

### The Parable of the Good Samaritan; Mary and Martha

Luke 10:25-42

*Luke 10:25-37: And behold, a certain lawyer stood up and tested Him, saying, "Teacher, what shall I do to inherit eternal life?" 26 He said to him, "What is written in the law? What is your reading of it?" 27 So he answered and said, " 'You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, with all your soul, with all your strength, and with all your mind,' [a] and 'your neighbor as yourself.' " 28 And He said to him, "You have answered rightly; do this and you will live." 29 But he, wanting to justify himself, said to Jesus, "And who is my neighbor?" 30 Then Jesus answered and said: "A certain man went down from Jerusalem to Jericho, and fell among thieves, who stripped him of his clothing, wounded him, and departed, leaving him half dead. 31 Now by chance a certain priest came down that road. And when he saw him, he passed by on the other side. 32 Likewise a Levite, when he arrived at the place, came and looked, and passed by on the other side. 33 But a certain Samaritan, as he journeyed, came where he was. And when he saw him, he had compassion. 34 So he went to him and bandaged his wounds, pouring on oil and wine; and he set him on his own animal, brought him to an inn, and took care of him. 35 On the next day, when he departed, he took out two denarii, gave them to the innkeeper, and said to him, 'Take care of him; and whatever more you spend, when I come again, I will repay you.' 36 So which of these three do you think was neighbor to him who fell among the thieves?" 37 And he said, "He who showed mercy on him." Then Jesus said to him, "Go and do likewise."*

#### Background Notes

The well-known parable of the Good Samaritan is given only in the gospel of Luke. Even though the Lord presented it as a parable, it could actually have been a true story. The road from Jerusalem to Jericho is about 17 miles long, and drops in elevation about 3,000 feet from Jerusalem down through the barren Judean wilderness to Jericho, which is below sea level. It was not unusual for a traveler to be robbed along this lonely road. Thieves could easily hide out in the hills on both sides of the old Roman road and pounce on unprotected travelers.

In this parable, the traveler, who was most likely a Jew, was robbed even of his clothes, brutally beaten, mortally wounded, and left by the side of the road to die. First a priest, and then a Levite, saw the dying man but did nothing. They could not be bothered. After all, they were involved in the Lord's work! They both passed by on the other side of the road. But - of all people - a Samaritan, who was considered an outcast by the Jewish people, came to the dying man, treated his wounds, took him to an inn, paid for his lodging and care, and promised to return.

By the way, you can still visit the site of that inn. Near the old Roman road from Jerusalem to Jericho, there is an old Turkish inn called the Inn of the Good Samaritan. Most likely, it is on the same site as that 1st century inn, because there is well water available there.

## Doctrinal Points

### 1. The story of the Good Samaritan has an obvious meaning.

The parable of the Good Samaritan was given to a certain lawyer (or scribe) who was testing the Lord. The lawyers in Israel, of course, knew the Old Testament Scriptures well. After all, it was the Law. This lawyer was interested to find out what Jesus, as a teacher, believed was required for salvation. When the lawyer correctly summed up the Law, the Lord told him to keep the Law and live. The Lord was not teaching salvation by works here, because no one is perfect, so no one can keep the whole Law of God.

The lawyer tried to justify himself by asking, “*Who is my neighbor?*” Apparently he thought he was successfully keeping the Law and that he “loved the Lord with all his heart, and with all his soul, and with his strength and loved his neighbor as himself.” He certainly had a high view of himself, didn’t he? But he now wanted to justify himself by a narrow definition of neighbor, such as only the person who lives next door to you, or only your friend, or only your colleague at work. But the Lord totally shot down that narrow concept of neighbor! And in doing so, He rebuked the pride of the lawyer - and ours as well, if we think we’re so neighborly.

The Lord’s definition of “neighbor” includes anyone who is in need who comes across your path in life - not just your friend, or your colleague at work, or the person living next door to you. And if you’re really going to be a “good neighbor” to that person in need, and love that neighbor as yourself, you’ll have to be willing to sacrifice time and money. You’ll have to be willing to change your plans. You’ll have to be willing to take on a long-term commitment. The story of the Good Samaritan should convict **us**, just as it was intended to convict the lawyer. The story of the Samaritan has an obvious meaning.

### 2. The story of the Good Samaritan has a deeper meaning.

The story of the Good Samaritan may have been a true story, but the Lord certainly gave it as a parable. All parables have a deeper meaning. The Lord Himself is represented by the Good Samaritan. We are like the man going from Jerusalem to Jericho who was attacked by thieves and was left dying by the side of the road. When I say “we,” I mean “we” individuals, or “we” the human race. We’ve all gone downhill morally and spiritually. We’ve been robbed by Satan, and we’re dying because of sin.

In the account, the priest and the Levite did not help the dying man but passed by on the other side of the road. In the parable, who or what did the priest and the Levite represent? They represent the Old Testament Law, which cannot save

a person. God gave the Law to show what sin is, and to show how God's moral standards are so high that no one can perfectly keep the Law. Galatians 3:19: *"What purpose then does the law serve? It was added because of transgressions, till the Seed should come to whom the promise was made...Is the law then against the promises of God? Certainly not! For if there had been a law given which could have given life, truly righteousness would have been by the law. But the Scripture has confined all under sin, that the promise by faith in Jesus Christ might be given to those who believe. But before faith came, we were kept under guard by the law, kept for the faith which would afterward be revealed. Therefore the law was our tutor to bring us to Christ, that we might be justified by faith."*

The Law was given to show God's standards and make clear what sin is in God's eyes. Further, the Law was given as a schoolmaster, or tutor, to drive us to Christ for salvation. The Law forces us to realize that we cannot measure up to God's moral standard of perfection, and that our only hope is in Christ. The Law is like a mirror - it can show us that our faces are dirty, but it cannot wash our dirty faces. The Law has no power to save us - it can only condemn us. So in the parable, the priest and the Levite who represented the Law passed by on the other side of the road. There is no help for the dying sinner from the Law.

By way of application today, many people are hoping religion (the "priest and the Levite") can save them. They think religion, doing good works, and trying to keep God's Law can save them. But the Bible clearly teaches that religion and good works cannot save us. It is only by God's grace that we are saved. Ephesians 2:8-9: *"For by grace you have been saved through faith, and that not of yourselves; it is the gift of God, not of works."* And so in the parable, the priest and the Levite passed by on the other side of the road because religion and the Law cannot save us from our sins, or save us from the penalty of our sins. Without the help of the "Good Samaritan," we are lost. We will die in our sin.

But the Lord, as the Good Samaritan, has come to us in mercy and with compassion, and He has healed us. He has provided the Church to care for us, and He has promised to return for us. It's hard to miss the obvious point. The story of the Good Samaritan is a parable of the grace and goodness of God that has been extended to all of mankind in general, and to us as individuals in particular. The story of the Good Samaritan has a deeper meaning.

## **Practical Application**

### **Don't let your service keep you from worship!**

The last section of Luke 10 is the well-known account of Jesus' visit in the home of Mary and Martha. Verses 38-40: *"Now it happened as they went that He entered a certain village; and a certain woman named Martha welcomed Him into her house. And she had a sister called Mary, who also sat at Jesus' feet and heard His word. But Martha was distracted with much serving, and she approached Him and said, 'Lord, do You not care that my sister has left me to serve alone?'"*

*Therefore tell her to help me.” And Jesus answered and said to her, “Martha, Martha, you are worried and troubled about many things. But one thing is needed, and Mary has chosen that good part, which will not be taken away from her.”*

Did you ever feel sorry for Martha? Martha was doing all the work and Mary was just sitting there, but Martha was rebuked and Mary was praised! What’s going on? The proper view of this account is to see it as a lesson in priorities.

First of all, notice that Martha was serving the Lord. She was involved in extensive preparations because she, her sister Mary, and their brother Lazarus were entertaining a royal guest - the Lord Himself - in their home in Bethany. Martha wanted everything to be just right - and so would we, if the Lord were to visit our house! In verses 41-42, in essence the Lord was saying, “Martha, all of this elaborate preparation for the meal is not necessary. Just a sandwich and a glass of water would be fine. I’d rather have you here with Me, listening to some important teaching from the Word. Don’t worry about all the preparation. We can use paper plates and the microwave!”

It really is a lesson in priorities, isn’t it? We, too, can get so caught up in our service for the Lord, as Martha was, that we lose sight of what’s really important. And we may even lose out on our close communion with the Lord!

I recall talking with a Christian youth leader who told me that he was so busy in the ministry that he didn’t have time to read his Bible much anymore. Well, something was seriously wrong with his priorities, even though he was faithfully serving the Lord. It’s a lesson that all dedicated Christians must learn. Don’t let your service keep you from worship!