

## Luke 10:25-37

<sup>25</sup> On one occasion an expert in the law stood up to test Jesus. “Teacher,” he asked, “what must I do to inherit eternal life?” <sup>26</sup> “What is written in the Law?” he replied. “How do you read it?”

<sup>27</sup> He answered, “‘Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your strength and with all your mind’<sup>[a]</sup>; and, ‘Love your neighbor as yourself.’<sup>[b]</sup>” <sup>28</sup> “You have answered correctly,” Jesus replied. “Do this and you will live.” <sup>29</sup> But he wanted to justify himself, so he asked Jesus, “And who is my neighbor?”

<sup>30</sup> In reply Jesus said: “A man was going down from Jerusalem to Jericho, when he was attacked by robbers. They stripped him of his clothes, beat him and went away, leaving him half dead. <sup>31</sup> A priest happened to be going down the same road, and when he saw the man, he passed by on the other side. <sup>32</sup> So too, a Levite, when he came to the place and saw him, passed by on the other side. <sup>33</sup> But a Samaritan, as he traveled, came where the man was; and when he saw him, he took pity on him. <sup>34</sup> He went to him and bandaged his wounds, pouring on oil and wine. Then he put the man on his own donkey, brought him to an inn and took care of him. <sup>35</sup> The next day he took out two denarii<sup>[c]</sup> and gave them to the innkeeper. ‘Look after him,’ he said, ‘and when I return, I will reimburse you for any extra expense you may have.’

<sup>36</sup> “Which of these three do you think was a neighbor to the man who fell into the hands of robbers?” <sup>37</sup> The expert in the law replied, “The one who had mercy on him.” Jesus told him, “Go and do likewise.”

A PASTOR NAMED KEN COLLINS, USED THE GAME OF MONOPOLY TO HIGHLIGHT HOW CHRISTIANS SHOULD TREAT OTHER PEOPLE.

HE EXPLAINED THAT THERE ARE BASICALLY TWO TYPES OF PLAYERS- THE FIRST KIND PLAY THE GAME VERY SERIOUSLY.

THEY ARE FIERCELY COMPETITIVE, AND SEE WINNING AS THE MOST IMPORTANT THING. PERHAPS EVEN MORE IMPORTANT THAN HAVING FUN.

FOR THEM IT IS ALL ABOUT GETTING AS MUCH PROPERTY AS THEY CAN, WHICH MEANS SHOWING NO MERCY, SO THEY CAN COME OUT AHEAD OF EVERYONE ELSE.

THE OTHER TYPE OF PLAYER, KNOWS THAT THE GAME IS ONLY A GAME. THEY DO THEIR BEST, BUT PLAY ONLY FOR FUN.

THEY PLAY KNOWING-WIN, LOSE OR DRAW, EVERYTHING GOES BACK IN THE BOX WHEN THE GAME IS OVER.

AND SO, THEY CAN AFFORD TO LOSE, BECAUSE THEY UNDERSTAND IT IS ONLY A GAME.

WHEN IT COMES TO MONOPOLY AS A METAPHOR FOR REAL LIFE, CHRISTIANS NEED TO UNDERSTAND THAT “WINNING” THE GAME IS NOT THE POINT, BUT RATHER HOW WE PLAY.

REMEMBER THE APOSTLE PAUL EQUATED THE CHRISTIAN JOURNEY TO A RACE IN 2 TIMOTHY 4:7-8.

“I HAVE FOUGHT THE GOOD FIGHT, I HAVE FINISHED THE RACE, I HAVE KEPT THE FAITH.

FINALLY, THERE IS LAID UP FOR ME THE CROWN OF RIGHTEOUSNESS, WHICH THE LORD, THE RIGHTEOUS JUDGE, WILL GIVE TO ME ON THAT DAY, AND NOT TO ME ONLY BUT ALSO TO ALL WHO HAVE LOVED HIS APPEARING.”

NOTE THAT THE PURPOSE OF THE RACE IS NOT TO WIN, BUT TO RUN WITH INTEGRITY OF FAITH REVEALED IN BELIEF AND BEHAVIOR, AND TO PERSEVERE UNTIL YOU FINISH.

THE CROWN, THE APOSTLE WRITES ABOUT IS NOT THE PRIZE HE OR WE HAVE WON, BUT IS WHAT JESUS HAS WON FOR US, AND BESTOWS UPON ALL WHO CROSS THE LINE TO HIM.

TO THAT END, PSALM 25 OFFERS A PRAYER FOR OUR LIFE'S JOURNEY, WHICH SEEKS GOD'S GUIDANCE.

“MAKE ME TO KNOW YOUR WAYS, O LORD; TEACH ME YOUR PATHS. LEAD ME IN YOUR TRUTH, AND TEACH ME, FOR YOU ARE THE GOD OF MY SALVATION.”

THIS BRINGS US TO THE GOSPEL STORY AND THE SAVIOR'S COMMAND FOR US TO TREAT OTHERS WITH THE LOVE AND COMPASSION, GOD SHOWS TO US.

THE LAWYER'S QUESTION TO JESUS CONCERNED WHAT JESUS, AS SOMEONE WHO WAS CLAIMING TO SPEAK FOR GOD AND HIS WILL, SAID WAS NEEDED TO INHERIT ETERNAL LIFE.

SINCE IT WAS A LAWYER WHO ASKED, THE SAVIOR'S REPLY WAS TO HAVE HIM RECITE THAT SUMMARY OF THE LAW.

THE LAWYER REPLIED WITH THE TEACHINGS FOUND IN DEUTERONOMY 6:3 AND LEVITICUS 19:18.

TOGETHER THE MESSAGE OF THESE TWO VERSES COMPOSE WHAT JESUS TAUGHT IS THE GREATEST COMMANDMENT. THEY DECLARE:

“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 LEVITICUS SAYS- “...LOVE YOUR NEIGHBOR AS YOURSELF. I AM THE LORD.”

THE LAWYER, AS WE HEARD, UNDERSTOOD THAT IT IS THIS LOVE WHICH IS THE UNDERLYING BASIS OF THE TEN COMMANDMENTS, AND ALL OTHER BIBLICAL LAW.

BUT THEN, HE CHALLENGED JESUS TO INTERPRET WHAT GOD MEANT BY NEIGHBOR. IN OTHER WORDS, WHO IS IT HE MUST LOVE AS A NEIGHBOR, IN ORDER TO FULFILL GOD'S LAW?

THE LAYMAN'S COMMENTARY ON LUKE INTERPRETS THE MOTIVATION FOR THAT QUESTION IN THIS WAY:

“THE LAWYER'S QUESTION FOCUSED ON THE WORTHINESS OF THE OBJECT, THE PERSON TO LOVE, RATHER THAN ON THE CONDITION OF THE HEART OF THE ONE WHO IS DOING THE LOVING.”

JESUS REVERSES THIS PERSPECTIVE. HE TEACHES IT IS THE CONDITION OF OUR OWN HEARTS THAT MATTER MORE.

TRULY, IT IS THE LOVE GOD PUTS WITHIN US THAT ENABLES US TO BE A NEIGHBOR EVEN TO A STRANGER OR AN ENEMY.

SO LET US RECOGNIZE OUR NEED TO SEEK THE HOLY SPIRIT'S HELP TO TRANSFORM OUR HEARTS AND MINDS.

CHRIST'S CALL TO LOVE IS ONE REASON WE NEED TO HEAR AND UNDERSTAND THE SAVIOR'S RESPONSE TO THE LAWYER, FOR IT ALSO APPLIES TO US.

THE PARABLE OF THE GOOD SAMARITAN IS JESUS' ANSWER TO THE LAWYER'S QUESTIONS.

THE STORY IS MEANT TO MOTIVATE THOSE WHO HEAR IT TO LOVE OTHERS AS GOD INTENDS.

AND IT IS IN THE SAVIOR'S DESCRIPTION OF THE REACTION OF THE SAMARITAN TO THE WOUNDED AND DYING MAN THAT THE KEY TO JESUS' VIEW OF LOVING IS FOUND.

AS WE HEARD IN THE READING, A MAN IS ATTACKED, STRIPPED, AND LEFT FOR DEAD, ON A ROAD THAT WAS NOTORIOUS FOR ATTACKS BY BANDS OF THIEVES.

A PRIEST AND LEVITE BOTH PASS BY THE MAN, WITHOUT GIVING HIM ANY HELP. HOWEVER, EACH OF THEM MAY HAVE HAD A GOOD REASON NOT TO STOP.

THE PRIEST IN PARTICULAR, MIGHT HAVE WORRIED ABOUT BECOMING UNCLEAN BY TOUCHING A DEAD BODY, OR SOMEONE OTHERWISE UNCLEAN.

EACH OF MAN MAY ALSO HAVE BEEN AFRAID THAT IF HE STOPPED TO HELP, HE MIGHT BE ATTACKED.

OR THEY COULD HAVE BEEN IN A HURRY AND FELT THEY HAD NO TIME TO STOP FOR A STRANGER, WHO WAS PROBABLY BEYOND HELP ANYWAY.

THEN THE SAMARITAN COMES ALONG, AND HE HAS THE CHARACTER TRAIT OF COMPASSION THE OTHERS LACKED.

HIS COMPASSION IS ALL THE MORE SIGNIFICANT BECAUSE JEWS AND SAMARITANS CONSIDERED THEMSELVES TO BE ENEMIES.

SAMARITANS WERE THOSE WHO HAD BOTH JEWISH AND NON-JEWISH ANCESTORS- SO WERE CONSIDERED HALF-BREEDS.

THEY BELIEVED IN AND WORSHIPED THE GOD OF ISRAEL, BUT NOT IN THE TEMPLE OF JERUSALEM. THIS WAS TRUE MOSTLY BECAUSE THE SAMARITANS WERE NOT WELCOMED THERE.

BUT ANOTHER REASON WAS BECAUSE THEY HAD SOME DIFFERENT RITUALS THAN THE JEWS.

THEREFORE, IN THE MINDS OF MOST RELIGIOUS JEWS, AND MANY ORDINARY ONES, THE SAMARITANS WERE OUTSIDERS, AND NOT PART OF GOD'S COVENANT WITH ISRAEL.

THIS IS WHY JESUS' CHOICE TO MAKE THE SAMARITAN THE HERO OF THE STORY WAS SHOCKING.

THIS WAS ESPECIALLY TRUE SINCE HE WAS SHOWN TO DEMONSTRATE GOD'S COMMAND TO LOVE YOUR NEIGHBOR AS YOURSELF BETTER THAN EITHER THE PRIEST OR LEVITE.

THE LAWYER, SOMEWHAT RELUCTANTLY WE MAY IMAGINE, AFFIRMED THIS IN HIS ANSWER BY SAYING THE ONE WHO SHOWED MERCY WAS THE NEIGHBOR.

NOW WE COME TO THE HARDEST PART OF THE PARABLE, WHICH IS THE FACT JESUS SAYS- "GO AND DO LIKEWISE."

WHAT MAKES THIS CHALLENGING TO US IS THE FACT THE BIBLE APPLIES THIS COMMAND OF SAVIOR TO US, AS WELL.

IN OTHER WORDS, JESUS WANTS HIS FOLLOWERS TO FOCUS ON HOW WE RELATE TO OTHERS AS WELL AS TO GOD.

TO RETURN TO THE OPENING ILLUSTRATION ABOUT MONOPOLY, IT IS NOT WHETHER WE WIN, LOSE, OR DRAW THAT MATTERS, BUT HOW WE PLAY THE GAME.

THUS, JESUS TEACHES US IT IS NOT ABOUT HAVING A WINNING STRATEGY FOR LIFE, THAT MATTERS.

INSTEAD, THE SAVIOR SAYS THAT RIGHT ACTION IS MORE IMPORTANT THAN RIGHT BELIEF.

AFTER ALL IT IS IN CHRIST ALONE WE HAVE VICTORY IN LIFE AND IN DEATH, SINCE IT IS HE WHO PROVIDES US WITH FORGIVENESS AND NEW LIFE.

THIS DOES NOT MEAN BELIEF IS UNIMPORTANT, SINCE SCRIPTURE MAKES IT CLEAR THAT SALVATION IS BY FAITH IN CHRIST AS LORD AND SAVIOR.

BUT JESUS' POINT, WHICH IS BACKED UP IN MANY PLACES IN SCRIPTURE, IS THAT FAITH AND ACTION BELONG TOGETHER. REMEMBER OUR DEEDS ARE SIGNS OF OUR BELIEF.

FURTHERMORE, ACTING IN LOVING AND COMPASSIONATE WAYS PLEASES GOD MORE THAN PROCLAIMING OUR FAITH IN THE IMPORTANCE OF SHOWING LOVE AND COMPASSION.

THEREFORE ACTIONS, IN GOD'S SIGHT, SPEAK AS LOUD, IF NOT LOUDER THAN THOUGHTS OR WORDS.

REMEMBER, JESUS SAYS "GO AND DO LIKEWISE", NOT AS A WAY FOR US TO EARN ETERNAL LIFE, BUT AS A WAY FOR US TO DEMONSTRATE OUR THANKFULNESS TO GOD.

THUS, WE FIND THAT BY JESUS USING A SAMARITAN AS A MODEL FOR BEING A NEIGHBOR, HE WAS TEACHING THAT IT IS NOT WHO WE ARE, BUT WHAT WE DO OR DO NOT DO, THAT MATTERS.

IT IS COMPASSION AND KINDNESS THAT ARE THE KEY CHARACTERISTICS OF BEING A NEIGHBOR TO SOMEONE.

OF COURSE, NO MATTER HOW ONE DESCRIBES IT-KINDNESS, BEING NEIGHBORLY, DEMONSTRATING LOVE-OFTEN REQUIRES A SACRIFICE.

THIS MAY MERELY BE THE GIVING OF SOME TIME OR A LITTLE MONEY, FOOD, OR SOMETHING ELSE. BUT SOMETIMES IT MAY INVOLVE A LOT MORE.

KINDNESS MAY ALSO REQUIRE A LONGER COMMITMENT, OR A GREATER AMOUNT OF MONEY. SOMETIMES IT MIGHT EVEN INVOLVE A RISK TO OUR REPUTATION OR PHYSICAL SAFETY.

THIS MEANS, THE PRACTICAL LOVE OF OTHERS WILL AT TIMES INCONVENIENCE US, WHICH IS ANOTHER LESSON FOUND IN THIS PARABLE.

THIS PARABLE CAN ALSO BE USED AS A TYPE OF SPIRITUAL ROAD MAP, OR G.P.S. THAT GOD PROVIDES TO DIRECT US ON THE WAY OF LOVE, SHOWN THROUGH KINDNESS AND COMPASSION.

IN THIS STORY JESUS CHALLENGES US TO OPEN OURSELVES UP TO THE TRANSFORMING POWER OF GOD'S LOVE.

HERE IS A STORY THAT OFFERS AN EXAMPLE OF A GROUP OF CHRISTIANS, WHO WERE UNEXPECTEDLY TRANSFORMED TO LOVE MORE FULLY AND FREELY.

A CHRISTIAN YOUTH GROUP FROM INDIANA WENT ON A MISSION TRIP TO NEW YORK WHERE THEY WORKED AT A CAMP.

THEY TOOK A BREAK TO GO INTO NYC FOR A DAY, BRINGING A BAG LUNCH WITH THEM.

THE TEENS WERE AMAZED BY THE CITY, BUT ALSO SURPRISED BY THE NUMBER OF HOMELESS PEOPLE THEY ENCOUNTERED.

THERE, THEY LEARNED IT IS ONE THING TO KNOW SOME THING LIKE HOMELESSNESS EXISTS, BUT QUITE ANOTHER TO WITNESS IT, ESPECIALLY ON SUCH A LARGE SCALE.

FINALLY, ONE GIRL IN THE GROUP ASKED IF SHE COULD GIVE HER LUNCH TO SOMEONE.

THE GROUP LEADERS RESPONDED THAT IT WAS UP TO HER. SHE COULD DO SO IF SHE WISHED TO GO WITHOUT LUNCH.

SO, SHE HELD OUR HER BAG LUNCH TO A MAN AND ASKED IF HE WOULD LIKE A SANDWICH, HE NODDED AND TOOK IT.

SOON OTHER YOUTH AND EVEN ADULTS IN THE GROUP ALSO GAVE THEIR LUNCHESES AWAY.

BY THEIR SPONTANEOUS ACT OF KINDNESS THOSE YOUNG PEOPLE AND THEIR LEADERS WERE BLESSED FAR MORE THAN THEY WERE BY THE PLANNED MISSION WORK.

NO, THEY DID NOT CHANGE THE WORLD, NOR EVEN IMPROVE THE LIVES OF THOSE TO WHOM THEY GAVE THEIR LUNCHESES, BEYOND THAT ONE MEAL.

BUT THEY DID BECOME, FOR THAT ONE DAY AT LEAST, A NEIGHBOR TO THE HOMELESS PEOPLE WHO ACCEPTED A MEAL FROM THEM.

AND ACCORDING TO SCRIPTURE- BY GIVING A MEAL TO A STRANGER IN NEED, THEY NOT ONLY SHOWED THE LOVE OF CHRIST TO THAT PERSON, THEY ALSO SHOWED LOVE TO JESUS HIMSELF.

OUR CHALLENGE IS TO ALLOW THE TRANSFORMING POWER OF GOD'S LOVE, JESUS' EXAMPLE, AND THE HOLY SPIRIT'S BLESSING TO MAKE US NEIGHBORS TO ALL WHOM WE MEET.

THE WAY WE DO THIS IS TO RECOGNIZE OUR OWN NEED FOR GOD, AND TO WELCOME THE LOVE GOD PUTS IN OUR HEARTS.

LET US PRAY: HELP US, O GOD, TO FEEL ANEW THE LOVE YOU HAVE PUT IN OUR HEARTS. AND HELP US TO BE A NEIGHBOR WHO SHARES THE LOVE OF CHRIST WITH ALL WE MEET. AMEN

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