

**Th Parable of the Good Samaritan
(Luke 10:25-37 cf. Matt 22:36; Mark 12:28)**

Jesus' Parables in Luke's Gospel

Luke	4:14	9:51	19:28	24:1
Nativity	Galilee	Long Journey	Jerusalem	Easter
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	5:36-38	10:30-37	15:3-7	20:9-18
	6:47-49	11:5-8	15:8-10	21:29-31
	7:41-43	12:16-21	15:11-32	
	8:5-15	12:35-40	16:1-9	
	8:16	12:42-28	16:19-31	
		13:6-9	18:2-8	
		13: 18-19	18:10-14	
		14:7-11	19:12-17	
		14:16-24		
		14:28-33		

- Luke 10:30-37 Parable of the Good Samaritan
- Luke 15:11-32 Parable of the Prodigal Son

Four time periods, Four recent approaches

- 1. Meaning in Jesus' ministry
- 2. Meaning in Matthew's Gospel
- 3. Meaning in Church History
- 4. Meaning for Today
 - o German historical approach
 - o American literary approach
 - o Gospel narrative approach
 - o History of Effects contextual approach

**The Parable of the Good Samaritan
(Luke 10:25-37)**

(1) Setting: A lawyer asked about eternal life and neighbor.

10²⁵ Just then a lawyer stood up to test Jesus. "Teacher," he said, "what must I do to inherit eternal life?"²⁶ He said to him, "What is written in the law? What do you read there?"²⁷ He 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."²⁸ And he said to him, "You have given the right answer; do this, and you will live."²⁹ But wanting to justify himself, he asked Jesus, "And who is my neighbor?"

(2) Parable: Jesus tells him the parable of the Good Samaritan.

³⁰ Jesus 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. ³¹ Now by chance a priest was going down that road; and when he saw him, passed by on the other side. ³² So likewise a Levite, when he came to the place and saw him, he passed by on the other side. ³³ But a Samaritan while traveling came near him; and when he saw him, he was moved with pity. ³⁴ He 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. ³⁵ The 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.'

(3) Question: Jesus commands him to do likewise.

³⁶ Which of these three, do you think, was a neighbor to the man who fell into the hands of the robbers?" ³⁷ He said, "The one who showed him mercy." Jesus said to him, "Go and do likewise."

1. Meaning in Jesus' Ministry

This parable is framed by two questions.

- 1) "Who is my neighbor?" (10:29) This parable answers the question from a Pharisaic lawyer in light of the two laws of loving God and loving neighbors.
- 2) "Which of the three is the victim's neighbor?" (10:36). Jesus wants us to identify ourselves with the victim and find our neighbors from the three characters (priest, Levite, and Samaritan). Notice the difference in perspective. Our neighbor is not the victim we can help, but the helper who rescues us. Neighbors are indeed mutual, but why did Jesus define neighbor from a victim's point of view?

Jesus' Ministry

In Jesus' social context, classism divided people into Jews and Gentiles, religious and *am-harez* ("people of the dirt").

- 1) The stark contrast between characters (Jewish leaders vs Samaritan) points to racial ethnic, social, and religious divisions.
- 2) The fact that a priest and a Levite go around the victim is a strong indictment against the indifference and hypocrisy of religious leaders.
- 3) The irony that a Samaritan takes thoughtful care for the Jewish victim illustrates Jesus' teaching on loving enemies in the SM (5:44).

For Jesus, this parable invites his inquisitor to define "neighbor" accross boundaries and to love enemies.

2. Meaning in Luke's Gospel

- Narrative Context. Jesus sent out 70 disciples to preach the KG in towns and villages and they returned with success.
- 10²¹ At that same hour Jesus rejoiced in the Holy Spirit and said, "I thank you, Father, Lord of heaven and earth, because you have hidden these things from the wise and the intelligent and have revealed them to infants; yes, Father, for such was your gracious will. ²² All things have been handed over to me by my Father; and no one knows who the Son is except the Father, or who the Father is except the Son and anyone to whom the Son chooses to reveal him." ²³ Then turning to the disciples, Jesus said to them privately, "Blessed are the eyes that see what you see!
- Then, a lawyer stood up to test Jesus, asking how one may inherit eternal life (10:25). When Jesus had him answer by saying loving God and loving neighbors. This lawyer wanted to show he was intelligent, so he asked Jesus again who his neighbor is. It was to answer that question when Jesus told the parable of the Good Samaritan.
- The narrative context shows the occasion of the parable was debate and test, and just as Jesus said in 10:21-22, divine revelation of Jesus' identity as the Son of God was hidden from intelligent people.
- In Luke's view, this parable has something to say about divine revelation of Jesus' identity, besides his definition of neighbor.

3. Meaning in Church History

3.1 Early Church

- Antiochian School used historical-grammatical approach to define who is the neighbor.
 - (1) Anyone who suffers is our neighbor regardless of their racial ethnic, social and religious background.
 - (2) The good Samaritan is the best moral example showing how one should love neighbors in caring actions.
- Alexandrian School used allegorical approach to interpret who is the Samaritan.
 - (1) The good Samaritan represents Jesus who rescues sinners beaten up by sins while priest and Levi pass by.
 - (2) The story of his care for the robbed man lays out God's providence in salvation history. Origen's homily is an important interpretation.

Origen: Fragment 71, *Homilies on St. Luke 10.30* etc.

Greek text from Origen: *Homelies sur S. Luc (Sources chretiennes 87)*, Henri Crouzel s.j.

Francois Fournier, s.j. & Pierre s.j. (Paris, 1962), pp. 464-547. English Translation by John Y. H. Yieh

- Fragment 71 (Luke 10.30 etc. The Parable of a Good Samaritan)
- "We shall now describe, in a few words, the intent of the Parable. The man refers to Adam or indeed the doctrine concerning man, the life he undergoes, and the fall caused by disobedience. Jerusalem refers to the paradise or the heavenly Jerusalem. Jericho refers to the world. The robbers refer to the adversary forces or indeed demons, or false teachers who came before Christ did. The wounds refer to the disobedience and sins. Taking away his garment

refers to the stripping away of incorruptibility and immortality, and it refers to the privation of all virtues. To abandon the man half dead is clearly to let death advance to the half of human nature -- for soul is immortal. The priest refers to the law. The Levite refers to prophetic word. The Samaritan refers to Christ who carried his flesh from Mary. The beast refers to Christ's body. The wine refers to the word which instructs and corrects. The oil refers to the work of charity and mercy or indeed compassion. The inn refers to the church. The innkeeper refers to apostles, their succeeding bishops, teachers of the church, or those guarding angels of the church. The two denarii refer to the two covenants, the old and the new, or indeed the love toward God and the love toward neighbors, or the knowledge of the Father and of the Son. The return of the Samaritan is the second coming of Christ."

- Is this parable a "gospel story" or "moral tale"?
- Origen's interpretation reveals Luke's view of salvation history, Christology, ecclesiology, eschatology, and ethics.

3.2 Medieval Church: Four Layers of Meaning

- (1) Literal or historical: An unclean Samaritan ironically is better than the holy priest and Levi.
- (2) Allegorical or mystical: The good Samaritan represents Jesus who rescues sinners and cares for them thoughtfully.
- (3) Moral or topological: The Samaritan sets up a good example of charity in action of kindness that all who seek to love neighbors and find eternal life should do likewise.
- (4) Eschatological or anagogical: The Samaritan will come back to the inn for the wounded man; Christ will return at the end of time to reckon with the innkeeper, i.e., church leaders.

3.3 Reformed Church

- Luther: The parable of the Good Samaritan teaches us the most important lesson in life, that is, to help our neighbors who are in distress or in danger.
- Calvin: The purpose of this parable is to show that mutual love between neighbors should extend beyond family, friend, to all humanity.

4. Meaning for Today

4.1 German historical approach

- Focus on the lawyer's question regarding who is neighbor.
- 1) A neighbor is not the kinsmen in Jewish definition, nor simply the people living next door or on the same street. It is someone who is willing to lend a hand to those in distress or in need regardless of their racial ethnic, social and religious background.
- 2) Jesus wants the Pharisaic lawyer and us to show the same compassion and give the same care to anyone in the ditch. It is not sufficient to talk about law. What the KG demands is the act of kindness to whoever who is suffering.

4.2 American literary approach

- Focus on the characters of the story.

- The man robbed on his journey reminds us of human life full of surprises, misfortunes, suffering, loneliness.
- The priest and Levi remind us of many selfish people who refuse to help, unreliable and sorely disappointing.
- The good Samaritan reminds us of the few kind people, compassionate and courageous, admirable but unfortunately very rare.
- Only action of love can break down racial ethnic and religious boundaries that divide humanity.

4.3 Gospel narrative approach

- Jesus' question: "Which one of the three is the neighbor of the man robbed?" (10:36) reminds us of a victim's perspective that sees Jesus as our neighbor who rescues us from the power of sin and puts us in the care of the church.
- Jesus himself is the good Samaritan who, though rejected by the authorities and tested by the intelligent of the world, truly loves us even though we are broken and dirty sinners like tax-collectors and prostitutes.
- Having received Jesus' salvation like the man in the ditch being healed, we should obey his commandment –"Go and do likewise!" (10:37) – to imitate him and love those less fortunate than we are.
- We receive grace first and free, and divine grace demands human gratitude in the action of charity.

4.4 History of Effects contextual approach

- Neighbor refers to anyone in distress, including strangers and enemies (Jesus, Calvin, German approach).
- Jesus is the good Samaritan who loves us, dying on the cross for us. He has served as our neighbor, so we should love him as we love God and ourselves (Luke, Origen).
- Charity is not the merit to earn eternal life, but the proper response to the grace of God. It is the commandment of Christ who loves us first (Luke, Donahue).

Rembrandt, 1630 The Inn is the church with compassionate believers caring for the wounded souls.

Jan Wijnants, 1670 The robbed man is naked, unconscious, completely vulnerable.

Aime Morot, 1880 The good Samaritan bears the heavy burden of the robbed man who is totally paralyzed.

Van Gogh, 1889 The good Samaritan with strong muscles is putting the robbed man, whose luggage was emptied out, unto his own animal.

Theology and Preaching

- Liberation Theology: the parable shows an "all embracing reach of solidarity" with the oppressed and downtrodden.
- M. Gnanavaram, "Dalit Theology and the Parable of the Good Samaritan": "life-giving message to the marginalized Dalits and a challenging message to the non-Dalits."

•M. L. King, “On the one hand we are called to play the good Samaritan on life's roadside; but that will be only an initial act. One day we must come to see that the whole Jericho road must be transformed so that men and women will not be constantly beaten and robbed as they make their journey on life's highway. True compassion is more than flinging a coin to a beggar; it is not haphazard and superficial. It comes to see that an edifice which produces beggars needs restructuring.” (“A Time to Break the Silence”)

Summary of Messages for Today

1) Faith and Theology

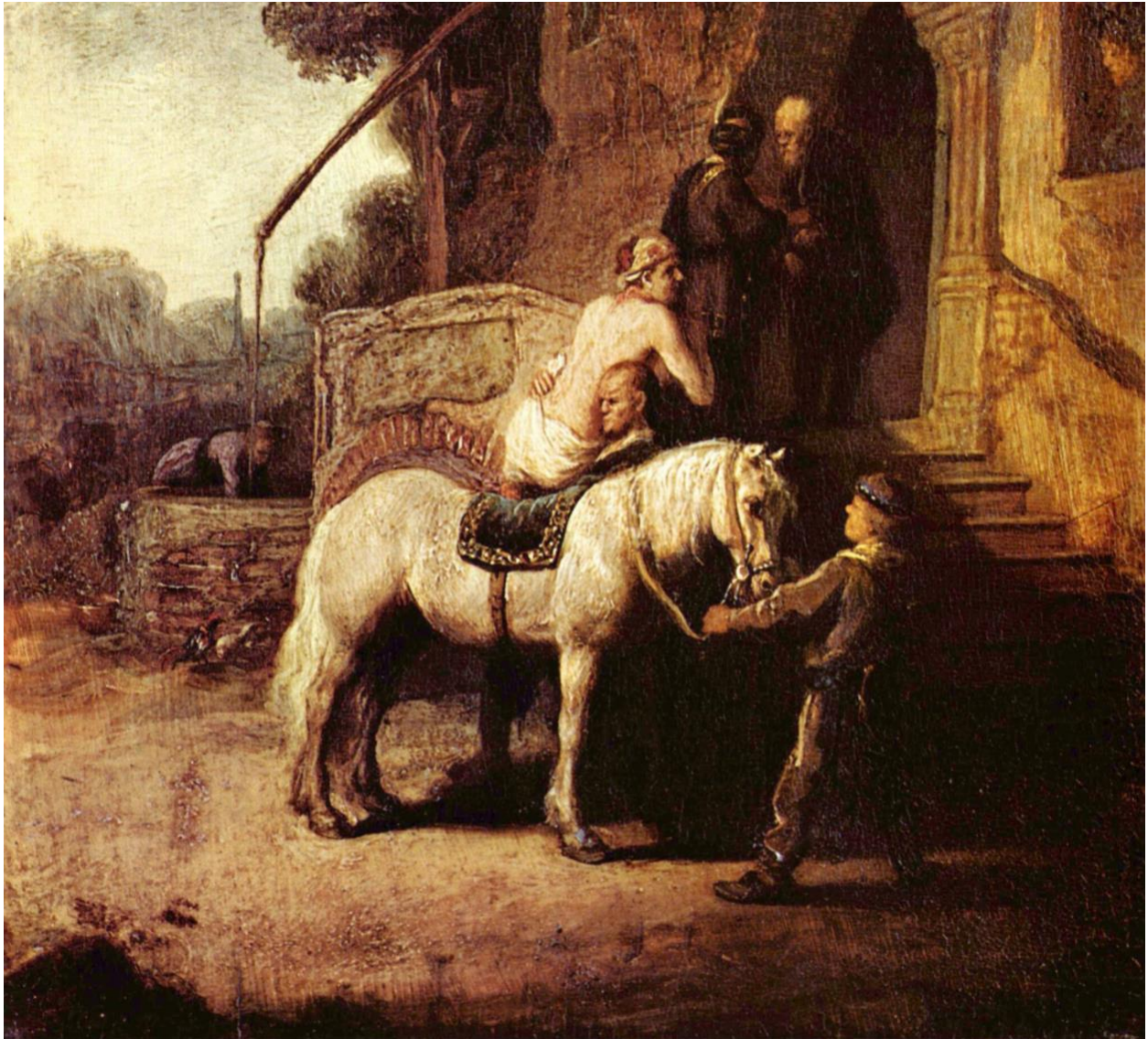
- God. The holy God loves us even when we are beaten by sin suffering alone without friend. God comes to us in Christ as our good neighbor.
- Christ. Like the good Samaritan, the Son of God became incarnate to bear our wounds and care for us in the church until he returns.
- This parable is a gospel story first, and then a moral tale. We love neighbors and enemies because Christ has first loved us and as Christ has demonstrated on us.

2) Life and Church

- The mission of the church, like the inn, is to take care of wounded souls, nurturing and healing them, until the Lord returns.
- Christians, having received free grace from God, should imitate Christ the good Samaritan to do as he has done for us and love our neighbors regardless of racial or social background.
- Christians should bear witness to God's grace by actively participating in social services and charity works.

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