

## Luke 10:25-37

The good Samaritan... we've heard it so many times. It is the staple of what we believe in doing good is all about. There was even a study done at Princeton, using theological students... those studying to go into the ministry. They were given an assignment to preach on the parable of the Good Samaritan. Some were told they needed to be at the preaching site immediately, others were told it would be good if they headed on over because they didn't want to be late, and some were told they had no time limit.

Planted on the pathway to the other building was a person who seemed to be in dire need of assistance. The person was in an alley only 4 feet wide blocking the pathway so if the student was going to get past that person they had to step over them. How many people do you think stepped over the seemingly sick person? 90% of the students who were told they needed to be at the other building immediately stepped over the person. That means if 100 people were in the study, only 10 of those who were told they needed to be there immediately stopped to help.

55% who were told they had a little bit of time stepped over the person in need. And, the people who had no time constraint? 37% of those given the Good Samaritan as their preaching topic did not stop to help! (Geher, Glenn. My Favorite Psychology Study: The Good Samaritan is in the situation. <https://www.psychologytoday.com/us/blog/darwins-subterranean-world/201703>).

Wouldn't you think that people studying to be pastors and priests would help a person? For the most part, no. We've got to admit that humanity is more like those priests who crossed the street and walked on the other side of the road than what we'd like to admit. Granted, the priest and the Levite (a member of the priestly family) most likely had very good reasons for not wanting to touch the man... he was covered in blood and it would take a very long time for them to go through cleansing rituals if they touched him. Likewise for the students with time constraints, they had a mission that would not have been accomplished had they stopped to help the person. I'm curious if they were told when they arrived they didn't need to give the sermon? Would they be angry they were duped, would they feel regret for not stopping to help the person? We'll never know because the study wasn't based on that, only on how many students would stop. I wish they would have gauged responses on the other side because that would give more of an indication of compassion.

As we know the Samaritan helped the man who was naked, bleeding, laying half dead on the side of the road. We don't know if the Samaritan had any place he needed to arrive, whether he had any time constraints... if he did, he ignored them and he helped. What we who have grown accustomed to hearing this story and being told we are to be good Samaritans don't realize is how very dangerous this action was on the part of the Samaritan. He would have no idea whether the man was Judean, Egyptian, or a fellow Samaritan because the clothing that would have identified him was gone. Since the lawyer who asked Jesus the question was most likely a Pharisee, a man who knew the law, we assume the injured man was a Jew.

Following through on this assumption we have to remember that the Samaritan man was more than just hated by the Judean people, he would most likely be in danger of being attacked himself. His life was in jeopardy for touching this dying man. Imagine how shocked the Pharisee must have been when Jesus said the Samaritan was the

only one who stopped to help? It would be like a Mexican helping a Texan. I use that example because my parents were traveling in a pickup truck towing a 5<sup>th</sup> wheel through the backroads of Texas, before the time of cell phones, and something happened to their rig. I don't know if they got a flat tire or if they ran out of gas, or something else. But a Mexican stopped to help them. The man didn't know who they were, but he helped nevertheless. Granted, he didn't buy them a place to stay while their vehicle was being fixed, but he did take them to where they could find help.

The Samaritan not only cleansed the man's wounds, he used oil and wine to do so. Wine is an antiseptic. It will clean a wound so that it can heal properly. It is symbolic of the cleansing nature of Jesus as our sins are forgiven. Oil is the symbol of the healing power of the Holy Spirit, it forms a barrier for the healing process to continue. Then he put cloth bandages on the man. Not only would the bandages keep the wound from being disturbed, they would also let the man know that someone cared enough about him to take care of him.

That's wonderful! We wouldn't worry a bit about using an antiseptic to clean, an antiseptic ointment to heal and a Band-Aid to cover a friend's injury. We might think twice about helping a stranger with their wound. I could end this sermon right here by asking you to consider loving those you don't feel love for, someone you are currently being rude to, or simply avoiding and you know the reason you feel compelled to do so. I could end it by asking you to turn in prayer and ask God to soften your heart because these are God's children. God created each of us for a purpose and that purpose was not to hate but to love and be kind; I could end it by reminding you we are vessels that God uses for good, even to those we think undeserving.

But you know what? Even though I'm going to ask you to do these things, to love one another, care for each other, treat each other politely and with compassion, I'm not going to stop with this. Why? Because it's not the end of the parable!

The Samaritan put his life in danger by stopping to help a man on the side of the road. He wasn't constrained by his religious beliefs, he stopped to help, used his own supplies to care for the man meaning that he touched a man who could have been his mortal enemy! He did this while surrounded by other people who would have gladly taken his life for touching the man on the side of the road. Then, did you hear what he did? He put the man on his own, the Samaritan's own animal and took him to an inn.

Being that it was on the road to Jericho from Jerusalem, we can safely assume the innkeeper was Judean and the Samaritan would not have been welcomed there. He put himself into an unsafe situation to help the dying man. But it didn't stop there either! He used his own money, which the innkeeper could have refused to take, but he used his own money to pay for the lodging and care of this stranger, telling the innkeeper if it wasn't enough he would come back and pay what was due.

How often do we follow through with our own acts of helpfulness? How often do we sit down and eat dinner next to the people we serve sloppy joes? How often do we try to build relationships with the people we are helping? I've got to admit, I'm just as guilty of not following through as the next person, but Jesus was all about building relationships. With those we admire and with those whom we disdain. Like Jesus said to the Pharisee who asked, "What must I do to attain eternal life?" "Go and do likewise." All glory be to God.