

The Good Samaritan

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Date: 03 July 2022

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[0 : 0 0] Well, good evening. It's not the normal response that Peter gets in the morning, but that'll do. Well, thank you very much for coming along this evening.

As we consider the second evening in our studies in Luke, which we are looking at the parables. And I want to start by telling you a story, as I guess customary in the start of the sermon, when we tell a story just to get you to understand exactly what we are going to speak about tonight.

And the story I want to tell you about is about coffee. Not the coffee that you're drinking in the cup, Sabina, but about a barista. Way back in 2008, there was a barista, about 51 years old, and she donated a kidney to one of her regular long-time customers in order to save her life.

Her customer was a 55-year-old, a similar woman, 55-year-old, who, upon having a chat with this girl, Sandy, one day, she explained that she needed a kidney transplant, and that neither her husband nor her son was a match, and therefore couldn't donate their kidney, meaning that they could not save her life.

Now, without hesitation, Sandy agrees to do the blood test to check if she's a match, and I think the amazing part of the story is that she ends up being a perfect match.

[1 : 2 5] And Sandy donated her kidney to this customer called Anna Marie in the Virginia Mason Medical Center a few weeks later. And after that, a few weeks after that, she was back to 100%, she was back to normal.

Now, anyone hearing that story would indeed say that Sandy was a good Samaritan, and I think we all understand what is implied by that. But if we look closely, we see that Sandy didn't just give a small drop out of her abundance, or a few pennies in a jar.

Instead, she selflessly gave her own body, literally, in order to save another person's life. And Anna Marie's life would have definitely been saved, and more than that, she would have been transformed, literally.

And I'm sure from that day forward, she would have been grateful, she would have been thankful, and anybody that she bumped into, she would have told that story about such an amazing encounter, and such an amazing person.

And that is an amazing, incredible story indeed. And I think we would all say that that is a picture of a good Samaritan. But tonight, we're going to look back at the original story that Alistair read for us tonight, about the good Samaritan.

[2 : 3 3] The story that has ended up being an everyday phrase for all of us. But I want us to look at what Jesus wanted us to learn by his inclusion in Scripture. You see, this parable is probably one of the most familiar parables that we know.

It's often used just in reference to anyone who does a good deed. However, as we focus on the details, we'll find that it's more than just a story about generous kindness. And maybe the central point of the message is slightly more obscure than we first thought.

Now, I haven't done three catchy headings, but I do have three points that I want you to think about. And the three points of this. Number one, what we cannot do, which is fairly easy and simple to remember.

The second point is what we must do. And the third point is what we should do. So they're fairly straightforward. What we cannot do, what we must do, and what we should do.

And these will help. And I also mentioned there that we're going to have some questions after the message. These will help in the discussion, these questions. But before we do that, let me just remind you what a parable is.

[3 : 40] So I think if you were brought up in a church or you went to Sunday school, you'll have heard a phrase like this. A parable is an earthly story with a heavenly meaning. In other words, it's a true-to-life story that is used to illustrate or illuminate truth.

It is true-to-life, even though not all of the parts might have actually occurred in the way that they're presented. But the situations are very relatable to us and about everyday things that we experience.

But they are used to demonstrate a spiritual lesson. Our Good Samaritan is in that, right? It's classed as a parable, which means it may be one of these two things.

It may be purely illustrative, or it may have actually been an event that occurred in which it's been referred to. In either case, right, it doesn't necessarily matter, because the story is used to illustrate a truth to the man who was asking the question and to those who were listening.

So in order for us to understand that parable a bit more, let's look at the context. So this appears to be a fairly normal scene at the start of the reading in verse 25.

[4 : 45] Jesus is teaching and debating with the people that followed him, and in that crowd, no doubt, there have been some scribes and Pharisees and lawyers, etc. Now, unlike what we have here, where the preacher stands up and preaches, and you guys are sitting, and it's replicated all through academia, the same kind of format.

In them days, most of the people would have been sitting down. And if somebody wanted a question, they would have stood up, and they would have addressed the teacher the question that they wanted to ask. Now, the individual that posed the question, we should note, right, as a lawyer, a learned man, the King James writes this, a certain lawyer, which might mean that he had formed for this, that he'd done this before, that this is one of the ways that he engaged in debate.

And more than just a general lawyer, I think we should note, but specifically somebody who would acutely understand the law of Moses, which is the Jewish law. He asked Jesus what would seem to be a fairly reasonable question.

He asked us, teacher, what shall I do to inherit eternal life? However, before we consider the question, we should note, and it is noted in the word of God, that it specifically tells us that the lawyer was trying to put Jesus to the test.

Now, we don't know whether this was a topic of never-ending debate within the Pharisees, or he had a specific gotcha moment that he was looking to trip the Lord Jesus up in, but we do know that people came often with that intention to trip the Lord Jesus up in the words that he spoke.

[6 : 12] Now, interestingly, the man asked what he could do to inherit eternal life, and I think this is the key to understanding the parable, this key question that he asked about what he could do to inherit eternal life.

Other Pharisees and rulers come, we read that in Luke 18, where the young ruler comes and asks, and Nicodemus comes in John 3, and although maybe probably slightly different motives, they pose similar questions.

Now, I wonder, in the audience tonight, if we have the same questions, very similar questions, because it seems like a fairly obvious question, but I wonder if you have the question in your head tonight that says this, how can you be right with God?

What must you do to be saved? What is the means by which the sin that separates us from God can be removed? Can you have peace with God? And how do you gain that?

Relatively simple questions. But Jesus doesn't answer this question that the lawyer poses immediately. Instead, he asks him another question. And quite rightly so, this man is an expert on the law, so he asks him what the law says.

[7 : 21] He's an expert on the law. He would have known exactly what the Mosaic writ would say, and he recites this proficiently. In verse 27, 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 neighbour as yourself.

And Jesus replies, You have answered correctly. Do this, and you will live. So the question's answered. Jesus is simple, and clear in his response.

You see, the man set out to put Jesus to the test, but he doesn't accept the answer, because he realises that by the Lord's response, he has trapped himself. He realises that the bar that was set in law, and now confirmed verbally by himself, is an impossibly high standard, which no man can fulfil.

Well, we read in Galatians 5, for the whole law is summed up in this one word. You should love your neighbour as yourself. Now, if we are trying to keep the law as a means of salvation, as a means to inherit eternal life, then we would need to keep the whole law.

And if we break the law at any point, and in any way, and in any time, then we will have also broken these two commandments. Matthew 22, a very similar question.

[8 : 40] It's another lawyer, and he asks the same questions. He says, He says, And he said to him, Verse 40.

And on these two commandments depend all the law and the prophets, and we'll come back to the law and the prophets later. So if we break any of these commandments, we offend these two fundamental pillars.

Now, everyone knows, and watch what I'm saying because there may be a lawyer in here tonight, but everybody knows that lawyers don't like to be caught out. They're expert wordsmiths on their interpretation of the law, on technical differences of an understanding, and they like to get themselves out of the spot of bother by that.

I'm sure we could all smirk just at the recollection of quick-thinking lawyers who have used technical nuance to excuse us from a speeding fine or such like.

Well, the lawyer's response is just that. He seeks to justify himself, and he asks, well, who is my neighbour? Define the terms of this high bar that has been set. You see, Jewish teachers normally refer to the neighbour as their fellow Israelite.

[9 : 58] And this lawyer is looking for a technical or maybe a hypothetical interpretation that allows him off the hook from fulfilling what the law requires. It's a curveball, and we can all relate to that.

You know, when you're backed into a corner in a debate, often what comes out is this, a comment about, you know, what about this or what about that or what about the next thing? A curveball to get away from the question that was actually asked.

Now, I wonder if we do that with Scripture. I wonder if we hypothesise or look for technical arguments that neither build us up as Christians or draw us near to God.

The devil did that to Eve in the Garden of Eden when he asked her to consider the words of God in a different way, and he caused sin and separation to enter into the scene of time. Now, speaking of time, I am 10 minutes in and we've not even got to the parable yet.

So, but let's just look at that parable then, right? So, and before we do that, I'll just read it again for us. So, verse 30. Jesus replied, 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.

[11 : 10] 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 into him and bound up his wounds, pouring on oil and wine.

Then he set him on his own animal and brought him to the 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 neighbour to the man who fell among the robbers? He said, the lawyer, the one who showed him mercy. And Jesus said to him, You go and do likewise.

Now, this story is amazing at silencing some of the noise that arises when people's consciences are pricked. You see, the scandalous outcome of this scene is that the one who the Jews hated, they cursed and they spat upon, namely the Samaritans.

[12 : 19] You'll remember the story well. You'll remember the story well at the well, where it says the Jews had no dealings with the Samaritans. And yet here is a Samaritan helping a Jew. If this had been a Jew helping a Jew or a Jew helping a Samaritan, it would be easy to be blown off course with further questions about the divides of these two people.

But Jesus answers the man's first question for the second time at the end of this parable. The man's question was, What must I do to inherit eternal life?

And Jesus answered is, Love your neighbour like this. Not just as a one-off. Not just to the people that you care about. Not just to those who are like you.

Or those who can repay you. Not just when it's convenient. And not just when others are watching. The law demands that we should love our neighbour as we love ourselves. And if we were in that situation, what would we do for ourselves?

We would look after ourselves. We would have patched ourselves up. We would have gotten us to the inn. We would have recuperated, etc, etc. That is what the law demanded.

[13 : 31] The neighbour to the wounded man in this parable is the one who acts. And the one who shows mercy as required. And is required to do exactly for your neighbour what you would do for yourself when you were in need.

Now, there are some points that help us appreciate the depth of lesson that Jesus is teaching. But the central point is this. That we cannot fulfil the requirements of the law. And therefore we cannot earn or gain eternal life in this way.

This is what the parable is teaching. So my first point that I said about what we cannot do. We cannot inherit or earn or gain eternal life by observing the law. Because we cannot keep the law.

This is the theology of works. But our good works, as mentioned and as written in Isaiah 64, says that all of our righteous deeds are like a polluted garment. So we must conclude that eternal life is obtained by another way.

And this is where, when we go back over the parable, we see a deeper theme. Which helps us see that the good Samaritan is indeed a picture of the Lord Jesus. It's maybe not immediately apparent to the hearer, but the picture is there.

[14 : 43] And I don't want to force the parable, as maybe some of us have heard in the past, where we assign some kind of attribute to every single little part of the parable. But I think in its interpretation, there are some good points that can help explain the good news or the gospel that concerns the good Samaritan.

You see, as sinful man, we can put ourselves in the place of the man who is beaten up, unable to help ourselves when it comes to our spiritual salvation, because we cannot keep the law.

The road from Jerusalem down to Jericho can be seen as moving away from the temple and symbolically then as moving away from God. And that is where we are. The direction of those, all of us, who are without God, is moving away from him.

And as sinners, this is a picture of us away from God, unable to help ourselves, and require some other person to intervene. Now, the two that pass by who were unwilling and unable to help are often referred to as the two that I mentioned earlier, the law, meaning the priest who passed by, or the prophets, meaning the Levite.

Neither of which could bring about salvation. Although, as we know from other parts of the scriptures, both of these were supposed to bring us to Christ, to the Lord Jesus, which leads us to the Good Samaritan.

[16 : 03] The Good Samaritan is an amazing picture of the Lord Jesus. He saw us in our need, unable to help ourselves, unable to keep the law, and he had compassion on us, and he intervenes.

Romans 5 and 8 says, But God shows his love for us, and that while we were still sinners, or another version would say, while we were yet without strength, Christ died for us.

The Samaritan comes right down to the place where the wounded man lay, and provides exactly what the victim needed. Notice the tenderness in which he cleans a man's wounds, where he pours in wine, which will have been used to sterilise and clean the wound, and any pours in oil, which would be used as a barrier to stop infection and reduce inflammation.

He gently lifts the casualty and provides for him transport, food, and shelter, so that he can recover. The Good Samaritan covers all of the costs of all of this, knowing full well that the injured party had nothing to offer him in return.

A true picture of sacrificial love. The Lord Jesus sacrificed himself in the ultimate act of compassion and love, to grant to those who believe in him eternal life.

[17 : 14] He has provided the way, and he has covered the costs. And my second point was this, and I don't need an interactive audience, but it is what we must do.

We must come to the Lord Jesus in our need and in our ruin, and accept that there is nothing that we can do, and that all that has been done, he has done on our behalf.

He is our rescuer. He will heal our wounds, and he provides for our eternal future. Which leads me on to the third point, which is, what should we do then?

Now, this is an exhortation to those of us who are saved. We should endeavour to live out this wonderful principle that is articulated in the law by the enablement of the Spirit that is at work within us.

This type of sacrificial love is exactly what is mentioned in Galatians 5. And an ongoing outward display of love and kindness and goodness. These are the marks of the Spirit of God within us.

[18 : 19] It is our duty to find those who need our help, regardless of skin colour or religion or social background or intellect.

The two people in the Soriacy could not be more different. The Jews, I've already mentioned this, the Jews and the Samaritans were enemies. Sometimes the Jews cursed the Samaritans, and no doubt that Samaritan might have thought, if I were in that man's case, he would not help me.

Or the Jew that was robbed, who he helped, he could not repay him. And maybe the Samaritan might have thought to himself, well, I will do the least that I can because it doesn't benefit me in any way.

Or he could have acted like the other two that passed by on the other side. There are a number of excuses that the good Samaritan could have used, but didn't. And we should do likewise. But remember this is a parable that is given to eliminate truth about salvation, a spiritual truth.

And the third point about what we should do goes further than just physical kindness towards our fellow man. And my opening story about Anna Marie receiving the kidney is an amazing story about a beneficiary of sacrificial love.

[19 : 36] Love that changed her life. And I'm sure, as I mentioned earlier, that the outcome would have been transformative. Both in the praise and the heartfelt thanks that she had for Sandy, who donated her kidney, but also for the fact that she would have went on just about her normal daily life, telling others about the most amazing sacrifice that somebody else gave her and the details of what happened.

And I think here lies our greatest challenge of being a good Samaritan. What is man's greatest need? We read that, in fact, just this morning we heard from Luca and Alistair last week about the need of a man.

It is the need of our eternal soul. In John 1, Philip excitedly exclaims to others, we have found him of whom Moses and the law and also the prophets wrote, Jesus of Nazareth.

And I want to challenge you. Does our heart move in this way towards our fellow humans to share the answer to their greatest need?

Referring back to Luca's sermon this morning and Alistair's last week, it both covered both being ready and willing to give an account. So, in conclusion, I just want to sum up the three points that I made.

[21 : 05] It is impossible for us to gain salvation by means of keeping the law because we cannot keep the law. Jesus quietly shows the listener this in the simple yet complex answer.

The law demands an impossibly high standard of love towards both God and man which cannot be attained by mortal man.

Good works can't save us either, but good works should be an ongoing outward display of our link with Christ. Jesus tells us this over and over again in the manner in which we are to live towards our fellow man.

And he lays great stress upon the love which should shine throughout our Christian character. I need to be careful, but this is Spurgeon, not Sturgeon. Spurgeon said this, I shall hold up the love of our neighbour as a, I shall not hold up the love of our neighbour as a condition of salvation, but as a fruit of it.

I shall not speak of obedience to the law as a road to heaven, but I shall show you the pathway which is to be followed by the faith which works by love. We must fall on our knees and accept by faith the gift of compassion that is offered by the grace and mercy of God through the good Samaritan.

[22 : 22] And we should live our lives thereafter telling others about him. Now, I want to thank you for listening. The three points, I think, that will help us in our questions after about what we must do, sorry, what we cannot do, about what we must do, and about then what we should do as we live our lives there out telling about him thereafter.

And I want to thank you for listening. I'm going to hand back over to Alistair. Thank you very much. Thank you. Thank you. Thank you. Thank you.