

SERVING: SERMON (1)

Holy Habits: Serving

Sermon on the 'Good Samaritan' – Luke 10 vv. 25 – 37

Background notes – the road [3300 rise in altitude, 17 miles distance] was a twisting dangerous road where robbers and others could hide and attack. Priests and Levites serving in the Temple in Jerusalem, often lived in Jericho and would commute to Jerusalem. Some priests would be wealthy enough to have their own donkey transport.

The “Expert” in v. 25 was an expert in Jewish law and would have been familiar with LEVITICUS 19 v. 18 which he quotes, but also vv. 33,34 which is about how aliens should be treated as native born.

1. v.25. 'What must I DO to inherit eternal life'? This question makes us wonder about his motive for asking for he must surely have known that it is a gift - not a reward for action....inheritance results from the relationship to the giver.

Jesus does not point out the contradiction or answer the question, but instead gets him to look at the Jewish law, which he does by combining Leviticus 19 v. 18, Deut . 6 v. 5

“You have answered this correctly” is not saying that eternal life comes through obeying the law, for the Jewish law requires them to keep it PERFECTLY. Not about rules but a relationship.

2. Concept of neighbour _For a Jew it would be a struggle for the idea of 'neighbour' to include everyone ...and certainly not Gentiles! The question “who is my neighbour?” leads Jesus to show him that it does include those of an 'alien' culture [Leviticus 19 vv 33,34] .

Don't we choose those to whom we will be neighbourly? Aren't we selective in those we choose to serve, befriend or with whom we share the gospel ? Helping others can be inconvenient or require sacrifice of time, or spoiling our agenda for the day. After all, are there not limits to my love and, anyhow, how far do my responsibilities go?

3. Responses to the man in need.

The PRIEST. He may have been going home after Temple service – if the man is dead he mustn't touch the body because it makes him ceremonially unclean. [see Leviticus 21 vv. 1 – 4]. He would have to cease his duties until restored to 'cleanliness'. So, helping this man would have been an inconvenience and the priest may also have been in danger of attack himself. It would be safer to cross the road and leave it to the experts.

The LEVITE

He also serves in the Temple and is fairly wealthy & very busy working for God. Busy FOR God but not caring LIKE God

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THE SAMARITAN

The pillars of Jewish society had passed by, but not the Samaritan who was hated by the Jews. The introduction of this character into the parable would have touched a raw nerve - it was the equivalent of a member of HAMAS showing compassion towards an Israeli.

It was not just nationality that set him apart. He had seen the same as the others but he felt compassion. His action overcame division. Remember also he was on Jewish territory!

4. The nature of the Samaritan

The Samaritan was generous. He may have used his own clothes to bandage, and oil and wine were not cheap. He gave money without realistic expectation of reimbursement. He was driven by a desire to restore this man to health.

1 John 4 v 18 *Perfect love drives out fear.*

What are the things that make us hesitate to help? How much should we protect ourselves and count the cost? How much do we rely on God's provision for us ?

5. Application ?

The parable is teaching us to see EVERYONE in need as our neighbour. We are automatically drawn to those people that we enjoy spending time with and whose company benefits us in some way. That is not wrong, but Jesus is challenging us to consider a neighbour not just as someone who offers us benefits but also as someone in need, whatever their lifestyle or race. *"For God so loved the WORLD"*, without distinction. Our challenge is to have the MIND OF CHRIST and want to be ready and willing to help the needy in our path.

Is there a difference between help provided by believers and that given by non-Christian volunteers ?

Reflections

Our love for people should be an overflow of our love for God.

Our driving force is God's love, generosity and grace towards us.

Christ showed us sacrificial and unconditional love. His forgiveness was never earned.

There is so much hurt in this world that we need to pray for all those under attack be it spiritual, physical, psychological , or whatever.

Pray for those who irritate us, who dislike us and who hurt us.

May we be the ones to show mercy.

"Go and do likewise" Jesus says.

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