

## The Parable of the Samaritan

Luke 10.25-37, NRSV

Phil Purkiss

---

<sup>25</sup> Just then a lawyer stood up to test Jesus. “Teacher,” he said, “what must I do to inherit eternal life?” <sup>26</sup> He said to him, “What is written in the law? What do you read there?” <sup>27</sup> 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.” <sup>28</sup> And he said to him, “You have given the right answer; do this, and you will live.”

<sup>29</sup> But wanting to justify himself, he asked Jesus, “And who is my neighbor?” <sup>30</sup> 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. <sup>31</sup> Now by chance a priest was going down that road; and when he saw him, he passed by on the other side. <sup>32</sup> So likewise a Levite, when he came to the place and saw him, passed by on the other side. <sup>33</sup> But a Samaritan while traveling came near him; and when he saw him, he was moved with pity. <sup>34</sup> 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. <sup>35</sup> 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.’ <sup>36</sup> Which of these three, do you think, was a neighbor to the man who fell into the hands of the robbers?” <sup>37</sup> He said, “The one who showed him mercy.” Jesus said to him, “Go and do likewise.”

### Introduction

One of the things I love about the good news of the kingdom and the parables that help us understand how to live out this message is that it is relentless and stands in our face, refusing to be compromised when opposed by our hatred, injustice, prejudice, greed and all of our other evils. It refuses to allow us to dismiss it, or justify ourselves - it is a message that stands in a world full of shades of grey and calls us live in a way that is counter cultural, it is a message that does not just ask but demands us to do what is sometimes hard, painful, costly and even sometimes seemingly outrageous. This is one of those parables that actually challenges some deep rooted stuff that lives inside us.

## The Parable of the Samaritan

Luke 10.25-37, NRSV

Phil Purkiss

---

So we are looking at 'The Parable of the Samaritan' again, and this week I want to take another look at this and take a slightly different perspective from where Sam and Paul have been.

### Missing the Point

Now, this conversation starts with a lawyer testing Jesus, the term Lawyer means someone who is an expert in the law – this is someone who knows and understands the law backwards. Now he is trying to catch Jesus out and so he asks “what must I do to inherit eternal life?”, and Jesus' response is you tell me – you're the expert! The expert's response is “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.” - and Jesus' response is 'you've got it, go and do it.

Now this chap is not happy to leave it here but he wants to justify himself, now I hope I am not misrepresenting him, but I think he is trying to prove how righteous he actually thinks he is, and I think he may also be trying to explain how he defines this scripture in order that he can have wriggle room – keeping the word of the law but missing the point.

I think this is interesting because I think we sometimes look for wriggle room, we try to define when a particular scripture applies, we say things like 'but you know when someone does this and...', and when we do this we can be in danger of totally missing the point. The parable's are meant to challenge us to do the seemingly outrageous, when you should do something completely different because that is the way of the kingdom – the kingdom demands a radical standard that is better than right, and goes beyond good.

So he asks 'Who is my neighbor?' I think he is asking because his definition would be my religious brothers, people who look, think, act and dress like me. I think Jesus has other ideas because if you follow his teaching, and you begin to understand that the tax collector, prostitute, leper and others that live on the margins of society – that is who my neighbor is. Who is our neighbor today? Anyone I can show love to?

## The Parable of the Samaritan

Luke 10.25-37, NRSV

Phil Purkiss

---

### What is Going on Here?

Now one of the questions we have to ask is what is going on here, what is Jesus doing? You see Jesus is a teacher, he is a master story teller and whenever he tells stories he is not just making them up with no reference to his hearers – no he is telling and deliberate story, with deliberate characters, with a deliberate purpose, in order to speak a deliberate truth to his hearers.

So in this story he chooses three characters, a priest, a temple assistant, and a Samaritan! Now you have to understand what he is doing here because the last character in this story would have silenced his audience and got people looking at each other and whispering to the person beside them, and would have probably outraged some people. Any good speaker will tell you that you tell a story to an audience you should pick characters that your audience will identify with, characters that they can relate to.

Not Jesus, he picks someone his audience hate, in order to really understand the impact of this, imagine someone speaking to a white supremacy or BNP type audience, and they tell a story that involves a black person being shown as the hero of that story. Or a black panther meeting, and the speaker says there was a white guy who was the hero. Or a right wing Christian group and the hero is a Muslim, or a gay and lesbian person – do you get what I am saying. Here is a question if Jesus was telling this parable to us, in our culture and society and our specific context (my specific context), who would this third character be? Who is the Samaritan in my story? Who is the one I feel justified in hating?

You see what Jesus is doing here is addressing the prejudices and hatred of this audience; he is challenging the status quo, and telling us that the Kingdom of God is better than this, because God is.

### Hatred

Now in order to understand this story, you need to grasp hold of the fact that Jews and Samaritans hated each other, there was a mutual hatred that had spanned centuries, writers believe that this hatred goes back to the time of exile. These Samaritans started out as

## The Parable of the Samaritan

Luke 10.25-37, NRSV

Phil Purkiss

---

small group of Jews that live in a specific area who were left behind when the Jews were exiled, and this group intermarried with the various groups around them, and when the Jews came back they were looked down on and were not seen as pure blood. Also it is clear that the Samaritans similar religious believes, as the Jews, but not the same – their beliefs seem to have been mixed with other religious beliefs and again this is viewed by the Jews as pagan and not pure. There is a lot of antagonism between these two groups, if you read Ezra, you find that when the Jews came out of exile and came back to the land to rebuild the temple, the Samaritans offered to help but were refused, so they then tried to stop them. Historical accounts include the Samaritan temple on Mount Gerizim was destroyed by Jews in 128 BCE; in 6 CE some Samaritans crept into the Jerusalem Temple and scattered human bones in it. After the uproar and other subsequent disturbances Pontius Pilate ordered a massacre on Mount Gerizim, which led to the Samaritans' demand for his deposition in 37 CE.

In Jesus' time the Jews hated the Samaritans, and the following is said to be true:

- Marriage between Jews and Samaritans was illegal
- Jews would not pass through a Samaritan town
- Samaritans were not allow to sacrifice in the temple
- A Samaritan could not serve as a witness in the Jewish courts
- Samaritan was publicly cursed in their synagogues
- A Samaritan could not be converted to Judaism as a proselyte
- Samaritans were excluded from the after life
- There was a saying that said 'He who eats the bread of a Samaritan is like one hwo eats the flesh of swine'
- The word Samaritan was a cuss word (John 8.48)

A deep rooted hatred existed in the Jesus' audience and Jesus was going to challenge it.

### Connecting the Dots

## The Parable of the Samaritan

Luke 10.25-37, NRSV

Phil Purkiss

---

Now there is something that find very scary here, that religious devotion and hatred could live side by side, especially in this person who is meant to be an expert of the law. The scary thing is that this guy who was an expert in the law was connecting the dots and getting the completely the wrong picture. When he connected the dots of the teaching about God, he should have got love, peace, faith, hope and loads of other good stuff but instead he finds justification for hatred. He has all of this knowledge – an expert in the law – but devoid of spirit of what God is saying.

Isn't it scary that religious people today, can connect the dots of the teaching of Jesus and the bible and get completely the wrong picture – and so instead of having people that are full of love and ready to live out that love at any cost no matter who, you get the judgment and condemnation, and a whole host of other junk that has nothing to do with God's kingdom or the way of Jesus, and sometimes it is the complete opposite.

But do you know what I find really scary? How I can sometimes connect the dots and get the picture I want but not necessarily the Kingdom picture that I believe Jesus is trying to show us. I can connect the dots and get completely the wrong picture.

### How Far Does the Rabbit Hole Go

Now look at how far this rabbit whole of hatred goes, Jesus tells the story and then at the end of the story he asks 'Which of these three, do you think, was a neighbor to the man who fell into the hands of the robbers?' A simple question!

However the expert in the law could not give a simple answer, he reply is 'The one who showed him mercy', this religious expert was so full of hatred that he could not even bring himself to mention the Samaritan by name! His hatred, for whatever reason was so deep, that he couldn't bring himself to believe that a Samaritan could be the hero of the story. How deep does our hatred and prejudice go?

What I find scary is the hatred that is so often done in the name of God, especially that so often this can be by the church and people who call themselves Christians. We can

## The Parable of the Samaritan

Luke 10.25-37, NRSV

Phil Purkiss

---

sometimes do so much junk in the name of God – greed and consumerism in the name of God, abuse and hatred in the name of God – Rwanda is an example of this.

This is why it is so important that we realize by saying you believe and that you are a follower is not the true sign. In Matthew 25, God does not divide the sheep and the goats on their religious profession, or their weekly religious activity, but he divides the sheep and the goat based on how they treated the least of people in their society and context. This is how we will be judge – what we think is important will not be at the top of the list.

### Where Morality Meets Mission

For me this story is where morality meets mission, I can change the world I am in through my mission, until I start to address the deep rooted stuff that lives and survives inside of me. This Samaritan did what he did because that is who he was – this was not a program or activity but it who is was deep on the inside – someone who could not just walk on by! He was not a good Samaritan but a loving Samaritan.

When I start engaging and challenging some of the deep rooted stuff that lives inside of me, then I will start to really live out the mission of his kingdom because it is that deep rooted stuff that causes a lot of the pain and hurt we see in the world around us.

### Go and Do Likewise

Jesus is making an outrageous demand of us here, he is echoing Matthew 5.38ff:

You have heard that it was said, 'Eye for eye, and tooth for tooth.' But I tell you, Do not resist an evil person. If someone strikes you on the right cheek, turn to him the other also. And if someone wants to sue you and take your tunic, let him have your cloak as well. If someone forces you to go one mile, go with him two miles. Give to the one who asks you, and do not turn away from the one who wants to borrow from you. "You have heard that it was said, 'Love your neighbour and hate your enemy.' But I tell you: Love your enemies and pray for those who persecute you, that you may be sons of your Father in heaven. He causes his sun to rise on the evil and the good, and sends rain on the righteous and the

## The Parable of the Samaritan

Luke 10.25-37, NRSV

Phil Purkiss

---

unrighteous. If you love those who love you, what reward will you get? Are not even the tax collectors doing that? And if you greet only your brothers, what are you doing more than others? Do not even pagans do that? Be perfect, therefore, as your heavenly Father is perfect.

And you know he doesn't ask us to do anything that he himself has not done, because Jesus is really the loving Samaritan:

Therefore, since we have been justified through faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ, through whom we have gained access by faith into this grace in which we now stand. And we rejoice in the hope of the glory of God. Not only so, but we also rejoice in our sufferings, because we know that suffering produces perseverance; perseverance, character; and character, hope. And hope does not disappoint us, because God has poured out his love into our hearts by the Holy Spirit, whom he has given us. You see, at just the right time, when we were still powerless, Christ died for the ungodly. Very rarely will anyone die for a righteous man, though for a good man someone might possibly dare to die. But God demonstrates his own love for us in this: While we were still sinners, Christ died for us. Since we have now been justified by his blood, how much more shall we be saved from God's wrath through him! For if, when we were God's enemies, we were reconciled to him through the death of his Son, how much more, having been reconciled, shall we be saved through his life! Not only is this so, but we also rejoice in God through our Lord Jesus Christ, through whom we have now received reconciliation. Romans 1-9, NIV

In this story God is calling us to set aside the deep rooted hatred that lives inside of us, and be reconciled to the people in our world around us, where we will be better than right, and greater than good, but loving like God.

Go and do likewise!