

Come and Listen (A Sermon Series on the Parables of Jesus)

The Compassion Question

Luke 10:25-37

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Compassion Experience Sunday

Text Introduction: We are in a new series for the summer on the Parables of Jesus. Jesus was a master story teller. People of Jesus' day were not really any different from people of today in the sense that they related to stories. Jesus took these stories using the familiar things of everyday life in the first century to capture the attention of His listeners.

Coming up on 32 years ago I preached for the first time. In my mind, the place was packed, but I don't really know, because I never looked up. Armed with 11 pages of notes, I preached (or something) for what seemed to be hours. When I sat down, I glanced at a clock to realize that I had blazed through those 11 pages of notes in 9 minutes. I share that with you today only to share that my text that evening was our text this morning—the Good Samaritan. If my record keeping is correct, this is only the third time in 32 years that I have preached from this text.

However, some would argue that this is the most well-known of all of Jesus' parables.

Come and listen to the parable of the Good Samaritan.

Text: ²⁵ Then an expert in the law stood up to test him, saying, "Teacher, what must I do to inherit eternal life?"

²⁶ "What is written in the law?" he asked him. "How do you read it?"

²⁷ He answered, "**Love the Lord your God with all your heart, with all your soul, with all your strength, and with all your mind;**" and "**your neighbor as yourself.**"

²⁸ "You've answered correctly," he told him. "Do this and you will live."

²⁹ But wanting to justify himself, he asked Jesus, "And who is my neighbor?"

³⁰ Jesus took up the question and said: "A man was going down from Jerusalem to Jericho and fell into the hands of robbers. They stripped him, beat him up, and fled, leaving him half dead. ³¹ A priest happened to be going down that road. When he saw him, he passed by on the other side. ³² In the same way, a Levite, when he arrived at the place and saw him, passed by on the other side. ³³ But a Samaritan on his journey came up to him, and when he saw the man, he had compassion. ³⁴ He went over to him and bandaged his wounds, pouring on olive oil and wine. Then he put him on his own animal, brought him to an inn, and took care of him. ³⁵ The next day he took out two denarii, gave them to the innkeeper, and said, 'Take care of him. When I come back I'll reimburse you for whatever extra you spend.'

³⁶ “Which of these three do you think proved to be a neighbor to the man who fell into the hands of the robbers?”

³⁷ “The one who showed mercy to him,” he said.

Then Jesus told him, “Go and do the same.”

Introduction:

When we encounter parables in the Gospels, there are a few basic interpretative principles that we must employ in order to get the real meaning of the text.

1. Understand the purpose of all parables. The literal meaning of the word parable is “to throw beside” or “to set beside.” Jesus used parables to throw beside a teaching or an instructive principle. That leads us to the second consideration.
2. We must seek to understand what that principle is. “What is the main point” is the question we should be asking. Most times, if not all times, there is something in the context that reveals precisely what the main point is and the story simply illustrates that main point.
3. Because we are looking for the main point, it is also important to understand that we need not press the details of the story. In other words, parables are not allegories in every case. I suggest that this particular parable is not an allegory—that is let’s not press the issue with every detail of the story, but rather seek to get the main point.

Questions Sets the Stage for the Story

The broad context of this parable is the journey to Jerusalem. Jesus was teaching as they walked. Jesus was delineating the meaning of discipleship. In Luke 9:52, the rejection of Jesus by the Samaritans is mentioned. That is going to be important background for the parable. In fact the disciples are so enraged with the response of the Samaritans that they want to call down fire from Heaven to consume the Samaritans. It is noteworthy there that the disciples thought they could do that. Perhaps it is also surprising that Jesus rebuked the disciples though instead of the Samaritans.

After teaching on various subjects, verse 25 opens up this scene particular to the parable. An expert in the law wishing to trip Jesus up asked a question of Jesus. “What must I do to inherit eternal life?” Now, please understand that the cross hasn’t happened. Jesus has not paid the penalty for sin on the cross. The time is not yet for the way that the Apostles answered similar questions after the cross and resurrection and the way that we would answer today. In fact, Jesus answered with a question of his own.

And then, key to our interpretation of this passage, the expert in the law, wanting to justify himself, asked another question: “And who is my neighbor?”

Be reminded by this question that those who seek a relationship to God by their good deeds are forever asking the question, “What is the least that I can do and still be right with God?” True followers of Jesus, people redeemed by His grace because of the cross, are forever asking a different question. “What is the most that I can do out of my thanksgiving and desire to be like Jesus?”

When we understand this difference, then we are ready for the parable. I want us to respond to this parable today. We have a pretty specific opportunity to respond today because of our Compassion Experience weekend that we have placed before you. Before I call you to a response, I want to point you to four different ideas.

A Picture is Worth a Thousand Words

This is why Jesus told stories. Jesus' listeners would have related to almost everything in this story. They would have related to the road between Jerusalem and Jericho being a road known for danger and being robbed. In fact, someone might even be thought a fool for travelling this road alone. They would have even related to the priest and Levite passing by the man left for dead. To come into contact with this potentially dead man would have left them ceremonially unclean for participation in their duties.

There is one detail in the story to which they cannot relate. The hero is a Samaritan. This is the hook of the story. The Samaritan's response becomes a model for Christian service. Who is my neighbor? Neighbors are those in need.

A Question is Worth a Thousand Words

Once Jesus told the story, He asked a question. "Which of these three do you think proved to be a neighbor to the man who fell into the hands of the robbers?" The answer was obvious. The answer was obvious then for the same reason that the answer is obvious today. Think about these 5 characteristics of genuine love.

- Compassion—Biggest difference between the first two and the Samaritan was compassion.
- Personal Involvement—The compassion led to action. There was much I got wrong in that first sermon I preached, but this much I got right, I titled the sermon, "Put your Compassion into Action." The difference in the first two religious leaders and the Samaritan is that they did something about what they saw and heard.
- Sacrifice—The Samaritan of the parable sacrificed time and money.
- Generosity—Action almost always calls us to be generous.
- Obligation—In the context of discipleship, a religious pedigree is no substitute for right action. We are not saved by the action, but this is what redeemed people (disciples) do!

A Testimony is Worth a Thousand Words

We have with us today, Jennifer Gitiri. Jennifer is from Nairobi, Kenya. Jennifer, please come. First Baptist family, please help me extend a welcome to Jennifer today.

- Give us a picture of what life was like for you in your earliest memories living in Nairobi, Kenya.
- And, then all of that changed because of Compassion sponsorship. Tell us about that.
- Did you ever meet your sponsors? What was that like? Did they prove to be "your neighbor" as Jesus spoke about in the parable of The Good Samaritan?

A Command is Worth a Thousand Words

Notice the last verse. "Go and do the same."

One way to carry out this command is to get involved in something hands on and it changes lives as you have heard in the testimony.

Our church is helping Compassion launch a sponsorship program in El Salvador. We are partnering with Compassion as they work through First Baptist Church El Sinai in Santa Catarina Masahuat, El Salvador. I want to challenge you to be one of 196 sponsors that we need in order to sponsor. Linett and I have. Would you join us? Now, we need 195.

Right outside are the sponsorship packets. Some of you have heard Jesus today say, "Go and do the same."

Some of you have heard the question of the expert in the law. Don't make the same mistake he did. Don't try to "justify yourself?"