

The Parable of Good Samaritan (Luke 10:25-37)

Context: The book of Luke emphasizes Jesus' lordship over all nations and every person (1:54-55; 73; 2:10, 27-32; 3:6; 24:44-49), which means that he welcomes every person to himself, especially those that society pushes away or takes advantage of – like the poor, the sick, lepers, women, children, widows, tax-collectors, sinners, Samaritans, Gentiles, etc. (4:18-19, 24-27; 5:1-11, 12-15, 27-32; 7:1-10, 21-23, 28-35, 36-50; 8:1-3, 40-56; 9:51-56; 10:25-37; 12:33; 13:10-17, 23-30; 14:12-14; 15:1-32; 16:19-31; 17:11-19; 18:9-14, 15-17; 19:1-10; 21:1-4). The parable of the Good Samaritan fits well into this theme.

Text: [25] And behold, a lawyer stood up to put him to the test, saying, "Teacher, what shall I do to inherit eternal life?" [26] He said to him, "What is written in the Law? How do you read it?" [27] And 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 answered correctly; do this, and you will live." [29] But he, desiring to justify himself, said to Jesus, "And who is my neighbor?" [30] Jesus replied, "A man was going down from Jerusalem to Jericho, and he fell among robbers, who stripped him and beat him and departed, 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, as he journeyed, came to where he was, and when he saw him, he had compassion. [34] He went to him and bound up his wounds, pouring on oil and wine. Then he set him on his own animal and brought him to an inn and took care of him. [35] And the next day he took out two denarii and gave them to the innkeeper, saying, 'Take care of him, and whatever more you spend, I will repay you when I come back.' [36] Which of these three, do you think, proved to be a neighbor to the man who fell among the robbers?" [37] He said, "The one who showed him mercy." And Jesus said to him, "You go, and do likewise."

Observations/Main points:

- (1) Jesus does not want us to put limitations on whom we will love (or whom we count as "neighbor") – the lawyer likely thought "fellow Israelites" should count as his neighbor but not Samaritans (which is why Jesus used the Samaritan as an example in his story); the Samaritan was a neighbor to whomever he came across.
- (2) Jesus does not want us to make value distinctions between different kinds of people, whereas others are devalued – the lawyer valued Israelites above Samaritans (question: do you think if he was the man who fell among robbers and left for dead, he would care if a Samaritan helped him? If he would have valued the Samaritan's help when he was in need, shouldn't he also value the Samaritan at other times, even all times?); the priest and the Levite valued their own self-interest above the man left for dead; but the Samaritan valued another above himself.
- (3) When you see someone in need do not walk by and do nothing, but do something by acting with mercy – the religious fellows (the priest and the Levite) may have felt sorry for the man who was left for dead, but they did nothing for him; the Samaritan did everything he could to help the man.

Applications to the abortion issue:

- (1) Jesus told us not to put limitations on our love or whom we count as "neighbor," but those who find abortion acceptable are limiting their love and only counting as "neighbor" those who are born (or those at a later stage of pregnancy). They essentially say, "We are not morally obligated to care for the unborn. We can choose to care for them if we want to, but we don't have to. In fact, if we deem them inconvenient or a burden, we can terminate their life." To the contrary, we should expand the borders of our love to include everyone and not exclude the unborn. Our neighborly love should extend both to those inside and outside the womb.

- (2) Jesus told us to not make value distinctions between different kinds of people, but those who find abortion acceptable consider the born to have more value than the unborn. Or they consider "not being pregnant" to be more valuable than the developing human in their womb. We, rather, should value all human persons equally. Or better, we should value others above ourselves.
- (3) Jesus called us to act with mercy toward those in need. It is not enough for us to feel bad that over a million unborn children die to abortion every year, we should act as to do something about it. Feeling bad is not the same as acting with mercy and compassion.
- (4) Jesus taught by example that it is unjust for those with more power to mistreat or take advantage of those with less. While this is not the main point of the Good Samaritan parable, it is taught throughout the book of Luke, as Jesus welcomes and ministers to those who are mistreated by the powerful. Abortion is a prime example where those with more powerful mistreat those without any power. Those with more power are the abortionists or the mothers who do not want to be inconvenienced by a child. Those without power are the tiny human beings growing in the womb, who will be violently slaughtered and removed from the only place that can sustain their lives.