

Session 2

THE PARABLE OF THE GOOD SAMARITAN

Luke 10:25-37

Memory Verse

He answered, "Love the Lord your God with all your heart, with all your soul, with all your strength, and with all your mind," and "your neighbor as yourself."

– LUKE 10:27, CSB

The Parable of the Good Samaritan

THEOLOGICAL THEME: Jesus taught that Christians ought to love their neighbor and that one's neighbor extends even to those who have acted as an enemy.

? What comes to mind when you hear the word mercy?

? What are some practical ways to show mercy?

There was a time when kids liked to play a popular game called “Mercy”—maybe you remember it. Two participants would lock their hands together by placing hands palm on palm and then interlocking their fingers. The contest would begin and the object was to twist and bend your opponent's fingers and wrists to such a degree that they cried, “Mercy!”

When a person calls, “Mercy,” they are in a position of complete helplessness. In this contest, the party that concedes victory to their opponent doesn't have the ability to walk away and remove themselves from the contest. Rather, they are dependent on their opponent to heed the cries of mercy and respond by halting the onslaught of pain and releasing them. The victor doesn't have to do this. They could continue to inflict pain and eventually lasting harm.

That's what makes mercy peculiar. It's using one's power to lift someone else up. In reality, it's wielding your power in such a way that you become less powerful. Think about it: If you are dominating your opponent in a game of "Mercy," then as long as you keep the person's wrists bent backward, you are in complete control. You have power over this person. But when you use that power to free your opponent, you lose that power. That's mercy.

Mercy is doing good to someone when you have the power to do so and they are powerless. This is what we see in the story of the Good Samaritan. Let's look more closely at this parable so that we can understand how to walk in mercy as we go about our daily lives.

Session Summary

To properly understand this parable, it is critical to understand the Jewish perspective on the Gentile and Samaritan in Jesus' day. Matthew Henry reported that the Jewish teachers of the day made these claims: "Where he saith, Thou shalt love thy neighbour, he excepts all Gentiles, for they are not our neighbours, but those only that are of our own nation and religion."¹ This teaching had wicked consequences. For example, if a Gentile was in danger of death, an Israelite was under no compulsion to help save his or her life. Samaritans were worse than Gentiles in the mind of the Israelite. Samaritans represented those Israelites who had left the camp and joined together with Gentiles. This was abhorrent to the Israel sensibilities. Samaritans were viewed as traitors.

That's the background to the story of the Good Samaritan, and that's what made the story so shocking to Jesus' audience. Notice that the lawyer, after hearing the story, wouldn't even acknowledge that the man was a Samaritan instead saying "the one." Jesus tore down racial prejudices and showed that whoever may be in need and within our power to help, or whoever has the power to help meet a need that we have, those are neighbors. Neither nationality nor religion make the list of criteria for determining who is our neighbor.

1. Godward Affections (Luke 10:25-33)

In Matthew 9:13, Jesus quoted Hosea saying, "Go and learn what this means: I desire mercy and not sacrifice. For I didn't come to call the righteous, but sinners." Jesus' parable of the Good Samaritan is an illustration of the abstract principle laid out in Hosea.

Preceding the enacted mercy of this parable is an internal reality, or what some call “affection.”

The text says that he “had compassion.” We might say that he felt compassion. What preceded any actual concrete steps was what we might describe as an emotion or a feeling. Something stirred inside the Samaritan that eventually led to action.

? What place do feelings have in our relationship with God and others? Why are they important?

Feelings can get a bad rap among some Christians. It’s true that feelings have oftentimes been given places of position that they shouldn’t hold; and they’ve been used, manipulated, whipped up in ways that are ungodly and unchristian. However, that doesn’t mean that feelings hold no weight in our relationship with God. Jonathan Edwards spent a lot of energy defending the place and importance of feelings or “affections” in the Christian life. He said, “Seeing holiness is the main thing that excites, draws and governs all gracious affections, no wonder that all such gracious affections tend to holiness.”²

Here Edwards gives us a clue as to the place of “affections” or feelings in our lives as followers of Christ. He says that “seeing holiness” is what produces godly affections. In other words, when we read the Scriptures and encounter the character and actions of the one true and living God, feelings will well up within us, feelings like compassion for those in need. These feelings never take precedence over the truth of Scripture, but when they are in their proper place, they accompany the truth of Scripture to spur us on to good works.

? All people have the capacity to show compassion, even if they are not followers of Jesus. So, how should Christian compassion differ from worldly compassion?

Compassion and mercy are universal characteristics that can be seen demonstrated among all people. This is because all people were created in the image of God and experience the benefit of God's common grace. However, there is a distinction between Christians and non-Christians in this area. Because seeing God and His glory is what produces godly affections, then Christians ought to be much more compassionate and merciful than non-Christians. Christians have encountered and experienced God in ways that unbelievers have not. We have beheld the beauty of His holiness and goodness in the sacrifice of Christ. Our religious affections should be "turned up to 11," so to speak.

? Application: What place do feelings or affections have in your spiritual life? Do they have too important a place? Do you ignore them altogether? What would it look like to have your affections rightly ordered?

2. More Than a Feeling (Luke 10:34-35)

Micah gave us one of the most well-known verses about mercy in the Bible. He wrote, "He has told you, O man, what is good; and what does the Lord require of you but to do justice, and to love mercy, and to walk humbly with your God." In the parable of the Good Samaritan, mercy was preceded by the religious affection of compassion. But compassion is an internal feeling. It alone isn't sufficient. The compassion of the Samaritan wasn't idle. He did not find it sufficient to say, "Be healed, be helped" (Jas. 2:16).

? How did the Samaritan act in accordance with his compassion? Why is it important that followers of Jesus act in line with the things of God and not only hold them inside?

The care that this Samaritan showed was exemplary. He went to the man, bound up his wounds, set him on his own animal, brought him to an inn, took care of him, and paid the innkeeper to continue to watch over him in his absence.

God asked through the prophet Isaiah, “Isn’t this the fast I choose . . . Is it not to share your bread with the hungry, to bring the poor and homeless into your house, to clothe the naked when you see him, and not to ignore your own flesh and blood?” (Isa. 58:6-7). Some have conjectured that the priest and the Levite avoided helping the man because they had important responsibilities to tend to at the temple. We can reasonably suppose that the Samaritan was on business of his own. Of those who passed by, it was the Samaritan who understood that both God’s sacrifice and His business must include showing mercy to a person in such a situation.


? What evidence is there that this Samaritan was more devoted to God than even the religious leaders of the day? How were the religious leaders of Jesus’ day misled by “good works”?

Some say this parable must be based on a true event because Jesus used actual place names to tell the story. Even if it is, there is no way for us to investigate more into the heart and motivation of this Samaritan man. Details other than what Jesus provided are lost to us. But we can assume some things because of the way in which Jesus told the story.

The Samaritan’s outward action indicates a superior religious internal reality. How do we know? Because outward action stems from inward pulling of the soul—and an inward inclination of the soul is shaped by what we behold, treasure, and go hard after. The Samaritan’s actions betrayed the Godward affection of compassion, which in turn betrayed a soul that treasures God and His character.


There are dangers associated with the good works that God has prepared beforehand for those whom He would save (Eph. 2:10). The first is simple and straightforward. Good works become dangerous when they are carried out with the idea that they will in some way justify the doer before God. These good works stem from an ignorance of the gospel, fear of judgment, and a high view of man. The Bible is clear about this. Works cannot justify a person before God. They do serve as a proof of salvation—evidence of a justified and cleansed soul—but they are incapable of rescuing a sinner.

The second danger has to do again with a misunderstanding of the gospel. Some people who experience the grace and kindness of God fail to understand that true saving faith and repentance result in good works. This is what James was getting at when he said, “Pure and undefiled religion before God the Father is this: to look after orphans and widows in their distress and to keep oneself unstained from the world” (Jas. 1:27). In fact, if good works fail to manifest in the life of a person who professes Christ, then it is reasonable to question the genuineness of the individual’s faith.

 **Application:** What are ways you look to serve others? Are you willing to forgo your plans and needs in order to meet the needs of someone else? Are you more often concerned about showing mercy or being productive?

3. The Blazed Trail (Luke 10:36-37)

Jesus once told another parable about mercy. It is commonly known as The Unforgiving Servant, but others know it as The Unmerciful Servant (Matt. 18:21-35). It is a shocking contrast between mercy and cruelty with a clear point: those who have been shown mercy ought to show mercy. Or we may relate it this way: it is good and fitting for those who have been shown great mercy to show mercy to others. The opposite took place in the parable, and that is what is so shocking about it. But Jesus didn’t tell the parable to entertain His audience. Rather, He told it because we often slink back into patterns of mercilessness despite the great mercy that we have received.

 **How have we been shown mercy by God?**

Ephesians 2:4-5 sums it up like this, “But God, who is rich in mercy, because of his great love that he had for us, made us alive with Christ even though we were dead in trespasses. You are saved by grace!”



Why should the mercy that God has shown us draw out our souls to show mercy to others?

Good works are good. Just because we weren't saved by our works doesn't mean that they have no place in our new lives in Christ. Quite the opposite. We pursue a life of joyful obedience (good works) to God's Word. That's why Jesus said, "If you love me you will keep my commandments" (John 14:15). John Tweedale wrote, "Far from undermining the gospel of grace, good works are the perfect complement to the gospel."³

On this subject, Richard Sibbes wrote, "We have this for a fountain of truth, that there is more mercy in Christ than sin in us."⁴ This truth causes our hearts to leap with joy (another Godward affection), but it doesn't end there: Godward affection always leads to godly living. If we have truly experienced the mercy of God, then we will, however imperfectly, show mercy to others.




Application: How do good works of mercy, grace, and compassion adorn the gospel that you claim to believe? What needs to change?

Conclusion

The parable of the Good Samaritan shows us that we are to show mercy to others in the same way God has shown us mercy. This begins with Godward affection that recognizes the compassion we have been shown by God and that we are to show to others. Secondly, we must act on these affections in line with the character and Word of God. As Jesus reminded us in this parable, we are called to go and do likewise. God has shown us endless mercy in the person and work of Jesus. Now we are called to go and show that same mercy to others, that they might come to know the same salvation.

 How do feelings or “affections” relate to the truth of Scripture?

 Are you a merciful person? What opportunities have you had recently to show mercy? Did you? Why or why not?

 If you lack mercy, what practical steps can you take in order to become more compassionate and merciful?

 How has God’s mercy affected you? Does it compel you to show mercy to others? Why or why not?

CHRIST CONNECTION: Jesus Christ embodied the compassion and mercy that the Good Samaritan symbolized. Those who are in Christ will also love their neighbor in this way.

MISSIONAL APPLICATION: The parable of the Good Samaritan helps Christians to capture a biblical vision of mercy and loving one’s neighbor. Today, Christians may look for opportunities to serve their neighbors in the same way that the Samaritan served the Jew.



FOR NEXT WEEK

The Parable of the Rich Fool

Main Passages

- Luke 12:13-21

Session Outline

1. Myopia of the Heart (Luke 12:13-14)
2. A Warning (Luke 12:15)
3. Temporary Treasures (Luke 12:16-21)

Memorize

He answered, “Love the Lord your God with all your heart, with all your soul, with all your strength, and with all your mind,” and “your neighbor as yourself.”

- Luke 10:27, CSB

Daily Readings

- Monday - Luke 10:1-12
- Tuesday - Luke 10:13-16
- Wednesday - Luke 10:17-20
- Thursday - Luke 10:21-24
- Friday - Luke 10:25-37
- Saturday - Luke 10:38-42

References

¹Henry, Matthew. *Matthew Henry Commentary on the Whole Bible*. Nashville, TN: Thomas Nelson, 1997.

²Edwards, Jonathan, and John Edwin Smith. *Religious Affections*. New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1987.

³“What Is Our Response?” by John Tweeddale.” Ligonier Ministries. Accessed December 03, 2020. <https://www.ligonier.org/learn/articles/what-our-response/>.

⁴Sibbes, Richard. *The Bruised Reed, and Smoking Flax: Some Sermons Contracted out of Mat. 12, 20, at the Desire and for the Good of Weaker Christians*. London: Printed by J.G. for R. Dawlman, and to Be Sold by Henry Cripps, 1980.