

The Good Samaritan
Luke 10:25-37
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What is a parable? It doesn't take long in reading through the Gospel accounts of the Jesus' ministry to learn that he loved to tell parables as a way to teach truths about God. Someone once wrote that Jesus' parables were short stories designed to compare someone in the parable with someone listening to it, and that's what we find in the well-known parable called simply, "The Good Samaritan."

Partway into Jesus' ministry, an expert in the law stood up to challenge Jesus. "Teacher," he asked Jesus, "What must I do to inherit eternal life?" Jesus asked him what was written in the Torah, the Law of Moses. "To love 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."

"That's right," said Jesus, "Do this, and you will live." The lawyer pressed Jesus on the detail: "And who is my neighbor?" And that's when Jesus told a parable; listen to him link his listener into the story- and maybe us as well: [\(read Luke 10:30-37\)](#)

Did you hear Jesus flip the question asked on its head? The lawyer asked for a list of neighbors, while Jesus asked who was being neighbor to the person in need. The lawyer couldn't even bring himself to name the story's hero: "The one who had mercy on him."

Only seeing this parable as encouragement to help those in need is like consuming low-lying fruit; you get the message, but this parable is more challenging than just being

a do-gooder. At that time, Samaritans were pretty universally despised by Jews, and the feeling was mutual. The term, “Good Samaritan” is really an oxymoron- and to those listening to Jesus’ story... there is no such thing as a “good” Samaritan.

In some places, we’re not much different than Jesus’ 1st Century listeners. We come to conclusions about people based on what people wear, and think about them accordingly. For example, in several parts of the world- especially France, there’s been a lot of controversy about women wearing burqas- covering up all but their eyes. No other identifying marks... an Islamic woman, covered head to toe... should they be made to undo their coverings for a driver’s license or identification card- especially in these days heightened terrorist activity? When you see such a woman- maybe it’s a man- how do you feel? What sort of message do you sense, and what’s your response... for example?

Fuller Seminary President Rich Mouw admits to uncertain feelings about people wearing burqas as an expression of their religious belief. A few days after a conversation with a Muslim scholar about the ambiguity among even Muslims about the necessity of burqas on women, Mouw was in an airport about a month ago, sitting at the gate area, waiting for his plane... and God brought him a parable. A young nun, wearing the habit of her community, was sitting nearby. A teenage girl passing by the nun stumbled and dropped some things she was carrying. The nun quickly stepped forward and helped her retrieve her belongings. Mouw saw their eyes meet for a brief moment as the girl thanked the nun for helping. The nun smiled and wished her safe travels. The teenager was wearing a tee-shirt bearing the Satanic symbol of a rock band, and had several tattoos and piercings. It was an interesting brief encounter between two modes of dress that spoke very different messages.

Mouw was glad that the young nun was wearing her habit, and he felt the same way about two Mennonite women, wearing head coverings and long skirts, who passed by a few moments later. In those brief moments in the airport, Mouw resolved to learn to live with some ambivalence about some women's religious practice of wearing a burqa. He realized that there was something deeper involved each case than a woman wearing a habit or a rock-n-roll T-shirt, or head coverings and a long skirt, or a burqa. He felt he'd taken a God-step of compassion toward seeing the people inside the stereotypes that too often govern our internal responses.

That's the lesson Jesus was communicating to his hearers, and it is just as appropriate to us today. Being a good neighbor isn't a matter of looking after those who look like you, or live next door to you. If that's all, we too often become just like the priest hurrying by, afraid of become unclean by touching something that might make us dirty. Many more of us are like that Levite, who just didn't want to get involved. They both knew the law- backwards and forwards. Yet who inherited eternal life... who lived out not the letter, but the spirit of that carefully-studied, well-known section of the Law of Moses... who was neighbor to the person in need? Jesus asked.

Look at the world around us deeper than a burqa or skin color or economic level or political party, Jesus teaches. Being a good neighbor is seeing people in a different way... different than the superficial way we do these days... and show some compassion... no matter how dirty their T-shirt is, or what color their spiked hair might be, or how much rust is on their broken-down old car held together by an Obama for President bumper sticker, or what sort of pricey neighborhood they live in, or the cut of their 3-piece suit, or their Glenn Beck Tea Party decal.

Jesus teaches us that none of those count when it comes to eternal life. The point, Jesus teaches, is that we're to do more than look for a list of things to do or the right people to help... we're to change the way we perceive everyone else around us, and act on that. Rather than loving someone who looks like you- be a good neighbor to someone who needs your help... whether they live in West Chester, or Over-the-Rhine or Laos. As Jesus put it in the Golden Rule: "...do unto others what you want them to do unto you."

Are you open to find those in need around you....around us? Some of you know that we've been reaching out to some kids right here in our own backyard... taking sack lunches down daily to kids over at Gettysburg Estates. Many of these are kids that we've also helped out through the Whiz Kids literacy program over at Adena Elementary. Our church's priority is to reach out and love children of any sort... beyond those we baptize or who come to our VBS or various children's programs. Last year, we provided some special literacy material to both Adena and Shawnee Elementary Schools last year through our Faith in Action fundraising effort... this year, we want to keep it up... going more miles to help out some anonymous kids in need... and I'd like to consider doing your part...

I'd like ask Dave Corfman to join me up front. Dave just returned from an adventure that lives out both last week's message about stretcher-carrying to salvation those who need help, together with this's thought about being open to seeing whoever it is that God brings across your path... he has an amazing story to tell... Dave....