

A small dog, possibly a Jack Russell Terrier, is sitting inside a light blue box. The box is placed on a wooden floor in front of a white door. The dog is looking directly at the camera. The background is slightly blurred, showing the interior of the house.

Who is my Neighbor?

Uncovering Possibilities of What Jesus Taught...

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Luke 10: 25-37 – The Parable of the Good Samaritan

25 An expert in the law stood up to test Jesus.[a] "Teacher," he said, "what must I do to inherit eternal life?" 26 He said to him, "What is written in the law? What do you read there?" 27 He answered, "You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your strength and with all your mind and your neighbor as yourself." 28 And he said to him, "You have given the right answer; do this, and you will live."

29 But wanting to vindicate himself, he asked Jesus, "And who is my neighbor?" 30 Jesus replied, "A man was going down from Jerusalem to Jericho and fell into the hands of robbers, who stripped him, beat him, and took off, leaving him half dead. 31 Now by chance a priest was going down that road, and when he saw him he passed by on the other side. 32 So likewise a Levite, when he came to the place and saw him, passed by on the other side. 33 But a Samaritan while traveling came upon him, and when he saw him he was moved with compassion. 34 He went to him and bandaged his wounds, treating them with 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, and when I come back I will repay you whatever more you spend.' 36 Which of these three, do you think, was a neighbor to the man who fell into the hands of the robbers?" 37 He said, "The one who showed him mercy." Jesus said to him, "Go and do likewise."

FULL PARABLE

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BEGINNING AND END OF WHAT JESUS MAY HAVE SAID TO HIS AUDIENCE

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fell. 31 A Samaritan was going down that road, and 32 he saw him and had pity on him. 33 But a priest and a Levite also went by on the other side. 34 But the Samaritan bandaged his wounds, treating

them with 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, and when I come back I will repay you whatever more you spend.' 36 Which of these three, do you think, was a neighbor to the man who fell into the hands of the robbers?" 37 He said, "The one who showed him mercy." Jesus said to him, "Go and do likewise."

Luke's Framework

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- Luke critiques lawyers (11:45–52) – Three "woes" to law experts.
- In the Matthew and Mark gospels, the parallel account asks about "commandments". Luke has the story ask about "eternal life". "This reflects Luke's more positive estimation of Judaism and its institutions and his understanding that the law was to bring the fullness of life." (Donahue, p129)
- Luke makes the lawyer seem comical by having Jesus tell him a law that he should be an expert on. The lawyer then tries to vindicate himself with a trick question(v.29) but in the end (v.36–37) makes him answer his own question, so Jesus is not caught saying something wrong.

Luke's Framework

- The framing adds a vehicle for Luke to push his agenda of disdain for the Jewish leadership (Pharisees, priests, scribes etc.)
- The evangelist also enjoys using Jesus to tackle the big question of "fullness of life".
- Luke uses Samaritans in a contrast to Jewish behavior: Luke 17: 11–19. He may be trying to shame Jewish leaders for their treatment of Jesus and the people of Israel.
- Luke's framework makes it easier to use the parable as an allegory. It sets the parable in the setting of being a defensive conversation where Jesus is answering a lawyer's challenge. The reader can be tempted to assume the priest and the Levite are all Jewish leadership, The half-dead man may be seen as an innocent Christian victim or Jesus himself, and the Samaritan may be seen as the good Christian.

Parable's Focus

- The assistance of a beaten man on the road from Jerusalem to Jericho.
- There are no distinguishing characteristics given of the man (stripped, beaten and robbed). Without clothes, we do not know of his nationality and status, (unless possibly by circumcision?)
- The shock that the Jewish leaders (as represented by a priest and a Levite) did not stop to assist. But even more shocking was Jesus using a well-known enemy of the Jews to symbolize compassion.
- Jesus shows that compassion for neighbor is more than a one-time passing occurrence but entailed intimate care (treating the man's wounds), putting yourself in possible danger (the robbers could still be near), sharing of resources (he put the injured man on his animal, so he must have had to walk) and providing sustainable care (stayed with him the night and promised to return and clear any debt).

Parable's Character Assumptions

- The first two passers-by were Jewish. What nationality were the robbers? What nationality was the inn-keeper? Why would the inn-keeper allow a Samaritan to bring in a Jew, then promise to pay any debt tomorrow? The inn-keeper was "inclusive"?
- The shock that the Jewish leaders (as represented by a priest and a Levite) did not stop to assist. But even more shocking was Jesus using a well-known enemy of the Jews (at the time) to symbolize compassion.
- Jesus shows that compassion for neighbor is more than a one-time passing occurrence but entailed intimate care (treating the man's wounds), putting yourself in possible danger (the robbers could still be near), sharing of resources (he put the injured man on his animal, so he must have had to walk) and providing sustainable care (stayed with him the night and promised to return and clear any debt).

Parable's Title

- Naming the parable the "Good Samaritan" suggests that the others must be bad or there is something special about this one person from the whole nationality. It is as bad as naming the parable "The Bad Jews".
- More fitting to Jesus' story may be – "The Traveler in Need", " The One Who Showed Compassion."

Contemporary Context



Contemporary Comparison

- Several strangers stop to help an accident victim trapped in a burning car. Notice the strangers are of different races and genders. Tessa Sand, one of the helpers and witnesses states "...if strangers had not come together to form a community..." This ties, for me, directly to the lesson Jesus was teaching. Both stories are about unselfishly helping someone in need, regardless of racial background or origin. They are not commentaries on who didn't stop to help - like the contemporary story is not about what drivers didn't pull over. The differences of the people involved are an additional "shock" to remove any rationalization of the motive of the helpers. The act of helping is done out of love for the community of mankind. As God intended...