

## The Parables of Jesus

### Lesson 9

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

Sometimes we think we have life figured out and don't really need to learn the lessons we learned as children. However, our sinful hearts over time corrupt our beliefs and activities. The parable of the good Samaritan can teach, re-teach, or remind even the wisest of souls.

#### Setting for the Parable

Jesus taught the parable of the good Samaritan in response to the religious leaders who were badgering him and attempting to trap him. The key thought of this parable is actually found in Micah 6:8, "He has shown you, O mortal, what is good. And what does the Lord require of you? To act justly and to love mercy and to walk humbly with your God."

The main message really isn't a hard principle but the sinful nature we're stuck with freezes our hearts to our neighbors. Fortunately, a frozen heart can be thawed by the working of the Holy Spirit. If we're serious about being a disciple of Jesus, we need to pay real attention to this simple yet critical message.

#### Telling of the Parable

The parable of the good Samaritan contains four main characters who represent all people. It should make you wonder immediately by which one you are represented. This is one reason why Jesus was such a great story teller. He drew people into the story immediately and effectively.

The Jewish man who was beaten represents people who need help. The Priest and Levite who ignore the man represent hypocrites and the Samaritan represents a model Christian.

The parable tells of a Jewish man who was walking along the road to Jericho from Jerusalem. It was a dangerous path to travel, especially alone. The road was notorious for its criminals. Suddenly, he was ambushed by a group of thugs. He was stripped naked, mercilessly beaten and left half dead along the side of the road.

The story then shares that a Jewish priest walked by the bruised and bloody man. The priest glanced but immediately looked away, quickly veering to the other side of the road. The priest lacked any type of concern for the victim. He had his own personal matters swirling in his head, his own agenda in place and didn't have time for helping anyone. He showed no compassion for the man...not even showing the heart to give him a drink of water.

Jesus then teaches that another man drew close to the scene of the beating. This Levite walked up to the victim, looked at him for a moment, then turned and walked to the other side of the road. This man showed a moment of pity, a hint of compassion but then excused himself from the terrible scene because of more important matters. Neither of these two men wanted to get involved with such a mess.

No doubt they had their excuses. They could have been late for some aspect of work, maybe a meeting. They may have suspected that the thieves were still nearby waiting to pounce on them as

well. Maybe they lacked materials to take care of the victim. God only knows what their lame excuses were. Hypocrites talk about religion but real Christians help others in need. Make sure you understand the difference.

Jesus then describes the scene when an otherwise despised Samaritan nears the victim. Jews and Samaritans disliked...even hated...each other. A person of that time listening to Jesus tell this parable would have, no doubt, expected the Samaritan to add a couple of kicks to the already fallen Jewish victim. This, of course, is not how the story goes.

The Samaritan sees the beaten Jew and stoops down beside him. He feels great compassion for the man, cleaning up his wounds and dressing them with bandages. Not stopping there, the good Samaritan placed the man on his donkey and brought him to the nearest inn. The two stayed overnight with the Samaritan nursing the man back to health. Later the next day, the Samaritan left the inn but told the innkeeper to allow the man to stay as long as needed. The Samaritan told him if the money wasn't enough, he would stop and pay the remainder of the bill the next time he passed through.

### **Meaning of the Parable**

This parable contains an important message for us. If you remember, Jesus asked the religious "expert" what the Scriptures say about acquiring eternal life. The answer given was, "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 Love your neighbor as yourself." Jesus responded, "That is the right answer." This religious "expert" then asks, "Who is my neighbor?"

In answer Jesus shares this parable after which he asks, "Now which of the three men was a neighbor to the victim?" The answer...of course, "The one who showed mercy." Jesus responds by telling the religious man to "go and do the same."

Did you notice how Jesus turned the question upside down? This is important in understanding His message. The religious leader's question was passive in nature but Jesus turned it into an active question. We must learn to ask, "To whom can I become a neighbor?" as opposed to asking, "Who is my neighbor?" This places us in an active role as Christians...becoming real neighbors.

This was quite an eye opening story to the Jews but it should be to us as well. Jesus broke all the barriers down with this parable. Jesus is clearly and loudly telling us here that our neighbors are people in need...regardless of who they are.

That pretty much says it all doesn't it? It shouldn't matter to us about gender, appearance, race, situation or anything else. The most basic of all commands to us is that we love our neighbor as our self. Our neighbor is anyone who needs help and if we help them we love them. I cannot add any more words to this simple teaching by Jesus.

## **Get This!**

The parable of the good Samaritan reveals how we are to live our Christian lives. We should focus first on God and then on others. We have to show them love by helping them when they are in need.

God places us directly in the path of hurting people. Which of the travelers are you? Do you not want to be bothered? Do you keep from becoming involved in something that may throw you off schedule? Are you too tight with your money to share with someone who is hungry? Maybe, like the priest in the parable of the Good Samaritan, you hardly give thought to that other person. I hope not. I hope you're like the good Samaritan.