

## MODERN PARABLES Part 2: Samaritan 10.03.10

Nancy reads Luke 10:29-37 ESV

Movie: Samaritan [13:08]

**Introduction:** Today we examine the parable of the Good Samaritan, probably the most well-known of all Jesus' parables. Hospitals and Charities are named "Samaritan." Theologians throughout the ages have analyzed and allegorized every aspect of the parable. Frankly, it is enough to make a teaching pastor despair. What could I possibly add?

The story of the Good Samaritan is really the story of the Bible. The entire OT is the story of God's gracious compassion on His people.

*"The Lord was gracious to them and had compassion on them."*  
2 Kings 13:23 ESV

The story of the NT is the story of God's Son's compassion.

*"When he saw the crowds, he had compassion for them, because they were harassed and helpless, like sheep without a shepherd."*  
Matthew 9:36 ESV

Paul follows with instructions that, as Christ-followers, we should be like Christ and also show compassion to people around us.

*"Put on then, as God's chosen ones, holy and beloved, compassionate hearts."*  
Colossians 3:12a ESV

But how, exactly, should we go about doing this? There are those in our midst - my good wife is one of them - who naturally have a merciful and compassionate heart. Then there are the rest of us. **Tell story of how I score so low on the "Mercy Scale."** In the parable of the Good Samaritan we find: **Four Changes to a Compassionate Heart**

### Change #1 - My Perspective.

View the situation **FROM THE DITCH**

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." Luke 10:30 ESV

To have a compassionate heart we need to change our vantage point. We need to see the situation from the victim's viewpoint. Consider that the entire parable of the Good Samaritan is told from the perspective of the man in the ditch. The priest comes and goes. The Levite comes and goes. The Samaritan comes and helps.

When we see someone in need, our tendency is to view the situation from our perspective, which is usually from a stronger vantage point. What if I (you) were in their shoes. How would I feel? What help would I need?

### Change #2 - My Permission.

Don't answer: **WHY I CAN'T HELP**.

*"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."*  
Luke 10:31-32 ESV

Undoubtedly, in their minds, the priest and the Levite had good reasons for not helping. The 19-mile journey down from Jerusalem to Jordan descended 3,000 feet through rocky and dangerous territory. Even today this route is known for bandits. The priest and Levite undoubtedly knew the risks and excused themselves by not placing themselves in danger. (In much the same way that everyone knows that it's dangerous to pick up hitchhikers!) They could have thought that the man himself was partly responsible for his own predicament (like the film we just watched.) They could simply have been in a hurry. They (like us) had their rational reasons.

But ask: **WHY CAN'T I HELP**?

“But a Samaritan, as he journeyed, came to where he was, and when he saw him, he had compassion.” Luke 10:33 ESV

The Samaritan's difference was that instead of having his rational answers for why he couldn't help already locked into his brain, **he gave himself permission to ask: Why Can't I Help?** This subtle difference of moving the “I” back just one place puts us in the right position to have compassion. In fact we find this is really the only difference that matters between the Samaritan and the others.

**#1 Qualification to Help: COMPASSION**

This was the “wow” factor to Jesus' audience that the good guy in the parable was the bad guy in real life. The Samaritan should not have been the one to have the qualifications to help. The priest or the Levite should have been better qualified. And often when we are confronted with the opportunity to help someone else out, we know that there are others more qualified. The pastor. The doctor. Anyone but us. But the main qualification is our ability to give ourselves permission to help, to move the “I” just one word back.

### Change #3 - My Performance.

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.’ ... And Jesus said to him, “You go, and do likewise.”  
Luke 10: 34-35, 37b ESV

To change our performance - and actually roll up our sleeves **and do likewise**, we need to understand what Compassion is and is not...

**Compassion is NOT:**

**COMPLEX**

**Compassion IS:**

**SIMPLE**

It's not something we have to think a lot about. It's a matter of doing. Some solutions are difficult. We don't have to have all the answers to be compassionate. We simply have to be willing to do what we can do. We trust God to provide the rest.

**PHILOSOPHICAL**

**PRACTICAL**

When it comes to compassion, it's easier to be philosophical. That person got what they deserved. That's what we have the (church, government) for. Or... the problem is just too big for me to really do anything about. But compassion is practical. It says, “I may not be able to solve the whole problem, but I can do something.”

## DEBATING

## DOING

How many of you can identify with the debate that goes on in your head when you find someone who needs help. Should I or shouldn't I? The whole permission debate takes place. It's like your heart and your mind are in conflict. Compassion is "doing" first and letting your brain catch up later. "Do likewise." See a need and do something about it!

## DUTY

## LOVE

The conflict between duty and love is the conflict to be compassionate or not. Duty looks to limit those I'm responsible to help. Love looks to take the limits off and help everyone I can.

This is the CHANGE #4 in My Perception...

### **Change #4: My Perception.**

But he, desiring to justify himself, said to Jesus, "And who is my neighbor?" ... "Which of these three, do you think, proved to be a neighbor to the man who fell among the robbers?" He said, "The one who showed him mercy." Luke 10:29, 36-37a ESV

**"Duty" ==> My question is NOT WHO IS MY NEIGHBOR ?**

Note that in verse 29, the lawyer looks to limit his responsibility to his duty. The argument of definition. Let me limit the definition of "my neighbor" so I can fulfill the jot and tittle of the rule. Duty is rule focused. But love is people focused.

**"Love"==> My question IS: WHOSE NEIGHBOR AM I ?**

Again just a small change of wording, moving the personal pronoun "I" after my neighbor. When I put my neighbor first, before me, then the focus is on other people. Rather than limiting the definition of my neighbor, my neighbor becomes anyone who could use my help. Love opens my heart and my life and my perception to the wide world around me.

**Conclusion:** There is no one here who could not use some help becoming the Good Samaritan. No matter what your "Mercy Index" is, there is always ways we can improve our compassion.

This has been a pragmatic sermon. You may wonder: where is the prompting of God, the moving of the Spirit - the power to do what needs to be done that goes beyond our human abilities? Quite frankly, I don't believe our failure to become the compassionate people of God is because we don't pray enough or read the Bible enough. It's much more likely to be a matter of our will - our decision and our action - to help others when and where we can.

If it's a matter of our will (and not God's will) then it will most likely require a change in our hearts and a change in our behavior. Which of these 4 changes need to take place in your heart?

- #1- Change of perspective - Do you need to start looking at life from someone else's point of view? From the ditch instead of from your lofty position?
- #2- Change of permission - Do you need to give yourself permission to be a Good Samaritan. Are you restricting yourself by the rules of when and where you should help?
- #3 - Change of performance - Maybe for some of you it's not a matter of your conscience, it's a matter of just getting to it.
- #4 - Change of perception - Do you need to move from duty to love?