

Luke 10:25-37
“The Sojourner”
Sunday August 7, 2016



A Sunday School teacher told her class the story of the Good Samaritan. When she was finished she asked her class, “If you saw a person lying on the side of the road, all wounded and bleeding, what would you do?” A thoughtful little girl finally broke the hushed silence and said, “I think I’d throw up!”



The questions we ask are important, the answers at times unexpected. One of my early mentors in preaching told me that good sermons don’t give the right answers, they ask the right questions.

This we see artfully displayed in the words of Jesus in his interchange with the “Lawyer” or “Scribe”. Scribes or Lawyers taught the intricacies of the scriptures.

Well, Jesus was being tested by this lawyer who first asked, “**How do you inherit eternal life?**”

Jesus answered a question with a question, “**What is written in the Law? What do you read there?**”

The lawyer answered, “**You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, soul, strength and mind and your neighbor as yourself.**”

Jesus responds, “**Right answer and if you do this you will live in this world and the one to come**”

Now the lawyer doesn't leave well enough alone. He has in mind some people he doesn't love and doesn't think he needs to love so he asks, "Who is my neighbor?"

That was the wrong question. But Jesus wanted him to really remember the right question and answer, and so tells a story we call "The Good Samaritan". The question that Jesus asks in verse 36 is the right question. The right question is not who is my neighbor? All human beings from the unborn to the aged of all races and creeds are our neighbor. The right question is, "How can I be neighborly?" How can I be a good neighbor?



In the parable two highly religious people walk by an unidentified man who was beaten, robbed and left naked beside the road. No one can tell if he is a Jew, Gentile, or Samaritan, or other; because all means of identification have been stripped from him. He is simply human and left naked, bleeding and dying alongside a road. He was simply a human in deep need.

There is a lot of speculation why the 1st two didn't stop to help. It doesn't matter... they didn't stop.



But one Samaritan sees him and as the scriptures say "is moved by pity". So he gathers up this naked beaten man, bandaged him, took him to an inn and made sure he was taken care of.



At the point the Samaritan's pity moved him to action was the point at which "Pity became love." Love is not a noun in a Christian's

vocabulary. Love is not a noun in any believer's vocabulary. **Love is a verb--it is an action!** Just as faith is active, love is also active. Love and faith to be real go far beyond thoughts and feelings into action.



What would have been so shocking to Jesus' hearers was that the last word they would have applied to any Samaritan was the word "Good". To Jesus' Jewish hearers Samaritans represented both racial impurity and religious heresy. Samaritans were hated by Jews and vice a versa.

For Jesus to use a Samaritan as an example of one who could love, so as to inherit eternal life, was truly shocking. It was so shocking in fact, that when Jesus asked, "Which of these three do you think was a neighbor to the one who fell into the hands of the robbers?" The lawyer couldn't simply say "the Samaritan". He said, **"The one who showed him mercy."**

To which Jesus replied to him and to us, **"Go and do likewise."**

Mercy is not something anyone deserves or earns or is entitled to. The man who was robbed, beaten and left in the ditch in many of Jesus' hearers minds probably thought, "He got what he deserved." He went down a road alone that was known for its robbers and got what he deserved. The Judean wilderness though stark, it's topography provides lots of opportunities for robbers to hide.



The road from Jerusalem to Jericho was called “the way of blood.” It was notorious for robberies and murders. If you went down it by yourself without guards you got what you deserved. Never mind the Priest and Levite made the same mistake and got away with it. So in many of Jesus’ hearers minds the last thing the beaten man deserved was mercy, but he got it. Now this is an example of mercy.



“A mother once approached Napoleon seeking a pardon for her son. The emperor replied that the young man had committed a certain offense twice and justice demanded death.

“But I don’t ask for justice: the mother explained. “I plead for mercy.”

“But your son does not deserve mercy,” Napoleon replied.

“Sir”, the woman cried, “It would not be mercy if he deserved it, and mercy is all I ask for.”

“Well, then,” the emperor said, “I will have mercy.” And he spared the woman’s son.”

In verse 31 it says **“now by chance a priest was going down the road when he saw him he passed by on the other side.”** John Wesley pointed out that as Christians, encounters such as this are not “by chance,” but by the providence of God.

When we come upon human need it is not by chance, it’s by God’s direction in our lives. One of my favorite verses is Ephesians 2:10, which reads, **“For we are what he has made us, created in Christ Jesus for good works, which God prepared beforehand to be our way of life.”** Human need is our opportunity to be neighborly!

In an Upper Room Devotional this true story was told.

The last place my friend Bill expected to find a Christian brother was among the guards in a prisoner-of-war camp in Vietnam. Bill had been captured by the Viet Cong and held in a bamboo cage. Bad food, polluted water, and the constant tropical heat made Bill deathly ill. He was dying from dehydration, and he knew it.

One of Bill's guards saw him on his knees in prayer. Well at the risk of his own life, the guard smuggled some salt into Bill's cage and pressed it into his palm. The salt saved Bill's life. Later, the guard slipped Bill pieces of fresh fruit when no one was watching. "Why are you helping me?" Bill asked him. The guard looked around, before he reached into his pocket and pulled out a small black book with a cross on its cover.

Pity turned to Love. Mercy was practiced. Love was expressed that was deeper than enemies in a prisoner of war camp. A Vietnamese at great risk to his own life lived out Jesus' words "You have heard that it was said, 'You shall love your neighbor and hate your enemy.' But I say to you, Love your enemies and pray for those who persecute you, so that you may be children of your Father in heaven;" Matthew 5:43-45a

The cost of practicing mercy can include our life, or simply our time and inconvenience. See how simple it is to live out Jesus' words here to "Go and do likewise."

RUN CLIP: "BUS"

We as a church live this out on many levels, seeking to show mercy to people emotionally, spiritually and physically.

We are gathered as a people to love our neighbors as a group for we feel we have more power together than separately. That is why we together do things like our Agua Prieta school supply drive delivering school supplies to over 160 children, youth and adult learners in Agua Prieta.

We pay our apportionments that support missions and ministries in over 160 countries. We support Family First, Impact of Southern Arizona food bank. We supply back pack weekend dinners to Coronado students and we are starting a mentoring program there. We together have a huge impact on our immediate neighbors and neighborhood.

Now many question organized religion today and shy away. I say organized religion is the way to go if you want to make a major impact in this world for we can do more together than separately.

Together we can do something world class like unite to eliminate Malaria in our Lifetime! In our Annual Conference report you probably heard the 130 churches of the DSWAC raised over \$2,000,000 to combat malaria. That's over 200,000 lives saved.

Many ministries begin when God captures the heart and mind of an individual and that revelation, that Kairos moment is spread to others. This is what happened when Karen Tyron was inspired to start the prayer shawl ministry. Today you saw fruit of their labor being consecrated that will go out as blessings to many people.

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When we see human need, when a new idea to help and serve pops into our head it is not by chance, it is by the power and working of the Holy Spirit. I titled this message “The Sojourner” because God often calls people sojourning on this earth into our lives. Sometimes, like family, it can be for a lifetime, some just a short conversation on a bus, and some for an extended season.

But none of these people we meet, no matter how random the meeting might seem, are there by chance or accident. They are there because God has called us to be there with them.

This summer two young boys came into our lives as interns in our church: Beto and Alex. I thought we were getting two youth who were looking at becoming pastors, but we got one who wants to be a commercial artist “Beto” and one who wants to be a Quantum Physicist “Alex.”

Five minutes after I learned that I tossed out their job description in my mind and we began to sojourn together. We were not sure where we were going, what we were going to do, and how we were to get there, but I knew God had some things in mind which blessed many people in this congregation, community and even back in Mexico.

Here’s what pastor Gela said about their work in Mexico when we went down to interview 15 youth and college students receiving scholarship aid. She wrote, *“Another thing I want to comment on is about the great help we received from the 2 youth (Alex & Beto)... with the translation. I give thanks to God for both of them. They were very educated, very helpful and attended to their work in a very excellent way. (Our youth witnessed) that this is another way of serving the Lord, with language translation. I also know that they were a big help with the work of organizing the school supplies.”*

A bit about the two interns, Alex’s dad is a civil engineer. His family does ok economically. But like I said last week, “No one’s life is without tragedy.” Alex’s older brother was murdered in a bar fight.

But Beto’s family economic circumstances can only be described as dire. On the trip down to Mexico he asked me, “Could the church help with my schooling. My grandmother who used to help is now sick and the medicines are very expensive and she can’t help anymore.” He was embarrassed about asking for help to the point that he could not look at me as he did it. And here he was on the way to Mexico to help others receive financial aid that he so desperately needed himself.

Well to make a long story short several members of the congregation who worked with Beto this summer and were very

impressed by him have stepped up to help him out. Of the \$200/ month for 18 months for him to graduate we have \$150 a month committed for 16 months. We as a church together will contribute the first two months through, very appropriately named, “the Good Samaritan” fund here at Vista. So as you see we need one more commitment of \$50/month.

We as individuals and as a church have decided to practice the neighborliness that Jesus calls for in this parable and help him out.

We didn’t ask for this young man to come into our lives. God sent him. He was not what we expected, but he was a blessing and will be even more of a blessing through his education. We hope to have him back next year.

In closing remember Jesus question, “How are you being neighborly?” to all you “randomly meet” and “Go and do likewise.”

In Jesus Name!!! Amen!