

<http://www.nbcnews.com/nightly-news/video/-buddy-benches-help-thousands-of-lonely-kids-find-friends-947572291963>

Everybody deserves to have a friend. If children can figure out that what people need most are other people then why can't we?

Today's passage is found in Luke chapter ten and beginning in verse twenty-five, it is the familiar story of the Good Samaritan. We can't however appreciate the intended focus of the story without the context that led to Jesus sharing this make-believe story. The story is told in response to a second question raised by a Jewish scholar who studied the Jewish law and tradition. Here the interchange.

25 On one occasion an expert in the law stood up to test Jesus. "Teacher," he asked, "what must I do to inherit eternal life?" 26 "What is written in the Law?" he replied. "How do you read it?" 27 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' (Deuteronomy 6:5) and, 'Love your neighbor as yourself.'" (Leviticus 19:18) 28 "You have answered correctly," Jesus replied. "Do this and you will live."

Our text tells us that this "lawyer" comes to our Lord, asking this question to put Jesus to the test. It is a hypocritical question, because he appears to be a seeker, but he is not. **He is not really seeking to be taught by Jesus, nor is he interested in finding the way to eternal life. He believes he understands all these things.** The question is one of arrogance.

What must he do to share in the resurrection of the righteous? When future blessing comes, how can he be sure that he will receive it? Jesus answers his question with two questions:

26 "What is written in the Law?" he replied. "How do you read it?"

It makes sense to ask a student of the law to respond based on the law. Basically, what is revealed in Scripture about this issue? Does the Scriptures provide an answer to your question? The scholar responds.

27 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’ (Deuteronomy 6:5) and, ‘Love your neighbor as yourself.’ (Leviticus 19:18) 28 “You have answered correctly,” Jesus replied. “Do this and you will live.”

Jesus’ question revealed that the answer to the lawyer’s question is found in the OT. What “is written” is decisive. Jesus affirmed the law. The teaching of the law is definitive.

Jesus affirms the clear and concise answer that the man gives. He challenges him to “do what he knows to do and then he will enjoy eternal life”. The Jewish scholar however is not satisfied with this answer. He wants to justify himself. He is looking for a loophole to make sure that he is covered. So he asked a question of clarity.

29 But he wanted to justify himself, so he asked Jesus, “And who is my neighbor?”

Cultural background: An ancient Jewish book of wisdom, **Sirach 12:1-4**, tells its readers to not help a sinner. Thus the lawyer is attempting to make a distinction. Many Jews didn’t consider enemies their neighbors. He implies that some are neighbors and some are not. Most Jews had a narrow view of who was their neighbor. Responsibility therefore is to only love the true neighbors. I do have “non-neighbors”.

30 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. 31 A priest happened to be going down the same road, and when he saw the man, he passed by on the other side. 32 So too, a Levite, when he came to the place and saw him, passed by on the other side. 33 But a Samaritan, as he traveled, came where the man was; and when he saw him, he took pity on him. 34 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. 35 The next day he took out two denarii 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.'

Jesus therefore tells a story. This is a made up story to make a point. It is a story of a no named traveler who travels from Jerusalem to Jericho. This was a rocky thoroughfare with winding roads through desert and cave like areas. It was a road that was notorious for mischief and treachery. It was an easy spot for those with ill intentions to do harm to innocent people. The man is minding his own business and attempting to travel from point A to point B. But his trip is interrupted by robbers. The robbers stripped him. Beat him continuously and left him for dead on the side of the road.

Jesus has created the tension in the story, now the resolve. A priest travels by on the road. The expectation from those listening is that this story is going to have a happy ending because surely the priest will help. The priest "saw the man" yet chose to do nothing for the man. He crossed to the other side of the road and continued to travel. **There will be no help from the priest.**

Jesus has created a second character who is a Levite. A Levite would have been one who was born from the family of Aaron. He was responsible for important task in the temple where people worshipped God. Surely, the Levite will show love to this man and assist him. His action is grouped with that of the priest by two terms (**so too**) and the reuse of **passed by**. The text suggest that he takes a closer look at the man but still passed by.

Who then will love this dying man? Everything changes as a new man arrives on the scene. This man was a Samaritan. Samaritans were despised by the Jews because they were known as half-breeds, half Jewish and half Gentile. When the Northern Kingdoms were taken captive by the Assyrians, they intermarried with them to settle in the place that is called Samaria, just north of Judea. For a Jew, a Samaritan was among the least respected of people. They have a long history of an adversarial relationship. They would not even walk in Samaria but would go far out of their way, even if it was a longer trip, to avoid entering Samaria because they believed the Samaritans were unclean people. This is precisely why **Jesus mentioned the Samaritan in this parable because he would be the least likely to ever help a fellow Jew** because the **Samaritans also had a hate that was equal to that held by the Jews against the Jewish people because of the way that they were treated by them.**

The Samaritan however is the surprise in the story. He overcomes his hate for Jews and has “pity” on the man. chooses to show love to this man by helping him. The "But a Samaritan, as he traveled, came where the man was; and when he saw him, he took pity on him." (10:33)

The Samaritan traveler doesn't move over to the other side of the road, but when he sees the wounded man he takes pity on him. The word translated "pity" is Greek *splangchizomai*, "**have pity, feel sympathy**," from *splangchnon*, "literally, 'inward parts, entrails' ... figuratively of the seat of the emotions, in our usage 'heart.' "[13] **Love, sympathy, and mercy are motivated by the need of another.**

The Samaritan [the unlikely hero]. **WHAT DID HE DO FOR HIM?**

- Saw the man's condition—heart went out to him
- Gave him first aid (disinfecting and bandaging his wounds)
- Placed him on donkey
- Led him to the inn
- Covered his expenses

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

Jesus indicated that one should worry less about who “who is my neighbor” and more about “am I being a neighbor”. Jesus point was to emulate the Samaritan.

LESSONS FROM THE PASSAGE

1. **ETERNAL LIFE IS GAINED BY FAITH EXPRESSED IN LOVE.** *Galatians 5:6* The way to eternal life is the same in both the OT and the NT. It is by grace through a faith that works in love. “For in Christ, neither our most conscientious religion nor disregard of religion amounts to anything. What matters is something far more interior: faith expressed in love.” The MSG

2. LOVE LEADS ME TO BE A “NEIGHBOR” TO ALL PEOPLE NOT JUST SOME PEOPLE.

Our vertical relationship with God is best seen or expressed through our horizontal relationship with others.

1 John 2:2-11

Here’s how we can be sure that we know God in the right way: Keep his commandments.

If someone claims, “I know him well!” but doesn’t keep his commandments, he’s obviously a liar. His life doesn’t match his words. But the one who keeps God’s word is the person in whom we see God’s mature love. This is the only way to be sure we’re in God. Anyone who claims to be intimate with God ought to live the same kind of life Jesus lived.

My dear friends, I’m not writing anything new here. This is the oldest commandment in the book, and you’ve known it from day one. It’s always been implicit in the Message you’ve heard. On the other hand, perhaps it is new, freshly minted as it is in both Christ and you—the darkness on its way out and the True Light already blazing! Anyone who claims to live in God’s light and hates a brother or sister is still in the dark. It’s the person who loves brother and sister who dwells in God’s light and doesn’t block the light from others. But whoever hates is still in the dark, stumbles around in the dark, doesn’t know which end is up, blinded by the darkness. The Message

Horizontal love supersedes vertical love because horizontal love is evidence of true vertical love. Love for God is demonstrated and authenticated by how we treat others.

ANYBODY CAN “BE A NEIGHBOR”. Samaritan, Jew, etc.

“Neighborliness comes in all shapes and sizes. It is limited only by our failure to see, feel, and respond.” Darrell L. Bock

3. GOD BLESSES DOING NOT KNOWING. “Do this and live” v. 28, 37. James 1:22-25 what we know must be put into practice. Faith at work.

WHAT DOES IT MEAN TO “DO LIKEWISE”? WHAT DOES IT MEAN FOR US TO EMULATE THE SAMARITAN? WHAT DOES A GOOD NEIGHBOR DO?

A. GOOD NEIGHBORS ARE COMPASSIONATE-“PITY”.

It’s easy to become desensitized to the needs and pain of others.

In psychology, desensitization is defined as the diminished emotional responsiveness to a negative, aversive or positive stimulus after repeated exposure to it. It also occurs when an emotional response is repeatedly evoked in situations in which the action tendency that is associated with the emotion proves irrelevant or unnecessary.

ILS. THE MORE THAT I’M EXPOSED TO FOUL LANGUAGE, VIOLENCE, IMMORAL BEHAVIOR, DISRESPECT, ETC. THE LESS SENSITIVE I AM TO IT NOT BEING NORMAL.

The New Normal: America Desensitized to Gun Deaths, Politicians Paralyzed by Gun Lobby
Are we so callous that the loss of life by senseless gun violence is weighed against the age of the victim? Every life lost to gun violence should be counted equally on the conscience of every politician and citizen of the United States until we find a way to stop these senseless deaths.
*Is there so much gun violence, real and make-believe, on our televisions that we’ve just stopped caring? Has real life just become too much like a first-person video game that **we have stopped distinguishing between reality and video games like Grand Theft Auto?***

ILS. 74 was our backyard and a train track was on the other side of the highway. Initially we heard cars and the train. After a while we had become accustomed to it so we no longer paid attention to it. came by we heard it. Open your eyes, ears, and hearts. See, hear, care.

B. GOOD NEIGHBORS GET INVOLVED.

He didn’t pass by. He didn’t stay on the sidelines. He chose to get involved and do what he could do. Choose to get involved in the lives of people. We Can’t

meet every need, but we can meet a need. Could have walked on the other side like the others. Yet he decided to get involved.

WHY DON'T PEOPLE GET INVOLVED? Withholding mercy is essentially an act of **selfishness** or of **self-protection**.

The reality is that I am more the Priest and the Levite than I am the Samaritan?

Its. When we were on Nebraska we owned rental property. During this time we took a chance on partnering to help several men and women get their lives together. The first person that we attempted to help we went overboard as a congregation. We encouraged, supported and nurtured. That person eventually took advantage of the kindness and left. We continued to attempt to help individuals but each time took a little away from us. The lack of success in our eyes caused us to become desensitized and less compassionate. We started expecting the next one to do what the last one did. It became a self-fulfilling prophecy. We eventually tore down the apartments for expansion and stop our efforts. We didn't talk about it but this kind of helping, hands on ministry where we provided housing and invested in the life of a person was not something that we were open to anymore. We just stopped and in our minds we had failed. Several years before we left, I ran into the first gentleman that we attempted to help. He took a moment to say thanks. He thanked the church for their work to help him. He was clean and sober, working a full-time job and doing well. He just smiled and said thanks.

Understand that involvement means sacrifice. It will cost. **It will cost TIME**. **It will cost VULNERABILITY**. It will cost taking the **RISK TO CARE**. It will cost **RESOURCES**. **It is investment with NO GUARANTEES OF THE OUTCOME**, but it is loving because we have been loved.

CONCLUSION:

Jesus did for us what the Samaritan did for this man.

- Saw the man's condition—heart went out to him
- Gave him first aid (disinfecting and bandaging his wounds)
- Placed him on donkey
- Led him to the inn
- Covered his expenses

DISPLAY: LIVING AND LOVING LIKE JESUS

- 1. For the next week, ask yourself these two questions each day.
How can I love God better today than I did yesterday? How can I love my neighbor better today than I did yesterday?**
- 2. Based on what you read about Jesus in the Gospel's, what would it look like for Jesus to live in your neighborhood? Read the Gospel of Luke.**
- 3. Based on what you read about Jesus in the Gospel's, how would Jesus show love to your neighbors.**
- 4. How is my love for God evident in my love for the people around me?**