At this point she's giving up hope.
 - b) That's when a man finally stops. He calls 911 but they don't answer because caller ID says "Scam likely". Turns out this is the exact same guy that tried to scam our small group leaders out of money this very week. But then he pulls out a first aid kit, bandages her up, then takes her to the hospital. Upon arrival at the hospital he hands her the keys to his own car and tells her he wants her to be able to get home when she's released from the hospital so this is hers now, the pink slip is in the glove box."
 - 3. So now I ask you, "Who here acted the most like Jesus" and you say, "The one who helped her." "Go and do likewise."

- a) I tell you the story this way because the second we hear the phrase, “The Good Samaritan” something totally different comes to mind for us than what would have come to mind for the original audience. This story has taken on a life of its own and now to call someone a good samaritan is endearing.
- b) But if I say “the good scammer” you get a better idea of how putting those words together literally don’t make sense. Let me show you a little bit of ancient Jewish writings that would have been well known at the time of Jesus.
 - (1) The Wisdom of Jesus Ben Sirach says, “If you do good, know to whom you do it.... Give to the devout, but do not help the sinner. Do good to the humble, but do not give to the ungodly; hold back their bread, and do not give it to them, for by means of it they might subdue you; then you will receive twice as much evil for all the good you have done to them. For the Most High also hates sinners and will inflict punishment on the ungodly. Give to the one who is good, but do not help the sinner.”
 - (2) Samaritans were considered half-breeds. So Jews were obviously the best because they were the covenant people of God. The Gentiles were the awful pagan idolaters. And the Samaritans? Well, let’s just say I’d rather kiss a rat than share my country with a Samaritan. Okay. That’s the idea. So all that in mind, let’s finally read the parable.

- C. **Luke 10:25-37** - On one occasion an expert in the law stood up to test Jesus. “Teacher,” he asked, “what must I do to inherit eternal life?” “What is written in the Law?” he replied. “How do you read it?” He answered, “ ‘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 neighbor as yourself.’” “You have answered correctly,” Jesus replied. “Do this and you will live.” But he wanted to justify himself, so he asked Jesus, “And who is my neighbor?” In reply Jesus said: “A man was going down from Jerusalem to Jericho, when he was attacked by robbers. They stripped him of his clothes, beat him and went away, leaving him half dead. A priest happened to be going down the same road, and when he saw the man, he passed by on the other side. So too, a Levite, when he came to the place and saw him, passed by on the other side. But a Samaritan, as he traveled, came where the man was; and when he saw him, he took pity on him. He went to him and bandaged his wounds, pouring on oil and wine. Then he put the man on his own donkey, brought him to an inn and took care of him. The next day he took out two denarii 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.’ “Which of these three do you think was a neighbor to the man who fell into the hands of robbers?” The expert in the law replied, “The one who had mercy on him.” Jesus told him, “Go and do likewise.”
- 1. A while back Caleb shared, when he preached here, his story of climbing the ladder toward worship leader success and losing God along the way. I think that we often fail to realize just how easy it is to lose God in ministry.
 - 2. I absolutely love talking theology, I could do it all day long. I’m obsessed with the Bible. I write sermons from it basically every week. I write essays on it for class nearly every week. I read the Bible daily, I read about the Bible for work, I read about the Bible for school, I read about the Bible for leisure. And honestly, I make a lot of sacrifices to be able to do this for a living.

- a) But what does it even mean if I know everything about the Bible but I don't actually do what the Bible teaches? We get so caught up in arguing the details.
 - b) I've heard so many times that people have argued about the different Greek words for "love" and so what love am I supposed to have for God? What love for others? What love for Christians? In other words, I'm constantly asking questions that are ultimately asking, "Jesus, what's the bare minimum?"
- D. That's precisely what's happening in this story. The lawyer is like, "Yeah, I know I'm supposed to love my neighbor as myself. But define 'neighbor'."
- 1. And Jesus goes full on master strategist with his answer here. He actually doesn't even answer the guy's question.
 - 2. Multiple times elsewhere in the New Testament Jesus directly quotes Hosea 6:6 which is where God himself is speaking and he says, "Don't you know that I desire mercy over sacrifice?" In other words, these sacrifices are absolutely pointless if you're not merciful. Here's what I want you to understand about this parable and what Jesus is doing:
 - a) Jesus isn't trying to answer "who is my neighbor?" He is upending the worldview that would even ask that question.
 - b) If you're wondering, "Would God want me to love that person?" Then you've already missed it. You've already lost the plot. Jesus would say that you don't know God if you have to ask that question.
 - (1) If your theology stops you from acting like Jesus then your theology is trash. If your theology causes you to question mercy then your theology is wrong. If your theology allows you to treat others as less than the image of God then your theology is made in your own image.
 - (2) Believing in Jesus isn't actually something that is primarily intellectual, it's fully embodied. It's done with our actions. This is why Jesus says, "Go and do likewise."

II. You Be The Neighbor

- A. **Luke 10:29** - But he wanted to justify himself, so he asked Jesus, "And who is my neighbor?"
- 1. The man asks who his neighbor is, and I want you to notice something here. Jesus never actually defines who the neighbor is. He never actually answers the question. In fact, he wants to know who his neighbor is because he wants to know who he has to give his love away to. The person in the story who needs to receive love is the man who has been left for dead on the road.
 - 2. Yet, that's not where Jesus stops to indicate who the neighbor is. Instead, Jesus points out the mercy of the Samaritan and tells the lawyer to do like the Samaritan did.
 - a) I said that Jesus is upending the worldview where the question about who your neighbor is even needs to be asked. Jesus is pointing out to us that rather than

asking who our neighbor is, we should simply be the neighbor. It puts the prerogative on us.

- b) Now are you ready for the really yucky part? Part of the reason that the Jews hated the Samaritans so much was because of their bad theology. The Samaritans were a people group that was from Jews and Gentiles intermarrying and with that came mixed theology. Jesus doesn't allow us to use that as an excuse not to love people or to treat them as if they're not our neighbor.
 - (1) Boundaries are important, and we stand on our theological convictions, but that should never allow us to mistreat people, or to even tolerate them. I actually hate the idea of being tolerant. I tolerate my neighbors noisy dogs, I don't tolerate people. I love people.
 - (2) Now if your job is to be the neighbor then what does it mean practically? Remember I said this is the yucky part, or in other words this is the part that might make you flinch.
 - (a) **It's your job to actively find a way to love your Samaritan.** That could be people who vote opposite from you. It could be the politicians themselves. It could be people with a different sexuality. It could be people teaching false doctrine. It could be your neighbor who starts their giant lifted truck with the muffler removed every morning before the sun comes up just because he wants to remind the entire neighborhood that he hasn't hit puberty yet. It could be any number of situations. But it's YOUR job to find a way to be their neighbor and to love them as you love yourself.
 - (b) Any soccer fans in here? I've been absolutely loving the World Cup. It's so cool to see so many nations coming together unified by one sport. It's also been so fun to see people coming to the U.S. and having the time of their lives.
 - i) I was having a conversation recently with Sarah from our GAP ministry about how people coming to the U.S. have discovered ranch dressing and they're obsessed with it. TSA is literally having to put out warnings to people about the legal way to transport ranch. I kid you not, this is real.
 - ii) But church, if ranch dressing can unify the world more than Jesus can unify the church then what in the world is wrong with us? Seriously.
 - (c) The problem is that we say we love people but then we don't actually do anything to love people.
 - i) And let me actually be fair to you guys. I have been SO impressed with this church and I love you guys so much. Not only for this, but I'm so proud of the way that I've seen so many of you step up and love others. The way you've loved through GAP, the way you showed tangible support when our former GAP director's grandson was in need even though you didn't know who he was yet. The way you guys stepped up for the fireworks booth.

- ii) So I want to be clear that I'm not wanting to beat you down, I'm wanting to encourage you. So much of the church in America is sitting on their hands and that can be discouraging. I don't want you to lose momentum to keep going and to keep pressing deeper. Because neighborly love is deeply, deeply personal. It's hard work.

III. Neighbors are Personal

- A. **Luke 10:33-35** - But a Samaritan, as he traveled, came where the man was; and when he saw him, he took pity on him. He went to him and bandaged his wounds, pouring on oil and wine. Then he put the man on his own donkey, brought him to an inn and took care of him. The next day he took out two denarii 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.'
- B. Do you see the effort the Samaritan puts in to taking care of this guy?
 - 1. Darrell Bock (NIVAC) wrote, "Jesus details in a series of verbs just how active this man is in ministering to his newly discovered needy neighbor: he goes to him; bandages him, pours oil and wine on his wounds; puts him on his donkey, carries him to the inn, and takes care of him, even to the point of leaving enough money behind to make sure the man has two weeks lodging to recover"
 - 2. The Samaritan risked religious impurity, physical danger, and financial extortion. Why? Because that's what love looks like. Love is dangerous. Love is sometimes a little reckless. The only reason we even have the ability to be a good neighbor is because of the Holy Spirit transformation work inside of us.
 - a) Because the Holy Spirit has shown us that we can give abundantly because he has taken from us a worldview of scarcity and gifted us with his worldview which is one of abundance. I can give everything to my neighbors because God has enough for me. We can risk it all.
 - b) This is the gospel message. This is the story of Jesus. God was the one who was first a neighbor to us. He didn't have to ask who his neighbor was, he chose to be our neighbor and to love us as himself.
 - (1) Jesus stepped out of heaven to personally live among us. And he gave abundantly. He gave everything. He gave his whole life. But he was able to do so while trusting that his Father would provide the abundant life.
 - (2) Last week JC talked about how the Kingdom of God is here now and we are little outposts for that Kingdom of God. We're the mustard seeds that keep sprouting up, that can't be defeated, that say to roundup that death has died.
 - 3. What do we do with this sermon? We acknowledge that there is something in us that seeks the bare minimum. There is something that is looking to avoid having to give more of ourselves. See that it's there, and push back against it.
 - a) I remember back in 2020 when everything was going on with George Floyd and the Black Lives Matters marches. I remember constantly hearing the two sides go back and forth and arguing with one another.

- (1) My friends and family would point out that we're not racist so this has nothing to do with us. And honestly, that sounded pretty appealing because if it has nothing to do with me, then nothing is required of me. But then I realized that my Black brothers and sisters were hurting, they were weeping.
- (2) **Romans 12:15** - Rejoice with those who rejoice; mourn with those who mourn.
 - (a) You can't be a neighbor to someone if you can't weep with them. You can't be a neighbor to someone if you can't rejoice with them.
 - (b) At some point I had to realize that it didn't matter if my politics were right or wrong. What mattered is that my brothers and sisters in Christ were mourning and I'm called to be their neighbor and mourn with them, weep with them.
 - (c) Jesus has a second name. Immanuel. God with us. He rejoices with those who rejoice and he weeps with those who weep.
- b) I realize that some of you came in here off a great week, but many of you are treading water. Many of you are trying to figure out how you're even going to make it to next week. Life is hard.
- (1) The promise of Jesus is that he is with you. It's crazy because we're sitting here asking Jesus to swoop us off this earth and take us into heaven and instead he comes to be with us. It's so backwards. It's so counterintuitive.
- (2) But what we need isn't rescue, what we need isn't heaven, what we need is Jesus. So Jesus comes to be with us. And there's a story of a man who died with Jesus. He was hung on a cross right next to Jesus. Both of them suffering, both of them dying.
4. **Luke 23:39-43** - One of the criminals who hung there hurled insults at him: "Aren't you the Messiah? Save yourself and us!" But the other criminal rebuked him. "Don't you fear God," he said, "since you are under the same sentence? We are punished justly, for we are getting what our deeds deserve. But this man has done nothing wrong." Then he said, "Jesus, remember me when you come into your kingdom." Jesus answered him, "Truly I tell you, today you will be with me in paradise."
 - a) Even on the cross Jesus was a good neighbor. And to this man dying on the cross next to Jesus, Jesus says to him that later today they're going to be together in the garden.
 - b) The Greek there, "παράδεισος" literally translates to garden. Like that original garden that God planted so that he and humanity might be even more than neighbors, they would live together.
 - c) If you don't know Jesus, today is your invitation to experience Immanuel, God with us. To live in a reality where God is always with you, and the moment you pass from this life you are with him, welcomed home. That's your invitation

today and we would love to pray with you at the front of the stage after the services.

Takeaways:

1. Identify your Samaritan
2. Love them tangibly