

Go and Do Likewise.

[Read Luke 10:25-37 NRSV]

²⁵Just then a lawyer stood up to test Jesus. "Teacher," he said, "what must I do to inherit eternal life?" ²⁶He said to him, "What is written in the law? What do you read there?" ²⁷He 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." ²⁸And he said to him, "You have given the right answer; do this, and you will live." ²⁹But wanting to justify himself, he asked Jesus, "And who is my neighbor?" ³⁰Jesus replied, "A man was going down from Jerusalem to Jericho, and fell into the hands of robbers, who stripped him, beat him, and went away, leaving him half dead. ³¹Now by chance a priest was going down that road; and when he saw him, he passed by on the other side. ³²So likewise a Levite, when he came to the place and saw him, passed by on the other side. ³³But a Samaritan while traveling came near him; and when he saw him, he was moved with pity. ³⁴He went to him and bandaged his wounds, having poured oil and wine on them. Then he put him on his own animal, brought him to an inn, and took care of him. ³⁵The 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.' ³⁶Which of these three, do you think, was a neighbor to the man who fell into the hands of the robbers?" ³⁷He said, "The one who showed him mercy." **Jesus said to him, "Go and do likewise."**

As a young man I remember traveling with my dad on his business trips. The business trips were usually to far away places like New York City, Chicago, Washington DC, and San Francisco. These trips were full of excitement and potential danger.

I remember reading about how NYC was described in our local paper as dangerous and full of criminals. Several people from the big city of Mocksville warned us to not go out at night or travel at night on the subway.

Once we were in New York City it seemed the warnings were overstated. Everything went well on our trip until late one night when we

needed to get back to our hotel room. We did not have much money so we took the subway.

The subway is convenient and cheap but also potentially dangerous especially at night. To get to the subway required going down several flights of stairs. Several lights were out and it was hard to see. On the way down you encountered many strange odors and noises.

Once you reached the bottom, you bought a ticket and waited for the right train to stop. Only a few people were standing around waiting for a train. I remember feeling uneasy as I looked at all the different people standing around.

A train stopped and we got on an empty car along with a few other people. The train pulled out of the station and people started moving around. Suddenly a stranger entered our car and started asking people for money.

Everyone looked down at the floor. No one wanted to be bothered. There was a sense of fear in the air. Suddenly the beggar approached my dad and asked him for some money. This man was probably a beggar but could have been a robber. We both froze for an instant. My dad reached into his pocket and gave him some money. The beggar thanked my dad and went on to the next car.

The reason I tell you this story is to give you a sense of danger. Jesus tells the story of the Good Samaritan while traveling to Jerusalem. He is

familiar with the road from Jerusalem to Jericho. It is downhill all the way and is approximately 18 miles long. It is filled with caves, boulders, and blind spots. The road is notorious for robbers.

And this road is where Jesus places the story of the Good Samaritan. The road from Jerusalem to Jericho was kind of like how my friends from Mocksville thought of New York City, dangerous, scary and unsafe.

Three Groups

The Good Samaritan is a familiar story. Maybe it is too familiar. As you know, the man encounters three groups of people during his journey: (1) The robbers, (2) the priest and Levite, and (3) the Samaritan. This morning we're going to look at each of these characters, and what we're going to see is that the characters represent 3 different ways of living life.

First, the robbers

The robbers are the folks my dad and I, and all our friends in Mocksville, were afraid of. Luckily, I did not encounter any robbers in New York. But the poor fellow in this story does, and the robbers do three things: (1) they strip the man naked, (2) they beat the man, and (3) they leave the man half dead. They do not care who the man is they only care about themselves. They live by the creed, **"I'll take your life to enrich mine."**

Second, the Priest and the Levite

The Priest and the Levite are like the passengers on the train that do not make eye contact with the beggar. They are the most religious people in the parable and yet they do nothing. We are only told that they come across the wounded man but they move to the other side of the road.

Some scholars have argued that the priest and Levite did not want to become unclean by touching a dead man. All professions have rules and codes of conduct. The fear of becoming ceremonially unclean might be true if they were headed towards Jerusalem but they are headed to Jericho which is away from the Temple. We are left to guess why they did not get involved.

Maybe they were afraid. Maybe the robbers were still around. In the end they do not get involved. Getting involved is costly. They live by the creed, **"I'll live my life and you live yours."** In other words, "I don't care what you do as long as it does not affect me."

Third, the Samaritan

Remember that this story was told in response to a question. The lawyer asked Jesus, "Who is my neighbor?" So Jesus is telling this story, and the lawyer has followed Jesus thus far and now he assumes that the next character will be the hero.

The robbers are the bad guys and the Priest and Levite are unwilling to help. This story has all the marks of being an anti-clerical story. Surely the

hero will be a common Jew. The lawyer and the audience are in for a shock because the next character is a Samaritan.

The Jews hate the Samaritans. The Samaritans split from the Jews and intermarried with the Assyrians. The Samaritans opposed the rebuilding of Jerusalem and the Temple. Just how much did the Jews hate the Samaritans? Imagine that you are a racist and the person that comes to your aid is of another race. A Samaritan is the last person the lawyer expects to be the hero.

The Samaritan

The Samaritan is like the robbers, the priest, and the Levite in that all of them see the man in the road. The main difference is that the Samaritan has love for his fellow man. The Samaritan does six things that express love: (1) he has compassion, (2) he applies oil and wine, to the wounds, (3) he bandages the wounds, (4) he gives up his mount for the wounded man to ride, (5) he checks the man into an inn, and (6) he leaves enough money to restore the man to health. The Samaritan lives by the creed, **“I’ll give my life to enrich yours.”**

Summary

So we have the Robbers, whose creed is, **“I’ll take your life to enrich mine.”** And the Priest and the Levite, whose creed is, **“I’ll live my life and you live yours.”** And then the Samaritan, whose creed is, **“I’ll give my life to enrich yours.”** So, which of these creeds do you live by?

View of God

Let me tell you something you may not have thought of. How we live our own lives is based on how we view God. We are all theologians in that we all have a certain image of God. Some people think that God is like the robber, some think that God is like the priest and Levite, and some think that God is like the Samaritan. Let's take a look at each character and compare their characteristics with our view of God.

God as Robber

Some people see God as the robber. They see an angry and judging God. Their God does not show love or mercy. The robber does not show love or mercy in that the robber takes life from others to enrich the robber.

The people that see God as a robber see a God of rules and punishment. They think that God punishes us here and now. God's narrow and difficult rules take away life just as the robber takes away life. These people react to this image of God by using others for their own pleasure. Their creed is **"I'll take your life to enrich mine."**

God as Priest

Some people think that God is like the priest and the Levite. These people are Deists. They believe in God but they believe in a God that does not interfere with creation. The priest and the Levite do not get involved with the wounded victim. Their lives do not intersect those who are in need. They remain distant. These Deists think that God is distant, that God does

not care, or that God does not get involved with God's creation. They react to this God by minding their own business. Their creed is **"I'll live my life and you live yours."** You live your life the way you want to live it just don't involve me.

God as the Samaritan

Some people think that God is like the Samaritan. (1) The Samaritan stops out of love to save the man's life. Jesus empties himself of his divine prerogative out of love and comes to earth to save creation. (2) The Samaritan has compassion. Jesus sees the crowds and has compassion. (3) The Samaritan heals the wounds of the victim. Jesus heals the sick. (4) The Samaritan carries the victim on his beast of burden. Jesus carries the cross daily loaded with our sins.

(5) The Samaritan provides food and shelter for the victim. Jesus feeds the 5000 after one sermon and 4000 after another sermon and has food left over. Even though Jesus does not have a place to lay his head on earth he tells his disciples that he is going ahead of them to his Father in heaven to prepare a room for them.

(6) The Samaritan tells the innkeeper that he will pay whatever it costs to restore the man to life. Jesus gives his life for us on the cross so we can live. Those who see Jesus as the Samaritan react to this image of God by loving their neighbor as themselves. They live by the creed, "I'll give my life to enrich yours."

Summary

So, what is your image of God? Is your God angry, is your God distant, or is your God a God of love and compassion? Jesus tells the story of the Good Samaritan so we can know what God is really like. Our God is a God of love, compassion, and mercy. Jesus turns the lawyer's self-centered question around from "who is my neighbor?" to a selfless question of "who was the neighbor?" Then Jesus tells the lawyer to ***go and do likewise.***

Good News

The Good News of this passage is that Jesus loves us just as the Samaritan loved the victim of the robbers. Jesus sees us and has compassion. Jesus heals us. Jesus provides food, water, transportation, and shelter. Finally, Jesus provides for our future eternal life. So, how do we respond to this Good News?

Our Response

Our response to God's word is to be a neighbor to those in need. God loves us and sent his only Son, Jesus, into the world to show us his love. Jesus taught his disciples and us that we must love God with everything in our power and love others as ourselves. This type of love is self-giving love. It is sacrificial love.

The Samaritan stopped to help the victim of the robbers out of love and compassion. ***Jesus said, "Go and do likewise."*** The Samaritan bandaged the wounds of the half dead man. ***Jesus said, "Go and do***

likewise." The Samaritan gave up his comfortable ride for the wounded man. ***Jesus said, "Go and do likewise."*** The Samaritan put the homeless man in an Inn. ***Jesus said, "Go and do likewise."*** The Samaritan gave money to restore the beaten man's life. ***Jesus said, "Go and do likewise."***

IN the name of the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, Amen.