

On May 8th, 1889, a tired, ill, and unstable Vincent Van Gogh admitted himself to a psychiatric asylum in the south of France. Once a monastery, this psychiatric asylum allowed Van Gogh to spend time on his paintings. He not only painted his surrounding area, but also would copy and modify works from other painters. Adding his own touch on colors, and his unique way of using the brush. Here Van Gogh would modify a number of Rembrandt van Rijn's works, eventually modifying a picture of the Good Samaritan. While Rembrandt rendition uses darker colours to depict a darker tone and very fine lines, Van Gogh took the approach of having bright and lively colours¹. This morning we are going to look at this this parable and the surrounding verse that this painting is depicting.

If you would turn to Luke 10 with me, we will read together starting at verse 25.

PAUSE

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'^[E], and, 'Love your neighbor as yourself.'^[D]" ²⁸ "You have answered correctly," Jesus replied. "Do this and you will live." ²⁹ But he wanted to justify himself, so he asked Jesus, "And who is my neighbor?" 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^[E] 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.'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."

This is the Word of the Lord; Thanks be to God.

PAUSE

It is only within Luke's Gospel account that we find our story in. Matthew and Mark, in addition to Luke make up what's called the Synoptic Gospels, together all three have very similar parables and stories to one another. The initial part of our section today, verses 25-28 are shared with Matthew and Mark and it is normally the section we call the Great Commandment, however unlike those two Gospels, the account we read of in Luke's Gospel goes further and it is where we get the parable of the Good Samaritan. But without the prior context of the experts questions, the story lacks and is not complete. Together Luke ties together one man's question, along with Jesus' teachings and message through this parable for all who could hear to understand. So, let us as an extension of those initial listeners hear this Word.

Our passage here presents itself in two parts:

Part 1

Part 2

¹ <https://www.vincentvangogh.org/the-good-samaritan.jsp>

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| Identification of the Experts Motive | v. 25 | v. 29 |
| The Expert's Question | v. 25 | v. 29 |
| Jesus' Answer and Counter-question | v. 26 | vv.30-36 |
| The Expert's (Appropriate) Reply | v. 27 | v.37a |
| Jesus' Final Word, in the Imperative | v. 28 | v. 37b |

Luke opens by saying that at one point an expert in the law stood up to test Jesus. We do not know when this took place, where it took place, or really who the man was that stood before Jesus. Those details clearly were not important to Luke, and we also need to remember that Luke was not one of the firsthand eyewitnesses. He collected the story of Jesus after Jesus had already returned to heaven post His resurrection. So, for Luke he's going around asking those who were eyewitnesses what they saw and what Jesus had said.

One detail Luke does make clear is that this man was an expert in the law. This is not some random Jewish man who vaguely knows the teachings of the law, but this guy was an expert. An expert, according to Malcolm Gladwell is one who does 10,000 hours which equals roughly 10 years of deliberate practice. This man would deliberately study Scripture and understand and memorize it as it was a part of Jewish culture. So, from this we can probably assume that he is some kind of religious leader, perhaps a pharisee or a priest or a lawyer of some kind, which could be a reason why Jesus notes that one of the three to walk by the injured man is a priest. Could be saying that the man who walked by was like this man asking the questions to Jesus. Nevertheless Luke is only concerned about the fact that he was an expert in the law, he knew scripture. As a Jewish man he would have started memorizing the Torah, the first 5 books of our Bible, from the age of 5 and would have completed memorizing it all around the age of 13 when he would have his Bar Mitzva and be recognized as a man in his society.

PAUSE

This expert, Luke notes, he gets up to test Jesus. He gets up and he says "teacher", which is ironic. This man is challenging Jesus, trying to trick him into saying something that isn't Scripturally sound yet is "respectful" enough to call him teacher which Luke takes notes of. He calls him teacher and then asks him a question that he already knows the answer to. This practice is one that teachers in school still use to this day. "Class, what's it called when plants take light and turns it into nutrients?" "Photosynthesis", someone calls from the class, "Right!". Parents also use it too, although sometimes it's to allow the child to confess to something or explain why their younger sibling came crying to them.

The expert asks the question of how to obtain eternal life, the things he has to *do* to have salvation and make it to heaven, except the expert knows the answer already according to Scripture. Again, this man is not an expert in sheep herding, but an expert in the law. He knows what Scripture states as the way to inherit eternal life but he's trying to trick Jesus into saying something that isn't Scripturally sound. In this moment he is hoping for Jesus to say something that isn't from the Law. He wants Jesus to go "if you hop on one leg in the morning and then the other in the evening. Skip lunch, and make a blood sacrifice to me, then you'll have eternal life. Then you'll have salvation".

Jesus however, as He does so often throughout the Bible, flips the conversation and asks a counter question of the man. He asks the expert a question of the same field he's an expert in.

“You’re an expert in this, what does your expertise in the Law tell you?” Jesus recognizes what this man is trying to do and so he takes control of the flow of the conversation and makes the expert do the work and figure it out.

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In verse 27 we get the response to Jesus’ question where the man says, ‘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.’ If you have your Bible with you, you will note that the man replies with two verses. The first, “Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your strength and with all your mind”, this comes from Deuteronomy 6:5. This is part of a prayer the Jews would pray called the Shema. This passage was fundamental to Jewish life, worship, the temple and synagogues. The Shema is a prayer which was said in the morning and at night. It is an ancient prayer. The man then follows the section from the Shema with “and, ‘Love your neighbor as yourself.’” Which that itself comes from Leviticus 19:18. This expert knows his stuff; he knows the answer.

Jesus himself, in verse 28, says that the man has answered correctly and if he *does* this, love the Lord and love his neighbours, if he does this he will live. Both on this earth but also for eternity. The expert speaks out Jesus’ message of loving God and loving neighbour, however, it is one thing to interpret and speak the law, and another to live it out.

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In Matthew and Mark’s Gospel, they leave the conversation here, but Luke keeps going. In verse 29 in says that the man wanted to justify himself. The man was not satisfied with the conversation, he did not get the answer he was looking for, even though he was the one who answered HIS question. He still wanted Jesus to somehow stumble so he could jump on him. So, the man keeps pressing Jesus and asking him “Who is my neighbour”. The expert knows who God is, and so he can easily love the Lord with all his heart, soul, strength and mind, however deciphering who his neighbours were that Leviticus 19:18 speaks of has become trickier since the days that Leviticus was written.

In context of Leviticus 19, love for neighbour meant love for fellow Israelites as well as extending the love to those “resident aliens” that embrace the covenant with the Lord as Leviticus 19:33-34 points out. However, hundreds of years since the writing of Leviticus the world has changed. With the Roman Hellenistic movement, to be in the geographical borders of Israel, no longer meant that you were Jewish. There was Roman presence, inter-marriages of people from other countries, it would be similar to our own nation. It became very diverse and so this man wanted to clarify who he was to love. He thought by asking this question, perhaps Jesus would say something that he could use against him. However, like elsewhere in Scripture doesn’t give a clear-cut response, but here he tells a parable to answer the man.

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“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. Myself and my family were able to go to Israel in 2014 and we actually went from Jerusalem and drove past

where Jericho would have been. The cities are 25km away from each other and it takes around 45min to drive in a car. However, when you drive from Jerusalem to Jericho, you are literally going down. Jerusalem is 2,500 feet above sea level... Jericho is 800 feet below sea level. When I went you turn onto this road and as you follow it you turn around a hill and the road has a fairly steep decline. My ears were popping like crazy and you could just feel the change in air as you got closer and closer to sea level and eventually below sea level. So, when this parable says the man was going down from Jerusalem to Jericho, he literally was. And as the story tells us, this road was dangerous. It was full of robbers and in this case, this unknown man was robbed. He was beat, kicked, and we are told nothing about this man except he's half dead as the robbers leave. We do not know if this man is Jewish, if he's a Samaritan, if he's a foreigner who didn't know not to take this road. That doesn't matter for Jesus in the story. The bottom line is that this was a human being, that ran into trouble, and now he's in need of help.

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. A priest and a Levite. Both Jewish men and religious leaders, ones who are supposed to care for others, walk by on the other side. They did not want anything to do with the man. Why is this? Why did neither of these religious men stop? Jesus doesn't say, Luke doesn't say. Neither of them say that they had more important things to do, they had to be at an appointment somewhere. The only thing that is noted is that they saw the man and did nothing about it.

Perhaps, they saw that the man was *half dead* or *mostly dead* and they thought he was fully dead. But if Miracle Max the Wizard from the *Princess Bride* has taught me anything, is that "mostly dead is still slightly alive."

It is also likely that these holy men, mistaking him for being fully dead, would have not wanted to come in contact with a corpse and become impure as that would have disobeying Numbers 19:13. But the reality of the men in this parable, they did not want to deal with this man and chose to walk on by. This would be the same as myself, Brad, or anyone of us here driving home today from church, seeing a very major car accident happen, not another soul is in sight of what has just happened and we drive by, pretending that we didn't see anything. These men went by as this man needed the help of someone.

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^[e] 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.' A Samaritan was the one who had compassion on his neighbour. See, Jews and Samaritans did not like each other. For hundreds of years they had been fighting and if they entered the others territory, they would be mocked, ridiculed, and treated as an enemy. This is why when in John 4, when Jesus and his disciples are walking through Samaria and He has a conversation with a Samaritan woman at the Well his disciples were shocked and almost insulted by that. Jewish members saw Samaritans as lesser as they were not "pure Jews" but were hybrid Jews. They weren't at the same standard as themselves.

However, we read in this story that it was a Samaritan man who came. Unlike the other two this man was not a holy man; the Bible says he was travelling away from Jerusalem just as

the others in the story did and so we can probably guess that he was a traveling merchant as he had donkeys and supplies for a longer trek. The Samaritan man, it says, took pity on him. He felt sad for the man and was filled with compassion because of the suffering this man had gone through and the misfortune the robbers caused him. For him it didn't matter that it he was different, it didn't matter that their metaphorical passports had different stamps on it, he saw a person in need. So, he saved him, healed him as best he could with his oil and wine, which if you're thinking why use oil and wine? It was not only valuable possessions for one to have, but together it was a medical treatment for really any issue.

PAUSE

For some the compassion may stop there but not for this man, he loaded him up on his donkey and took him into an inn. There the wounded man would have had a bed and room to rest and the inn keeper would have been there to change bandages, examine his wounds, feed him, it was the ancient day hospital. While at the inn, we read that the man spends a full day with the man as he takes care of him. Then the Samaritan man has to leave, maybe he has a family to take care of or he has to return to his job, he can no longer be with the man to heal him. However, he takes out two denarii and gives them to the inn keeper.

A denarii would be the equivalent to one days wage. And this man gave the inn keeper 2 denarii and told him to do whatever it takes to help the wounded man get better probably resulting in the cost being more than the 2 denarii he gave. For my own curiosity, I wanted to put this into our world today. In Alberta right now minimum wage is set to \$15 an hour and say you work a standard 8-hour day you wage for the day would be 120 dollars for one day. So, for two denarii it would be equivalent to \$240 that he gave the innkeeper with the promise that he'll come back and cover any extra expenses. And this got me thinking how man days the robbed man would be at the inn. The parable ends before we learn any further details about the story but I just two weeks. If the wounded man was at the inn for two weeks the Samaritan man would have a bill of \$1,680 to come back to pay.

The final thing we should note on the Samaritan man is that this entire time his compassion was putting himself in risk. Joel Green states it like so, "He (Samaritan man) stops on the Jericho road to assist someone he does not know in spite of the self-evident peril of doing so; he gives of his own goods and money, freely, making no arrangements for reciprocation; in order to obtain care for this stranger, he enters an inn, itself a place of potential danger; and even enters into an open-ended monetary relationship with the innkeeper, a relationship in which the chance of extortion is high." He himself could have been robbed, perhaps not by the hands of the robbers that beat this other man, but by the inn keeper. He took risks and placed the other man ahead of himself because he had compassion for his neighbour.

PAUSE

Moving away from the parable and back to the conversation with Jesus. Jesus once again has a counter question for the expert. "Which one of these three acting like the neighbour?" See, Jesus doesn't ask who this man's neighbour is, but ask's whose actions have been more neighbourly. Shifting the focus with the help of this parable and signifying that *anyone* can be identified as a neighbour. Jesus focusing on the action, in this case love and compassion, and not the blood and birthplace of each people.

Also, notice how the expert responds. He doesn't explicitly state it's the Samaritan man, he replies by saying it was the merciful one of the three, which most clearly is the one who stopped for more than two seconds and lent out a hand to a man in need.

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Jesus tells him to go out and do like the Samaritan man. To live with mercy and compassion for others. Elsewhere in Scripture Jesus tells others to go. He tells his disciples before he returns to heaven to Go preach and teach, to baptize and make disciples. Literally the section before ours this morning, earlier in Luke 10 he send 72 followers out to Go into communities and tell the good news. Here Jesus gives another command. To Love the Lord. To Love our neighbours, and to be merciful and filled with compassion, *regardless* of who they are.

Remember, this conversation started with the expert asking just what he has to *do* to have eternal life. Jesus tells him exactly what to do. At the end of this conversation the expert really gets the answer he was looking for. Except Jesus uses this moment to teach us a valuable lesson. A lesson on love, on compassion, and helping our neighbours as the Samaritan man did.

PAUSE

As I close, I'll tell you a story from this past summer. As I was working at Camp, this story was one of the stories we acted out during day camps at a nearby church in Olds. For us leaders who have grown up in church all our lives, we knew this story and it didn't take many practices for us to know what to do when acting it out. However, for these children, for many of them this was their first time hearing the story. They were scared when the man was robbed, they were sad and upset when the two men walked on by, failing to stop. They were cheering and happy when the Samaritan man stopped to help him. Even as we explained that the Samaritan man and the injured man were different, they didn't like each other. That didn't matter to them. For these kids it didn't matter that they were different. What mattered was that the man was helped. And then something amazing happened where these kids started talking about how they can help their friends at school or help their little siblings when they fall and hurt themselves. These little kids were talking about having compassion for one another, for being merciful to other people. These little kids grasped the message Jesus was trying to preach. Be compassionate, have mercy. As we leave here today (after our AGM), go into your week with this story in mind. Try to find one way you can be a good Samaritan to somebody. Pulling someone out of a ditch or cooking them a meal. Just something to show compassion and mercy to our world.