

Only Good Samaritans Inherit Eternal Life

Franklin Church of Christ
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PM Assembly

Introduction:

Everyone is familiar with the story of the Good Samaritan (**Luke 10:30-36**). This 2000-year-old story has made it into our popular culture to describe any good deeds. We must take care not to lose the power of this parable through common usage. I am not sure we always make the connection that this story was ultimately in answer to the question of **Luke 10:25**, "What shall I do to inherit eternal life?" (ESV). Jesus' statement was, "Only Good Samaritans inherit eternal life!" At the end of the story (**vss. 37**), Jesus told the lawyer, "Go and do the same." This story promotes action, the action of love. Therefore we ask, "What did the Good Samaritan do?"

Discussion:

- I. The Good Samaritan acted from compassion not prejudice.
 - A. Most of us are aware Jews and Samaritans hated each other. This hatred was so much a part of Jewish practice you will remember the Samaritan woman at the well in **John 4:9** was surprised Jesus spoke to her. The Samaritan did not love this man because of his race or religion, he just loved him. He saw his need and was merciful to him.
 - B. In our culture, race has always posed problems. Thankfully, our society seems to be working through these problems, slowly but surely. Race, however, is not the only prejudice. There are numerous reasons we may be prejudiced. It is easy to devalue those who are poorer or dirtier than us; those whose clothes are not as nice. We may know about their sins and believe they do not deserve compassion, perhaps they are drunks, liars, homosexuals, child abusers, fornicators, etc. Perhaps they are not as educated as we are and don't speak as correctly as we do, hanging participles and splitting infinitives. Or, heaven forbid, they may even sound like a Yankee. We can be prejudiced for any number of reasons.
 - C. We are all in the same boat—sinners in need of saving. In the grand scheme of things we are not better or worse than anyone in this world because of our race, religion, socio-economic class, gender or morality. We are to love others when we can, where we can and to the greatest extent we can. Then try to love a little more. Remember Jesus' statement to the Pharisees given in response to their prejudice against sinners and tax-gatherers in **Matthew 9:12-13**, "Go and learn what this means, 'I desire mercy and not sacrifice'" (ESV). Without unprejudiced love and mercy, sacrifice in worship is pointless.
- II. The Good Samaritan sacrificed of himself and his resources.
 - A. The Samaritan was not out for a walk; he was on a journey (**Luke 10:33**). He had places to go and most probably a timetable to keep. Nearly every man knows journeys have timetables, even when the children have to use the restroom. Assumedly, this Samaritan was no different. But, when he saw the need of the Jew, he sacrificed his own timetable to bestow mercy and love.
 - B. The Good Samaritan also sacrificed his resources. Where did the bandaging, oil and wine come from? They were not on the side of the road in a box that said, "In case of robbery." These items came from the luggage of the travelling Samaritan.
 - C. The Samaritan sacrificed his own comfort and ease. For this journey, the Samaritan had been riding on a beast. After he treated and bandaged the man, he placed the injured man on his own beast and was relegated to walking.
 - D. The Samaritan sacrificed some of his money. He gave the innkeeper two denarii, that is two day's wages, and promised to reimburse him for any other costs in this man's care.
 - E. We know the greatest love, that a man lay down his life for his friends (**John 15:13**). It is easy in a Bible class to declare we might lay down our lives for some of our friends. But if we won't even give up our time, comfort, resources or finances, we will never give up our lives.
- III. The Good Samaritan kept his own needs in perspective.
 - A. This Samaritan was going somewhere and had things to do. He had goals to reach, plans to accomplish and responsibilities to keep. This Samaritan had wants and needs he was striving to accomplish even at the moment he came across this injured man. We don't know them, but rest assured, to the Samaritan they were important, else he would not have been involved in it.

- B. The Good Samaritan, despite how important his needs and goals were, was able to keep things in perspective. The imminent death of this beaten Jew was far more important than whatever the Samaritan's plans were. Love keeps things in perspective and does not seek its own (**I Corinthians 13:5**). It is so easy to believe my plans, goals, needs and desires are more important than anyone else's. After all, they are mine. I have to step outside myself and try to understand you to see how important your needs are. That is not easy.
 - C. I want to explain some of the difficulty I had in developing this point. At first, I labeled it, "The Good Samaritan put the needs of others first." Then I considered, I had a friend who in high school was at home alone, cutting the yard and through cut off his thumb. He had to drive himself to the emergency room. What if on the way he saw an elderly woman with a flat tire sitting on the roadside? Does love demand he put his own concerns aside to help her? Of course not. Thus I changed the point to "The Good Samaritan kept his own needs in perspective."
 - D. Understanding this is probably the most difficult aspect of being a Good Samaritan. This does not mandate we impoverish ourselves through unwise benevolence. Love keeps things in perspective and balances the real needs of all involved. That takes wisdom, experience and probably a lot of mistakes. It is an area of growth. Notice, the Samaritan did not stay with the man until he was fully recovered. Rather, he did what he could and when the situation was rectified to the point his need to journey on was greater than the Jew's need for medical help, he left.
 - E. I wish I could draw lines for you and say which situations demand personal sacrifice and which do not. You, through prayer and study, have to determine your own course of action regarding love and mercy. I bring this point up, not to resolve all the conflicts in your mind regarding when and where, but rather to bring that conflict up in the minds of those who haven't dealt with it. Because typically, those who struggle will keep things in perspective and will not seek their own.
- IV. The Good Samaritan made himself vulnerable and took a risk.
- A. I am not sure we realize the great risk the Samaritan took. First, that this man was here in this state at all demonstrated robbers were on the road. The man could have been there as a trap or the robbers might still have been close by and attacked the Samaritan as he helped the injured Jew. Yet, despite the risks, the Samaritan stopped, got down off his beast and stooped to examine the man, making himself vulnerable to any attack that might have been waiting.
 - B. But the risk did not stop there. The Samaritan made himself vulnerable when he told the innkeeper he would pay for any of the expenses the Jew incurred while staying at the inn. He did not know what caring for this man would cost. He didn't know if the injured man was honest or if he might take advantage of his generosity. He opened himself up to be used.
 - C. Love is not truly possible without making ourselves vulnerable. Every time we offer love and mercy we are opening the door to be hurt. We are opening the door to be used. We are opening the door to get burned. We often think about this in the realm of romantic love, but it is true regarding any relationship and act of love. We must be willing to accept this risk.
- V. The Good Samaritan did all this when no one else could see him.
- A. If the road had been populated, this robbery would never have happened. The Samaritan had the same option to pass by without helping as the Levite and the priest and no one would ever have known. Instead he stopped to help.
 - B. If we are acting just to be seen of men, our action is not love or mercy. It is love when we do it whether or not we ever get noticed. Interestingly, the Samaritan didn't even wait around until the man was well enough to give a reward or even say thank you. He wasn't interested in being noticed or rewarded. He was interested in helping a man in need. The Samaritan loved.

Conclusion:

At the end of this story, Jesus told the lawyer, "Go and do the same" (**Luke 10:37**). Notice what Jesus did not say. He did not say, "Go and think about the same." "Go and teach about the same." "Go and talk about the same." He did not say, "Go and feel the same." "Go and point fingers at others who do not do the same." "Go and talk about how you would do the same if the opportunity arose." He said, "Go and do the same." Are you a Good Samaritan?