

## **The Good Samaritan**

Randy Martono-Chai

GBST 163 – Survey of the New Testament I

August 1, 2016

Jesus Christ told a story as recorded in Luke 10 that reflect a theme of common sense mercy and love towards one another, just as God has shed forgiveness to our unclean spirits. Our state of the world is in absolute chaos, tarnished with political corruption and stigma that there are groups of “us” and “them” which also puts boundaries toward Christ-like love. Despite social labels based on ethnic origin, spiritual values, economic prowess, and other divisive terms, mankind has the potential to do good in the world, just as the Good Samaritan demonstrated in this didactic tale that utilizes the social relations between Samaritans and Jews to illustrate the extent of God’s love and the love he challenges both his followers and enemies to give.

### **Synopsis of the Good Samaritan**

Christ’s parable of the Good Samaritan was prompted by a challenging question from a lawyer. According to the Gospel of Luke, this lawyer asked Christ what must one do to inherit eternal life. In turn, Christ responded to the lawyer by asking him what is written in the law of the land at the time.<sup>1</sup> Then the lawyer replied by saying that one must love God with all one’s heart, soul, strength, and mind and to love one’s neighbor as oneself, in which Christ replied by concluding that that was all necessary in order to live in heaven forever. Essentially, this referred to the principles behind God’s Golden Rule.<sup>2</sup> Furthermore, the lawyer pressed further and asked Christ what he meant when he mentioned a person’s own neighbors, which led to Christ telling the story of the Good Samaritan in parable form.

In the parable, there was a man going down from Jerusalem to Jericho. Robbers assaulted, looted, and deserted him for dead. After some time, a priest eventually came down the same pathway, but when he saw the man who was robbed, he ignored and avoided him by passing him by on the other side. A Levite passed by as well and did the same thoughtless action

---

1. *Holy Bible*.

2. Snodgrass, Klyne. *Stories with Intent: A Comprehensive Guide to the Parables of Jesus*, 87.

as the priest. Then a Samaritan, from a race that was despised by the Jews, saw the hurt man and demonstrated his compassion for him and committed time, resources, and energy to restore the beaten man's life. He poured oil and wine on the stranded man's wounds and bandaged them. With his donkey, the Samaritan then carried him to an inn and cared for him. On the morning after, the Samaritan paid the innkeeper two denarii to look after and care for the man and promised to reimburse for any other expenses to aid in the man's recovery.<sup>3</sup>

Christ then turned to the lawyer and asked him which of the three men who interacted with the robbed man represented a genuine model for a good neighbor. As a response, the lawyer chose the one who acted upon mercy to the man, the Samaritan. Then Christ advised him to go and do the same, and by doing so, expanded the meaning of the word "neighbor." He meant for the word to not be used exclusively for anyone who lives directly next to someone, but really anyone who is in need of help.<sup>4</sup> Thus, when someone helps another person, in turn that someone is helping God.

### **Context to Christ's Parable**

Outside of Luke's account of witnessing Christ's message to the man of law, a copious amount of details to consider in light of this parable, including its high authentic regards among other parables, the real-life parallels in accordance to the Samaritan and Jewish peoples, and the multilayered audience to which this didactic story is intended for which includes essentially everybody.<sup>5</sup> What remains the most resonant of this parable is the depth of Christ's words of wisdom towards moral philosophy.

This particular didactic tale is highly regarded by some scholars as an authentic parable

---

3. *Holy Bible*.

4. Snodgrass, *Stories with Intent: A Comprehensive Guide to the Parables of Jesus*, 90.

5. *Ibid*, 67.

of Christ.<sup>6</sup> In another words, it is likely that the spiritual being in physical form of Christ begot this educational tale and without bias from an actual human soul, despite its written form made by a human. However on the other hand, parables may also be seen as mere tales with good morals, and this parable, along with any other that is found in the Gospels could be deemed tastefully fictional.<sup>7</sup> Furthermore, with regards to the historicity of the tale, Ma'ale Adummim, a town in between Jerusalem and Jericho, is identified by tradition as the site of the inn where the Good Samaritan helped the man in need.<sup>8</sup> If the parable actually so happened to be based on a true story, this would be the place as to where the Samaritan brought the injured man.

Christ utilizes the relations between the Jews and Samaritans to exemplify the extent of manifesting compassion and kindness while alluding to the current sociopolitical unrest in the geographical area. People of Samaria resided in an area sandwiched between the Galilee to the north and Judea to the south. They were despised by the Jewish people because they did not observe the Mosaic Law strictly. Furthermore, they intermarried with other peoples outside the Jewish faith and blood.<sup>9</sup> Thus, there were schisms, as there always have been, in the communities that existed millennia ago, which became the motive that connected with Christ's audience and created a bigger impact because of that.

Christ's audience is noted as a lawyer, but scholars have drawn to conclude that Christ also intended his message to reach the large of his followers and the world. Perhaps, it is those who, like the lawyer, are assumably intelligent and seek to challenge the framework of God's philosophy of life.<sup>10</sup> It is definitely geared towards those who seek retribution or entitlement or overindulge in the sense of nationalism. In essence, this message is for all of human race in this

---

6. Bauckham, *Jesus and the Eyewitnesses*, 98.

7. *Ibid*, 104.

8. Snodgrass, *Stories with Intent: A Comprehensive Guide to the Parables of Jesus*, 90.

9. Bauckham, Richard. *Jesus and the Eyewitnesses*, 119.

10. Snodgrass, *Stories with Intent: A Comprehensive Guide to the Parables of Jesus*, 93.

modern world. For Luke, his purpose in writing all of Christ's parables was to provide written proof of Christ's authenticity through sound philosophies and genuine spiritual values.

### **Analysis and Application of the Parable's Theme**

Christ intended for his audience to understand that through the naked eye, one cannot understand the vast scope of God's divine mercy and universal kindness, such that being a good neighbor could also mean being a good neighboring state or neighboring community. It could also mean being a model church or global regime as well.<sup>11</sup> He not only implies the synonymy between love and neighborliness, but repudiates tribalism and advocates kindness, mercy, and respect even amongst enemies and strangers.<sup>12</sup>

Another interpretation of the parable identifies this Good Samaritan character with Christ, who was rejected by most others with sociopolitical power, and the stranded traveler with every person incapable of saving himself or herself. In a sense, this is the tool that Christ used to connect with people during his time on earth; through story, he taught philosophical and spiritual principles that impact the core of Jewish values and enlightened a movement with enough momentum that created the Early Church.<sup>13</sup> By implying the power of God and his choice to show mercy to his human creation, Christ further strengthened the embodiment of the parable's theme. Because he pointed out a glaring error in the authorities that governed the people of his time and land, he justified his message that people should not be enemies tear each other down, but comrades of one single human race who build each other up. Such is not the way in the current state of the world.

Tribalism is the key factor that goads prejudice, which in turn incites fear and violence;

---

11. Wilmington, *Wilmington's Guide to the Bible*, 203.

12. Snodgrass, *Stories with Intent: A Comprehensive Guide to the Parables of Jesus*, 120.

13. Bauckham, *Jesus and the Eyewitnesses*, 143.

the ramification of such is global-scale war. Everybody thinks they are the “good guy,” or the person or group of people who have a just cause to their mission and actions.<sup>14</sup> Additionally, greed has led to political corruption and an imbalance in social and economic equality. If the human race were to rid of these weaknesses, or at least implement governmental control, there would be neither war nor high demand for military force; there would be no poor, quality of life would ideally improve, and mission work for Christianity and other peace-promoting religious institutions would thrive upon the grace as demonstrated by the Good Samaritan and Christ. There would be no need to hold back in giving to the needy and helping others at a global scale for the betterment of the human race altogether.

A major factor that incites this same prejudice against outsiders from any given group of people is the towering industry built around corporate media.<sup>15</sup> Not only do political scientists deem their press coverage as unhealthy and biased, but they also incite fear, blemish the whole truth, and go against the morals that are illuminated in this parable of the Good Samaritan. Corporate media, along with politicians and lobbyists, actively choose to cause unnecessary fear and hasty generalizations from the public, which lead to attitudes similar to that of the Levite and priest who chose to avoid the injured man in need.

### **Commonalities With Other Biblical Lessons**

Christ’s parable of the Good Samaritan is easily relatable to other scriptural messages. He exemplifies the importance of kindness and respect when it comes to relationships. Such is the Golden Rule and a number of other lessons, some found in other of Christ’s parables, that share the same themes or motives as the Good Samaritan.<sup>16</sup> There are far more parables than there is to

---

14. Bauckham, *Jesus and the Eyewitnesses*, 230.

15. Croteau, David, and William Hoynes. *The Business of Media: Corporate Media and the Public Interest*, 19.

16. Wilmington, Harold L. *Great Truths from God's Word*, 159-216.

summarize, but two that perhaps best resonate with the Good Samaritan are the parable of the Prodigal Son. Nonetheless, all of Christ's teachings embody the Golden Rule.

Christ based this theme on the Golden Rule, which is found in the Gospels of Matthew and Luke and essentially states that one must treat others as one would like to be treated.<sup>17</sup> Christ referred to the law of the land and spiritual leaders, but this is applicable to the entire human race.<sup>18</sup> In the parable of the Good Samaritan, the protagonist helped a fallen man who was robbed and manifested these desired qualities in a decent man, despite hurdles, such as social norms and relationships. There is no expectance to see any compensation to the Samaritan's good deeds, but one could imagine proper gratefulness.

Just as in the parable of the Prodigal Son, the Good Samaritan illustrated that God's love also includes stewardship, forgiveness, and unconditional generosity. When the Prodigal Son left home with his inheritance, he lost it and became poor, as he would have been without living under his father's roof. However, once he returned, his father embraced him, despite hesitation from his brother. Thus, Jesus wants his followers to understand that is important to give wholeheartedly, just like the Prodigal Son's father and the Good Samaritan.

---

17. Gundry, Robert H. *A Survey of the New Testament*, 178.

18. Snodgrass, Klyne. *Stories with Intent: A Comprehensive Guide to the Parables of Jesus*, 69.

19. *Ibid*, 124.

## Bibliography

Bauckham, Richard. *Jesus and the Eyewitnesses*. Grand Rapids, MI: William B. Eerdmans Pub., 2006.

Croteau, David, and William Hoynes. *The Business of Media: Corporate Media and the Public Interest*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Pine Forge Press, 2001.

Gundry, Robert H. *A Survey of the New Testament*. 5th ed. Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2012.

*Holy Bible: New International Version*. Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2005.

Snodgrass, Klyne. *Stories with Intent: A Comprehensive Guide to the Parables of Jesus*. Grand Rapids, MI: William B. Eerdmans Pub., 2008.

Wilmington, Harold L. *Great Truths from God's Word*. Forest, VA: Publishers Solution, 2011.

Wilmington, Harold L. *Wilmington's Guide to the Bible*. Forest, VA: Publishers Solution, 2011.