

Grace Walks the Bloody Way

You Asked For It, Part 5

Luke 10:25-37

Several years ago, CBS anchorman and reporter by the name of Hugh Rudd, was mugged just outside his New York City apartment complex. He was beaten and knocked down, but remained conscious, eyes open, but unable to move. He was right next to his doorstep . . . but all he could do was moan.

Hours later, after being rescued, he recounted the frightening scene where he lay there, watching people walk past him in the darkness, ignoring his moans for help. He said that even the milkman came, set the milk cans next to where he lay, and left. No one stopped to see what was wrong until dawn.ⁱ

I read of a more recent incident where a woman had fallen down, unconscious in a convenience store, and lay there in an aisle for over 10 minutes without help from anyone. The video cameras recorded people actually stepping over her to get to their food items without even bending down to see if she was alive.

Only this month, one television network reported on a staff member at an assisted living facility who refused to perform CPR on a woman who had a heart attack.

When this woman collapsed at her table in the dining room, another resident called 911 and during the return call, the dispatcher spent several minutes on the phone trying to get the employee to go against their stated policy of not providing medical assistance to the residents – a policy that had nothing to do with prohibiting emergency help, such as CPR.

The phone conversation transcript was released – which I read; the dispatcher says, “I understand if your boss is telling you, you can’t do it; but . . . as a human being . . . you know . . . is there anybody that’s willing to help this lady and not let her die?”

And the chilling response – “Not at this time.”ⁱⁱ

I found it interesting to learn that just about every State in our country has grappled with this issue . . . and many states have created what they call Good Samaritan Laws.

All kinds of laws that can be somewhat confusing – some seem to protect the victim from being mishandled by a good Samaritan who comes along

to help; and other laws that try to enforce people to act the part of a good Samaritan.

For instance, the State of Vermont’s Good Samaritan Law actually fines a person \$100 dollars if it’s clear they could have stepped in to help but refused.

The concept of a Good Samaritan law comes directly from the Bible; and more specifically, between an encounter Jesus had with, ironically, a lawyer.

Let me show you that Question and Answer encounter in *Luke’s Gospel, chapter 10*.

Notice *verse 25*. ***And a lawyer stood up and put Him to the test, saying, “Teacher, what shall I do to inherit eternal life?”***

This man was a *nomikos* – a scribal expert in the interpretation of the Mosaic Law and all the rabbinical traditions that had been formed over the centuries.ⁱⁱⁱ

This legal expert is planning to trip Jesus up in the minutia of Hebrew law.

The problem is, he asks a theological question instead – ***what must I do to inherit eternal life?***

Jesus could have pinned him to the wall by simply saying, “You don’t *do* something to inherit something.” An inheritance is received, not earned.^{iv}

Obviously, this lawyer is planning to focus on some legal aspect of human responsibility – he’s really not interested in eternal life – he’s interested in legal life.

I think he was expecting Jesus to say something like, “Keep the law and the ceremony – you know, be a good Jewish person.”

To which the lawyer could then have responded, “Then why do you break the laws and ceremonies and ordinances of our fathers – you travel on the Sabbath; pluck grain on the Sabbath; you don’t wash your hands ceremonially and all sorts of other misdemeanors.”

And he would have trapped the Lord.

Instead, Jesus sidesteps the trap and basically says in *verse 26*, “Okay, since you want to talk about the law, let’s start with the basics – what’s the primary issue to you as you read the law?”

That was easy. The lawyer quoted what every good Jew prayed every morning and evening, the Shema, from *Deuteronomy 6:4-5*, “**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.**”

The Jews considered, as we do today:

- the heart – as the center of emotions and desires
- the soul – as the place of personality
- strength – as the place of your will
- and the mind – as the center of your intellect^v

In other words, the greatest part of the law is to love God with everything about you.

But then the lawyer goes one step further and adds from *Leviticus 19:18* – **and love your neighbor as yourself.**

And Jesus says, “A+ on the pop quiz . . . now go and do that and you’re in.”

Which really translated means, “You got the right answer but you really can’t love God with perfection and you certainly can’t love your neighbor with total love incorporating your mind, soul, strength and heart . . . now can you?”

And with that the lawyer is stuck.

Now he *could* say, “Well, I *am* loving God like that” – and no one could prove him wrong; but he knows he can’t say, “And I am loving my neighbor that way too,” cause Jesus could go knock on their door and find out.

This lawyer knows he’s gone too far in adding to the Shema that last phrase . . . and he’s probably thinking to himself, “Man, why did I have to add that part about loving my neighbor?!”

He’s trapped.

So what he does is begin to parse words, like a good lawyer . . . and he asks Jesus, in *verse 29*, to define a neighbor.

This is his only possible loophole.

You see, by the time of Christ, many of the Jewish rabbis had defined a man’s neighbor as another fellow Jew.^{vi}

This allowed them to ignore or mistreat everybody else.

He’s hoping that Jesus will answer, “Your neighbor, just as the Rabbis have taught for years – is another Jew in good standing.”

And with that the lawyer could say, “Well, I am doing that . . . and I’ve got some good Jewish men who will vouch for me.”

But Jesus doesn’t say that . . . instead, Jesus begins to tell him a story – a story that will radically redefine who a neighbor is – and what love is, too.

Now, before we race to this road leading to Jericho, let me tell you that Jesus will introduce 4 characters in his story line. And what he says about each of them will be significant to understanding the punch line.

1. The Victim: On the Road of Tragedy

The first character is on the road we could call Tragedy.

Verse 30. Jesus replied and said, “A man was going down from Jerusalem to Jericho; and fell among robbers and they stripped him and beat him, and went away leaving him half dead.”

This character is completely anonymous . . . his name, age, occupation and race are not provided – which allows every one of us to enter this scene and feel sorry for him – we are immediately moved by the brutality of this tragic scene.

The truth is, everyone listening to Jesus would have immediately resonated with this scene. It was in the news almost every day.

This road from Jerusalem to Jericho was about 18 miles long, dropping in elevation more than 3,000 feet. You were literally going *down* to Jericho.

It was a perfect road for thieves to hide out and then rob travelers – it narrowed between hillsides; turned sharply in different directions.

Furthermore, Herod had rebuilt Jericho and turned it into an oasis resort for the wealthy. He had 3 of his own palaces there, including a swimming pool and sunken gardens.^{vii}

Government officials, religious and political leaders along with the wealthy upper class citizens would make the trip from Jerusalem to Jericho.

It was the perfect place to hijack a caravan of rich people.

In fact, so many people were injured or killed on this 18 mile stretch of road that when Jesus was telling this story, the road had already been nicknamed, The Bloody Way.

People listening to Jesus would have probably muttered under their breath, “This guy has no one to blame but himself . . . what was he thinking traveling all by himself?”

2. The Priest: On the Road of Ceremony

The second character now appears – and while the victim has traveled on a Road we could call Tragedy, this man is traveling on a road we can call Ceremony.

Verse 31. And by chance a priest was going down on that road; and when he saw him, he passed by on the other side.

At this point in the story, the crowd listening in – along with the lawyer – probably got a jolt of surprise – they would have thought the priest was going to set an example of love and compassion.

We all need to be more like the professional clergy.

But when he saw him, he passed by on the other side.

He changed lanes . . . he got as far away as he could.

Why?

We're not told . . . but a little digging might help us understand.

Numbers 19:11 informs us that any Jew living during these Old Testament times who touched a dead body would be automatically unclean for seven days.

Bible scholars point out the fact that since Jericho had the largest population of priests living outside of Jerusalem during the days of Christ, this priest was more than likely returning home after having served his tour of duty in the temple.^{viii}

He has just come from serving God . . . he had just represented God to the people and the people before God.

To put it into our context, he was on his way home, effectively, from church.

He'd just sung the hymns of the faith and worshipped with the saints.

He'd even preached three times on Sunday morning and was rushing home to take a nap before preaching on Sunday night.

He needed that nap and hopefully no one would bother him.

Howard Hendricks told us in class about one seminary assignment where the students were told they would discuss the Good Samaritan the following day in class. Unbeknownst to them, the professor had another student dress in rags, and lie down on the sidewalk the students would travel on; lying there in an awkward position, moaning as if in great pain.

That morning, not one student stopped to look at him, help him, or call for help. Not one student

connected the dots between what they were studying, and what they were doing.

Now to this priest's defense, it was more than busyness or blindness. He didn't want to become unclean . . . he didn't want to have to sit on the bench for 7 days . . . for him it was an issue of ceremony.

And he chose ceremony over sympathy.

Then again, and this occurred to me as I studied this story, maybe he thought to himself that he would just leave the task to his assistant, the Levite, whom he might have known was traveling a short distance behind him.

And that's exactly the third character who makes an appearance on the Bloody Way.

3. The Levite: On the Road of Safety

Verse 32. Likewise, a Levite also, when he came to the place and saw him, passed by on the other side.

The audience listening to Jesus would have expected the Levite to help the man.

- He had less ceremony to be concerned with.
- While the priests offered the sacrifices, the Levites provided music and assistance.
- The priests served God, the Levites served the priests.
- The priests managed the temple complex and the Levites served as the maintenance crew.

Surely the Levite will get his hands dirty and carry out the spirit of the law and help this blood caked, beaten, naked man out.

The language here even gives the sense that he actually went up closer to the man to look at him . . . he must have stood there for a moment or two deciding what to do.

Thieves were known to use decoys. Or maybe they were waiting nearby to see if anyone with money or medicine would stop to help – becoming an easy target for their next crime.

No doubt the Levite is looking all around for any more signs of danger. And then he evidently concluded it wasn't worth the risk.

Besides, they'd nearly killed one man . . . they could just as easily do it again.

Let's make sure we don't downplay the danger here.

The amazing thing in this story isn't that the Priest and the Levite didn't stop to help – this was a dangerous road with killers and bandits afoot.

The amazing thing isn't that these two men didn't stop; the amazing thing is that someone did!

I remember when I was in seminary, in Detroit, Michigan for a few years earning my first graduate degree – Detroit, Michigan – a city well known for safe streets and low crime, right?

Well, my wife had gone to a seminary wives meeting one night, and on her way home, long after sunset, our old beat up car broke down.

She had even decided to take a quicker route home through a dangerous part of town when the car conked out and coasted to a stop underneath a railroad bridge without any street lights nearby.

This was before cell phones and GPS.

You can only imagine how afraid, Marsha was. She didn't know what to do.

Suddenly a car pulled up behind her and a man got out and walked up to her window. She rolled it down no more than an inch – he asked her if he could help. All she could safely do was give him our apartment phone number and ask him to call me and tell me she had broken down. He said he'd be glad to.

In fact, he was so polite; he even explained to her that he was returning home from his wedding rehearsal dinner and was getting married the next day and certainly wouldn't want his bride stranded on the side of the road. He then reminded Marsha that she wasn't in a safe part of town.

She knew that.

So off he went to call me . . . during that time Marsha saw one more car coming her way – and the car slowed down, but then, to her relief, drove by.

It was a police car. But he didn't see her because when she saw car lights coming, she ducked down in the front seat.

So a really Good Samaritan possibility was lost.

A few minutes later, this young man returned and he even brought Marsha a cup of coffee. He promised to wait in his car behind hers until help arrived.

Meanwhile, since we didn't have two cars, I called a seminary buddy and his wife and told them what was going on. They hopped in their car to go and pick her up. The problem was, they traveled the normal route between our apartment and the church – not the back road Marsha had taken.

They couldn't find her.

At one point he made an illegal U-turn to try again and wouldn't you know it; blue lights began to flash behind him and he was pulled over.

He explained to the policeman what he was doing and when he said it was a dark car with a VA license plate, the policeman said, "I know exactly where that car is." It was the same policeman.

They all piled back in their cars, drove over to where Marsha was located . . . and we all lived happily ever after.

Listen, let's not be too hard on these two guys . . . they happen to be in one of the most dangerous places on the planet.

- The victim traveled the road we could call Tragedy.
- The priest traveled a road we could call Ceremony.
- The Levite is traveling a road we could easily call Safety.

The Samaritan is about to appear and he's traveling a road we could call mercy.

4. **The Samaritan: On the Road of Mercy**

Notice *verse 33. But a Samaritan, who was on a journey, came upon him . . . stop here.*

You need to understand that as soon as Jesus introduces this man into the parable, everyone assumed the villain has just arrived.^{ix}

Not the hero.

One author commented that Jesus' audience would have expected the Samaritan to finish off what the robbers started!^x

The Jews (and the implication of this parable is that this beaten man is a Jew) – the Jews and the Samaritans hated one another.

The hatred had only grown for several centuries since their captivity.

The northern tribes had intermarried with their Assyrian captors, creating a half-breed nation in the land.

But when the Jewish exiles returned from Babylon under Ezra, they began to rebuild the temple. The Samaritans offered to help but were rejected. Barred from worshipping in Jerusalem, they built their own temple on Mount Gerizim 400 years before the birth of Christ. The Jews later destroyed that temple with only inflamed the bitter feud between them.^{xi}

By the time of Christ, the Samaritans were pro-Roman and received Roman benefits in return. Even one of Herod's 10 wives was a Samaritan.

Josephus, the first century Jewish historian records that during one Passover celebration, the Samaritans infiltrated the temple and deposited human bones throughout the premises, which desecrated it and the priests were forced to shut down the temple – during Passover – which was devastating, of all times.^{xii}

Of all the dirty names the Jewish leaders called Jesus, one of the worst names they could come up with was calling Him a Samaritan (John 8:48).

So this parable is about to take an unexpected and explosive turn of events.

Now notice *verse 33 again. But a Samaritan, who was on a journey, came upon him; and when he saw him, he felt compassion, and came to him and bandaged up his wounds, pouring oil and wine on them; and he put him on his own beast, and brought him to an inn and took care of him.*

In other words, he gives him the best, most compassionate care possible.

Wine to disinfect his wounds; oil and strips of cloth to ward off infection; walking so the wounded man can ride; staying up to care for him through the night.

Verse 35. On the next day he took out two denarii and gave them to the innkeeper and said, 'Take care of him; and whatever more you spend, when I return I will repay you.'

In other words, he gives the innkeeper his VISA card number to cover as many as two weeks expenses – some scholars believe it would have covered up to two months. And then he said to the innkeeper, “If it runs even more than that, I’ll sign for the bill when I return.”

His mercy and love was unbelievable – nobody does that!

The point here is that someone who truly knows God and loves God should. In other words, you don’t get into heaven by doing this, but you do it to show you’re heading to heaven.

Jesus turns to this lawyer, who’s terrified that Jesus would, and asks one more question, in *verse 36, Which of these three do you think proved to be a neighbor to the man who fell into the robber’s hands?*

I love this – 37. *And he said, “The one who showed mercy toward him.”*

He can’t bring himself to answer, “The Samaritan.” He can’t get that out – “the one who showed mercy toward him.” He’s cornered but he just can’t say the word.

This has radically expanded his definition of who his neighbor was. Three different perspectives on life are presented here.

- The bandits lived with the perspective, “What’s yours is mine and I’m going to take it.”
- The priest and the Levite lived with the perspective, “What’s mine is mine and I’m going to protect it.”
- The Samaritan lived with the perspective, “What’s mine is yours and I’m going to give it away for you.”

And did you catch the fact that in this parable all the travelers *saw* this man lying in the road.

- the priest *saw him* – *verse 31*;
- the Levite *saw him* – *verse 32*;
- the Samaritan *saw him* – *verse 33*.

They all saw him . . . but only one man chose to really see.

Just as we talked about in this morning’s session, love is not blind – hatred is.

Has it ever occurred to you that the Christian is the only person on the planet whose eyes are truly open and able to see?

- You see that outcast and become their friend;
- You see that discarded child and become their mentor or parent;
- You see that person going down a dangerous road and you warn them of what you see coming;
- You see someone burdened and you move to encourage them;
- You see an understaffed area of ministry and sign on to meet the need;
- You see someone you don’t know in need of help and you offer it;
- You see someone in need of the gospel and risk your time and energy and maybe even your life to deliver it.

And the love of God demonstrated through us doesn’t ask, “What will happen to *me*?” The mercy of God demonstrated through us doesn’t ask, “What’s *in it for me*?”^{xiii}

As I studied this parable, I got to tell you, the Good Samaritan is presented as a model and as a goal – not for getting into the kingdom, but as children of the kingdom.

Though imperfectly, yet periodically, the Christian demonstrates the love of Christ by

choosing to see and then act with compassion and mercy and love.

But I see Jesus here – the only One capable of acting consistently and perfectly and faithfully with such sacrificial love and unbelievable compassion.

I see Jesus here.

I'm not the Samaritan here; we are not the religionists and the ceremonialists here either; here's who we are; we are the robbed and beaten and half-dead victim here.

And we have no one to blame but ourselves!

- Beaten . . . lifeless . . . penniless . . . helpless . . . and Jesus came;
- and Jesus saw us;
- Jesus had compassion on us;
- He stooped to pick us up;

- He healed us and cared for us;
- And He paid all the bills for us;
- And He even promised to come again.

And He will come for those who recognize they are helpless and who depend upon Him entirely for eternal life – for mercy and forgiveness and healing and love and grace and inclusion into the Kingdom of God – by His grace alone.

And until He returns we periodically reveal we belong to Him by the way we choose to see . . . and to act with mercy and grace and forgiveness and sacrifice and courage and love . . . in the name of and for the glory of our Good Samaritan . . . Jesus Christ, our Savior and Lord.

This manuscript is from a sermon preached on 3/10/2013 by Stephen Davey.

© Copyright 2013 Stephen Davey
All rights reserved.

i R. Kent Hughes, Luke: Volume 1 (Crossway, 1998), p. 390

ii CNN.com, "To Perform CPR or Not?"; March 5, 2013

iii John MacArthur, Luke 6–10 (Moody Publishers, 2011), p. 352

iv John Phillips, Exploring the Gospel of Luke (Kregel, 2005), p. 159

v Bruce B. Barton, Life Application Bible: Luke (Tyndale House, 1997), p. 278

vi David E. Garland, Exegetical Commentary on the New Testament: Luke (Zondervan, 2011), p. 439

vii Trent C. Butler, Holman New Testament Commentary: Luke (Broadman & Holman Publishers, 2000), p. 172

viii Garland, p. 441

ix Barclay, p. 139

x MacArthur, p. 357

xi MacArthur, p. 312

xii Garland, p. 443

xiii Garland, p. 447