

A STORY OF COMPASSION: THE GOOD SAMARITAN

Good Morning, Today we are going to be looking at a very familiar parable of 'The Good Samaritan.' This parable whilst on the surface appears to be quite straight forward has in fact got lots of layers and depths to it that over the next few weeks we are going to explore.

This parable is set in the context of a religious expert who decides to test Jesus by asking what he should do to inherit eternal life. The religious expert or teacher (as other translations call him) is not asking this question because he is curious or even because the teacher wants to follow Jesus but he asking this question to test Jesus and try and catch him out. Jesus who doesn't appear to be concerned with the religious expert's questions and answers his question with another question asking him what the Law Moses states? The religious expert replies that 'You must love the LORD your God with all your heart, all your soul, all your strength, and all your mind.' And, 'Love your neighbor as yourself.' To which Jesus answers him and says do this and you will live. The religious expert who wants to justify why he asks this question asks Jesus again who is my neighbour. (Luke 10:25-29 NLT)

To answer this question Jesus tells a story:

Jesus replied with a story: "A Jewish man was traveling on a trip from Jerusalem to Jericho, and he was attacked by bandits. They stripped him of his clothes, beat him up, and left him half dead beside the road. "By chance a priest came along. But when he saw the man lying there, he crossed to the other side of the road and passed him by. A Temple assistant walked over and looked at him lying there, but he also passed by on the other side. "Then a despised Samaritan came along, and when he saw the man, he felt compassion for him. Going over to him, the Samaritan soothed his wounds with olive oil and wine and bandaged them. Then he put the man on his own donkey and took him to an inn, where he took care of him. The next day he handed the innkeeper two silver coins, telling him, 'Take care of this man. If his bill runs higher than this, I'll pay

you the next time I'm here.' "Now which of these three would you say was a neighbour to the man who was attacked by bandits?" Jesus asked. The man replied, "The one who showed him mercy." Then Jesus said, "Yes, now go and do the same." Luke 10:30-37 NLT

Whilst this story of how an injured Jewish man who was hurt and was ignored by his own people and helped by a Samaritan appears to be simple to understand, Jesus twists this story and deliberately wraps it around two groups of people who were not neighbours, but who were in fact enemies.

It is generally believed that some of the descendants of the Samaritans came from Israel at sometime in Old Testament history. Precisely when this happened is greatly debated but is generally accepted that they share some of the same descendants and some of the same beliefs. (They were like a half-Jew). In Jesus' time the Jews hated the Samaritan so much that when travelling Jews would often go round Samaritan towns, cities or villages and not through them.

This parable is interesting because it not only re-defines who our neighbour is (particularly when you think of who the term neighbour refers to today), it gives us insight into compassion and what prevents us from reaching out and connecting with those who we are prejudice against us and who we maybe prejudice against particularly in the light of the action of the priest and temple assistant who did not help, or for someone reason couldn't help and didn't even get assistance for one of their own who was injured.

This parable also gives us insight to what Kingdom compassion looks like and tells a story of the Samaritan who goes all out, does everything possible to help this injured Jewish man. Today I want to take a look at this parable and what it teaches us about compassion in the Kingdom of God. I want to break down the story and look at what the Samaritan did in the story and what we can learn about kingdom compassion from him.

"A Jewish man was traveling on a trip from Jerusalem to Jericho, and he was attacked by bandits. They stripped him of his clothes, beat him up, and left him half dead beside the road. What made this parable different from some of the other parables was that it was believable and not exaggerated. (Phill's message two weeks ago –the parable of the debtor had exaggerated aspects to demonstrate a point.) The journey from Jericho to Jerusalem was well known for its danger. It was very steep, treacherous Rugged and dangerous terrain and there were many places for robbers to hide. In fact it was so bad that the name of the road was "the way of blood." This story was believable and it was likely that people were attacked and injured on this road. In this story we are introduced to a silent character who never speaks but we know he was on the way to Jerusalem and he was attacked and beaten up and left half dead.

By chance a priest came along. But when he saw the man lying there, he crossed to the other side of the road and passed him by. A Temple assistant walked over and looked at him lying there, but he also passed by on the other side. Both the priest and the temple assistant did nothing to help this man who was one of their own people. I am not going to spend too much time here and this may be explored in a few weeks time, but for whatever reason they choose not to help this man, or whether or not they could or couldn't help this man who was one of their own people, they still did nothing to help him personally and further to did they did nothing to get urgent assistance. Without the help of the Samaritan this man would have likely to have died!

Then a despised Samaritan came along, and when he saw the man, he felt compassion for him. (V30) There are a number of things that we need to look at with this text. Firstly, the Jews and Samaritans hated each other and the Samaritan had no obligation to help this injured Jewish man. Secondly this scripture and the rest of this story tells us three things about kingdom compassion:

KINGDOM COMPASSION IS BASED ON NEED

The Samaritan was looking for someone to help, he wasn't trying to be a good person and on the lookout for someone to do good too. On the contrary the Samaritan was going about his daily business and by chance stumbled across this injured man and saw someone in need. Kingdom compassion is compassion based on a present need.

As agents of God's kingdom we often go searching for people in need the elderly, the sick, the homeless who we can help (which is good). How many times are we presented with someone in need on the way to work, at work or whilst we about our daily routines and lives and we are too busy to stop and help. The Samaritan stopped from whatever he was going to do that day and wherever he was going to go because he felt that he could not leave this person in need.

How many of us would risk being late or not turning up at work one morning because on the way to work we saw someone in need and to be brutally honest with you this is quite literally what the Samaritan did. Let's be honest with ourselves most of the time we haven't got time but kingdom compassion makes and takes that time. The Samaritan didn't plan to help the Jewish man that day, he didn't get the day off work to help him, he didn't ask permission from his wife, boss or anyone else – HE SAW A PERSON IN NEED AND HE ACTED!

KINGDOM COMPASSIONS FEELS

The Greek word used here for compassion is *splanchnizomai*. It comes from a word that refers to the intestines, or bowels. I guess it's what we mean when we talk about a "gut feeling." A gut feeling is one of those feelings that comes from the deepest part of who we are. The Samaritan saw the Jewish man lying in agony beside the road and his heart churned within him so that he could not pass by without helping. Kingdom compassion is the kind of compassion that affects us. It stirs us; it troubles us, it keeps us awake at night until we do something.

The Jewish man's nationality or religion didn't prevent the Samaritan from feeling compassion and doing something to help this man and whatever issues he may have had concerning Jews he saw a man in need of help and he was not prepared to just walk on past. So let's take a look at what Samaritan's response to the man in need: 'Going over to him, the Samaritan soothed his wounds with olive oil and wine and bandaged them. Then he put the man on his own donkey and took him to an inn, where he took care of him. The next day he handed the innkeeper two silver coins, telling him, 'Take care of this man. If his bill runs higher than this, I'll pay you the next time I'm here.'

KINGDOM COMPASSION COSTS

What the Samaritan did for this Jewish man was extraordinary for many reasons because he was prepared to help the injured man at whatever the cost with nothing being withheld or expense spared and there are three things I want to focus on in this text.

1. 'Going over to him, the Samaritan soothed his wounds with olive oil and wine and bandaged them.' The first thing the Samaritan in order to help this man was to soothe his wounds and bandage them up. The Injured man must have been in pain and agony and it would have been enough for the Samaritan to clean the wounds with water but the Samaritan went further. He used his resources to help this man – The text tells us he used wine and olive oil to soothe his wounds. Olive oil and wine would have been costly. Olive oil was traditionally used to honour guests (particularly used amongst the wealthy) and for healing and other things such as burial. I don't know why the Samaritan had Oil (wealth reason seems likely) with him but it was something that was not used likely – it was costly. The Samaritan did not spare any expense with helping this man and used the best of his resources to do it. The Samaritan not only soothed his wounds but bandaged him up which took time.

2. Then he put the man on his own donkey and took him to an inn, where he took care of him. The Next thing the Samaritan did was place the man on his own donkey and took him to an inn where he took care of him. It is likely that the Samaritan would have had two donkeys, one for himself and one for his luggage. It is probable that the Samaritan would have had to walk with his donkeys (the one with the Jewish man and the other with his luggage) to the hotel which would of taken longer than travelling with himself and his luggage. It would have been exhausting as he would have to lead his donkeys in the heat of the day to the inn. That evening and throughout the Samaritan took care of the Injured Jewish man which would have meant re-dressing his wounds, checking his temperature, feeding him..... (he didn't just go to the hotel and sleep)

3. The next day he handed the innkeeper two silver coins, telling him, 'Take care of this man. If his bill runs higher than this, I'll pay you the next time I'm here.' The last thing this story tells us is that two silver coins or as translated two Derria which means two days worth of wages to take care of this man and promises to pay more if it is required when he returns. The Samaritan was willing to pay whatever it cost to take care of this man and the Samaritan must have been known by the inn keeper and trustworthy to come and re-pay.

What the Samaritan did for a man who was supposed to be his enemy, a man who most likely would have hated him because he was a Samaritan was not quick cheap fix. He was not trying to help him and get him off his back as soon as possible but he did was costly both in terms of the time, energy and effort involved with his care as well as costly in terms of resources and finances.

This parable helps us to understand that kingdom compassion is costly. It is not cheap and it doesn't use the bare minimum. But instead it goes all, it uses all you give and it goes the extra mile. When it comes your neighbours, your enemies, those who are prejudice against you or those who you maybe prejudice against it should take your:

- Time
- Energy & Effort
- Your resources (and not just the basic no frills stuff but your best resources)
- Money

CONCLUSION

Jesus tells us to love our enemies and this context our enemies become our neighbours and as I said in the beginning this parable re-defines who your neighbour is and the Samaritan is one who sees the need of another, and having the resources to meet it, does so, without prejudice and regardless of circumstances. This embodies this parable and the way of Jesus.