

THE PARABLE OF THE GOOD SAMARITAN

Final Week of the 4-Week Series, "Parables of the Bible"

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So, a man and woman were traveling on a train, and they were sitting across from each other and every few minutes the man would smile at the woman. After this went on about three or four times, the woman leaned towards him and said, "Every time I see you smile, it makes me want to invite you back to my place."

And the man's eyes kind of popped up a little bit. And he said, "Are you single?"

And she said, "No, I'm a dentist." [Congregants laugh]

So, how many people have ever said something unkind or not so caring to someone that you regret saying? Anybody ever said ...? And how many people ever had the opportunity to help somebody, but you made an excuse, because you really didn't like them and didn't want to help them? Anybody? And how many people have ever helped a total stranger, maybe carrying something or picking up something that fell. And that, even though you didn't know them, you still felt so great doing something good for someone else. Anybody had that feeling?

You know, today we are in the fourth and final week of our "Parables of Jesus" series. And, you know, parables are just common, simple everyday stories that hold a deeper spiritual meaning that helps us to feel a greater connection to God, and to have a greater experience of the kingdom of heaven right here and now.

Week #1 we looked at the Parable of the Seed Growing Secretly, which is about having faith in the seeds of possibilities, and trusting the growth and unfolding process that will lead to harvest. And realizing there are harvests going on all the time; we don't need to wait! That many, many good things are ready for harvest.

The second week we looked at the Parable of the Lost Sheep, which was really about parts in us that feel lost that we need to connect with and bring back to feel a sense of wholeness.

Last week we looked at the Parable of the Two Sons. And that was really about being impeccable with our word. Both the sons said something and did opposite. And it's about being alignment with our words, our thoughts, and our intentions to be a greater channel for God's good to flow through us.

Today we're going to look at the Parable of the Good Samaritan. It appears in Luke 10, Verses 25- 37. And I'll read it now:

"An expert in the law stood up to test Jesus. 'Teacher,' he said, 'What must I do to inherit eternal life?'

He said to him, 'What is written in the law? What do you read there?'

And the law expert read, 'You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart and all your mind and all your soul and all your strength, and your neighbor as yourself.'

And he said to him, 'You have given the right answer. Do this and you will live.'

But wanting to vindicate himself, the man asked Jesus, 'Who is my neighbor?'

Jesus replied, 'A man was going down from Jerusalem to Jericho and fell into the hands of robbers, who stripped him, beat him, and took off, leaving him half dead. Now, by chance, a priest was going down the road and, when he saw him, passed by on the other side. So likewise, a Levite, when he came to the place and saw him also passed on the other side. But a Samaritan, while traveling, came

upon him, and when he saw him, was moved with compassion. He went to him and bandaged his wounds, treating them with oil and wine. Then he put him on his own animal, brought him to an inn, and took care of him. The next day he took out two denarii and gave them to the innkeeper and said, 'Take care of him, and I will come back and repay you whatever more you spend.' Which of these three do you think was a neighbor to the man who fell to the robbers?'

He said, 'The one who showed him mercy.'

Jesus said, "Go and do likewise."

You know, this famous parable is clearly about the importance of expressing compassion and love and care towards anyone in need of help. And they focus on the second commandment to love others as yourself. And he asked the question, "*So who is my neighbor?*" And this parable really answers that question. Sometimes we think it's everyone we know or people we like, but the parable is clearly saying it's everyone -- whether you know them or not; whether you like them or not. If they are in need, that is your neighbor.

The Samaritan didn't care what race; didn't care what religion; he didn't even know him at all. All he saw was a neighbor -- another human being -- in need of help, and he helped him immediately. Jesus ends the parable by telling the law expert and all of us, "*Go and do likewise.*" Help others. Demonstrate compassion and care and support and kindness to everyone.

How many people know, as much as you love, that you still know you could be more compassionate and caring of others? You know, the face value message is clear and very powerful, but the metaphysical message takes it a little bit deeper. And I think there's a lot for us to gain from it.

We know that, when we look at a Bible story metaphysically, we look at it in a way that all the characters represent some aspect or dimension in us. We don't look at one character and say, "*That one's good and that one's bad.*" We look at the whole story saying that those are different qualities and aspects in ourselves. And if we want to make greater progress spiritually, understanding all aspects of ourselves helps us to get to a greater place to know our oneness with God and experience the kingdom of heaven right here and now.

There's six characters, I will say, and I'm going to share them and what they represent for us.

The law expert represents the part in us that feels like we've got it down spiritually. That we're living our best life. But there is still something in us -- in that area -- that feels like there's something more that we want. And so he's asking, "*How do I experience eternal life? How do I experience more fulfillment?*"

And Jesus says to him, "*Well, what's the law say?*"

And he said, "*Well, it says, 'Love God with all your heart and love others as yourself.'*" And then Jesus realized the man knows the letter of the law; he just doesn't know the spirit of the law. He knows the thought of love, but he hasn't fully embodied it. And the yearning that he's having can only be gained and filled by embodying and discovering Divine love within himself.

The man that's beaten represents a part of us that sometimes feels a little beat up; you know, defeated and mistreated. Feeling wounded or abandoned or traumatized. It's a part of us that sometimes that we could put ourselves in harm's way, and sometimes have to reap the repercussions where we need some help or support.

The robbers represent some aspect in ourselves where we rob ourselves of our lives in fulfillment by procrastinating, or by being lazy, or not trying or not planning. Or allowing ourselves to have energy leaks that we don't realize are depleting and robbing and cheating ourselves of a fuller life.

The priest represents that aspect in us that doesn't want to get involved. That doesn't want to get hurt; that doesn't want to be bothered; that would rather go on the other side and completely ignore and avoid and not take any risk or chance in reaching out and helping someone else.

The Levite represents an aspect in us that judges others negatively ... you know, that can pre-judge and be very rigid in how we see other people. Interestingly, the Samaritans were very much judged. They were mixed-race people, and they were thought of as being inferior and less than. And they were looked down upon.

The Samaritan really represents that Christ's presence and the fullness of God's love and compassion and kindness and care within ourselves.

You know, even in this interpretation, it's very clear this is about love. And it is about inviting all of us to be a greater expression of compassion by avoiding and getting rid of the barriers that prevent us from opening our hearts and seeing everyone as a child of God.

And so, we're going to look at three lessons today that we can glean from the Parable of the Good Samaritan.

The first one is to **FEEL AND EXPAND THE DIVINE LOVE THAT IS WITHIN ALL OF US**. You know, sometimes we all limit who we share our love with. We tend to only share our love with people we love and people we like. And, you know, this parable is saying expand your heart and your capacity for love and compassion to everyone. You know, to be willing to love everyone and see everyone as a child of God.

You know, the word "heaven" comes from a root word that means expansion. And we believe that heaven is really an expansion of our consciousness. The more that we expand our faith is an experience of heaven; the more we expand our love; the more we expand our joy -- they are all experiences of heaven. We are here to expand. However much love we're feeling now, we are here to expand it to a greater level of capacity.

You know, I saw a quote and it said, "*Life is not about having the most. It's about loving the most.*" There's no coincidence that the greatest commandment is to love. That is direction we have been given: to love God; love ourselves; and love others.

Paul said if we want to have a fulfilling life, love is the way. Love is the way to have a fulfilling life. That means that we've got to bring love alive in our lives ... not just as an idea, but as a feeling and an expression. To open our minds and our hearts to love; to open our actions and our interactions to greater levels of love.

Ervin Seale says, "*The fulfillment in love is creating a consciousness of good will towards ourselves and others and to be at peace with ourselves and with others.*"

Psalms 119 says, "*Great peace have they that love Thy law; nothing can make them stumble.*" And what this is saying is that, when we realize the fullness of God's love in us, that there will be full peace. There will be healing; there will be sense of oneness and a connection that we will feel with all people. And we will open ourselves to bring forth more good in our lives and in our world. But we need to discover and embody and bring to life the fullness of that Divine love within ourselves.

You know, in Genesis it says that we have been created in the image and likeness of God. And if God is love, that means every one of us is created in the image and likeness of love. That love is our nature. Love is our true identity. That love is already within all of us.

The question is: Are we willing to bring it alive and share it and express it fully?

Emmet Fox, the great spiritual writer, says this about the power of love. He said, *"There is no difficulty that enough love will not conquer; there is no disease that enough love will not heal; there is no door that enough love will not open ... It makes no difference how deep set the trouble; how hopeless the outlook; how muddled the tangle; or how great the mistake. a sufficient realization of love will dissolve it all. If only you could love enough, you would be the happiest and most powerful being in the world."*

How many people would say that you believe what he wrote? That if you could love, we would be the most happy and powerful being in the world? I mean, love is the greatest energy and love is the reason that we're all here.

How many people have heard of HeartMath? Anybody heard of HeartMath? They really believe that the heart has an intelligence. And that one of the things we need to do is to get what they call heart coherence to be fully aligned and have a fully open heart. And they say one of the ways to do it -- because human beings tend to close; we tend to close our hearts pretty often -- that we need to check in frequently to see if our hearts are open or closed.

Everybody take a deep breath right now. And go to your heart space and ask yourself: Is your heart open now or is it closed? Or would you say it's partly open or partly closed?

And one of the things they say is that ... They have a thing online that you should really check out. It's a two-minute heart coherence exercise to help you go to your heart and begin to open it. Because we cannot express the fullness of God's love unless we are willing to open our hearts.

Everybody, let's do it now. Take a deep breath for a second. And I want to go to your heart and I want you to feel God's love in your heart. And just breathe love into that space. Just feel God's love. And as much love as you feel for God in your heart right now, I want you to take a deep breath and expand that love even more. How much more of God's love can you feel? Again, deep breath. Just expand and open your heart to feel the love of God. And I want you to take another deep breath.

And now, I want you to open your heart to feel the love you feel for yourself. Feel how much love you feel for you. And I want you to take a deep breath, and see if you can expand the amount of love that you feel for you. Another deep breath. Expanding your self-love; your willingness to love you.

And now, let's turn to the love that we feel for the people in our lives; the people we love. Feel how much love you feel for your family, your friends, the key people in your life. And take a deep breath and see if you could expand to experience and feel more love for them.

And finally, I want you to think of someone in your life you're struggling with right now. And feel how much love in your heart you feel for them. And feel how much more you can expand to. Take a deep breath and expand your heart to feel more love for them; to be willing to feel more love for them.

And finally, just feel love. Put a little smile on your face and feel the joy of love: the fullness of God's love and the glory of God's love within you.

And now just open your eyes. How many people feel your heart a little more open than it was a few minutes ago? Sometimes people feel uncomfortable with these kind of exercises, but they actually work. The more we take time to notice, *"Is my heart open or is my heart closed?"* And you don't have to do it that long, but to intentionally take time to open your heart because that connects us with the Divine love within ourselves. The more love we open our hearts to, the more peace, the more joy, the more harmony in our relationships, the more success and fulfillment, the greater channel we can be to let more good into the world.

So, this week, check, *“Is my heart open or closed?”* And do a little exercise just to open your heart. Take time. The first thing we've got to learn, that the Samaritan did, is to feel and expand the Divine love within ourselves. That is the foundation.

And then the second one is to **JUDGE NOT**. You know, most of us don't think we judge. You know, we're like the person who once said, *“I am grateful that I am not as judgmental as all those censorious, self-righteous people that surround me.”* [Congregants laugh]

Now, judging is something that's actually built into us. Judging is a way that we perceive the world and determine where we fit in or what is safe and what is not. You see, judging: you know, we look and notice things that we like and notice things that we would rather avoid. And it's important to judge.

Judging gets to be difficult when we think that we're superior than other people; that we're different than they are. And that sense of separation and division creates a disconnect within ourselves, and a disconnection in our relationships and our overall experience of life.

You know, everybody judges. Did you know that the Greeks thought every foreigner was a barbarian? And Jews thought strangers were all Gentile dogs? And Muslims thought every alien was an infidel? We still divide groups in our lives today politically, religiously, all kinds of different ways. Republicans and Democrats; Christians and Muslims; black and white; rich and poor. And we not only look at the divisions; we judge them.

You know, it's interesting that Jesus called this the Parable of the Good Samaritan. And the reason is: Samaritans were absolutely judged as being less than, mixed race. So, the fact that he put “good Samaritan”; that would be like saying a good ... let's say criminal; a good bad person. Because back then, they weren't considered good. So, the fact that he put a Samaritan in the story -- someone who was judged and put down, and a character who actually doesn't judge -- was a powerful, powerful message for the day. And I still think a powerful message for us now. Someone for whom they had no compassion is the one who just demonstrates compassion.

Apparently, you're not as excited as I am about that, but I think it's really cool. [Congregants laugh] How many people have ever saw someone, and passed by them, and you passed judgment on them because of the way they look? Without even talking to them or knowing them? And how many people have ever thought someone was a jerk, and you got to know them and they were? And you felt justified in your judging! [Congregants laugh] And he ... I'm not judging; I'm just stating the facts! Just the facts! [Congregants laugh]

Either way, judging is not healthy for ourselves and our relationships. It is harmful to ourselves and our relationship. So judging is tough, because there's some of it natural that's important, but some of it is very harmful. Here are three things we can do to help ourselves, not judge.

The first one is to know that whatever judgment we have towards someone, that that's not the entire story of who they are. We might know them in some way where they come across in a negative way, but that's somebody's mom; or someone's dad; or someone's friend. That's somebody's hero. They may show up ... And we have to realize: that's *my* judgment; that's *my* experience ... but that's not the totality of who that individual is. And I think that's an important thing for all of us to remember. That there's good and positives in them; even though I can't see it myself in the moment, that is the truth of who they are.

And then the second one is to try to understand ... instead of trying to change somebody, try to understand where they come from. Sometimes we think somebody is standoffish and they're cold and they're not a warm person. Well, maybe they're an introvert. Maybe they're just not built that way -- to be as friendly and outgoing. We don't know all the stories. And sometimes, just understanding them --

you're not asking them to change -- but it kind of switches our perspective a bit in how we relate and understand them. Walt Whitman said, *"Be curious, not judgmental."* Find out a little more. Instead of just placing judgment, find out a little. Learn more, and it can help us be more accepting.

And then the third one is to look within. To ask ourselves -- when we get triggered and we really judge someone as being a certain way -- ask ourselves: *"What in me is getting triggered?"* You know: *"What in me do I maybe need to see with different eyes or have a higher spiritual perspective?"* Or, *"What in me is this trying to heal or awaken me to?"*

You know, Jesus said, *"Judge not lest ye be judged."* And he said that for three reasons. Number one, the reason to not judge is just -- when we judge others -- that judging negative energy comes back. We attract more of that in our lives. The second thing -- the reason not to judge -- is judging blocks the flow of love and peace in our lives. And third is that -- when we judge -- it stops us from seeing the truth that we're all children of God. We're all God's beloved children, all created the image and likeness of God. We're all brothers and sisters. When we judge, it stops us from seeing the truth of our oneness.

And so, you know, judging is a thing that we all do that's built into us. But we, as spiritual beings, need to go to a higher level and be aware of how that judging can affect us and limit our ability to feel a connection of oneness ... but also to express love and to feel a sense of closeness.

And then the final thing is that this teaches -- that the Samaritan teaches -- is a willingness to be there; a **WILLINGNESS TO SHOW UP AND TAKE A STAND FOR LOVE AND CARE AND COMPASSION**. You know, the Samaritan absolutely was willing to be there. In today's vernacular, you would say he had the beaten-up guy's back. And I'll tell you; hear all that he did. He stopped. He tended to his wounds and bandaged him up with oil and wine. He put him on his donkey. He took him to an inn. He stayed with him all night, because they said the next day. And the next day, he gave two denarii and paid for the inn. And then he even said to the guy, *"If this doesn't cover it, I'll come back and I'll cover that."* And so, what they're trying to say is: the Samaritan was willing to do whatever was needed to help. It is a powerful and important thing.

So let me ask you a question: When you are feeling beaten up, and things aren't going well, how well do you show up for yourself? How much of your back do you have when things aren't going well for you? Are you compassionate? Are you caring? Are you supportive? are you encouraging of yourself?

And what about those people in your in your life that you love? You know, how are you there when things are going so well? How are you there to have their backs when they're hurting or when they're feeling alone?

And also for strangers ... How do we show up when we see someone hurting that we may not know? In what ways do we have the backs of people that we don't know? You know, the Samaritan didn't hesitate to go. Because that is a part of our spiritual work: is to be a stand for love to be a stand for compassion for everyone

Ervin Seale -- who wrote a book called *Live and Learn* -- said the good Samaritan was so centered in Divine love. And it said he showed up, and he used the word "magnanimous." He was magnanimous, which means to be generous and forgiving. And not petty or holding on to little things, but being selfless; being charitable; being caring and thoughtful. You know the word "magnanimous," the root word of it means great-minded. Someone whose mind is so great, they don't see divisions and separations; just an open, willing heart who wants to care; who wants to help; who wants to support and bring more good into the world.

And it's not about bandages. It could just be a smile. It could be a hug. It could be a kind word. It could be any kind of support or encouragement. You know, it could be lending a helping hand. It could be

giving advice. It could be giving respite care. It could be giving some encouragement. That every one of us here is to be a stand for love, and to reach out and connect and express that love to one another. That's the great commandment!

He was an angel to that guy that was beaten up. How many people have ever had some stranger or some family member or friend, at a really low and difficult time in your life, help in some way that comforted you and made a difference? Anybody ever help you out at a tough time? Could you imagine what the beaten-up guy felt like? That he was beaten up and left for dead. And here is this Samaritan that takes time and care to be with him; to take care of him; and to pay for him to be at the inn. Could you imagine how good he must have felt? That's the feeling we're meant to give to one another: to help and support and encourage our family, our friends and strangers.

Let me give you three quick stories that I've shared before. First one: years ago, I wanted to be a professional speaker and I joined Toastmasters. It's hard to try and get paid. I was having a difficult time. It's hard to make a good career when you're not getting paid. And so I said to my brother, I said, *"I quit, man. I'm trying to do this thing. I can't get gigs."* And I said, *"Could you help me I had a way to get an accounting job."* My dad was into that and so was he.

And he said, "No! No! That would be wrong." He said, *"I'll help you do some marketing. I'll help you; we'll get some gigs."* He said, *"You're meant to do this. Don't give up on your dream; keep going."*

And I believed him! And he got me some gigs, and it was great. But the thing that I love about it is: I was ready to give up. I was down. And he said, *"I believe in you; I'll help you!"* And it made a huge difference.

My best friend's name was Vivian Dafoe. When my dad died, on the day he was buried, there was a huge, huge Canadian ice storm. Thick storm. Two people fell and were seriously injured. We almost dropped the casket. I have five brothers; we were all supposed to be pallbearers. I couldn't. And so Vivian -- my best friend -- was my substitute. And then, so, they were taking the casket up to where the hole was, and it was a kind of hill. I could, because of the ice, only stand about 60 yards away, holding on to the car at the road, and not be with my family. Vivian was all up there with them. And then, after about 10 minutes, I saw Vivian walking down very carefully to not fall in the ice. He walked right to me and gave me a hug, and I wept in his arms. At that moment, my best friend left my family there, because he knew I was alone and couldn't be with them. And he hugged me. And still to this day, that means so much to me.

When my car accident happened many, many years ago, it was in a very rural place. It was just grass and maybe the odd house or farm. And so, it was very isolated. So, the car accident happened; I got thrown and hit by the car. Anyway, I'm there and I'm bleeding; I'm in pain. Some guy stopped and came, and he grabbed my hand. He said, *"Son, everything's going to be okay. Everything. I'll be right here. I'll be right here. Everything's going to be okay."*

And so, I closed my eyes. because it was in pain, wishing I could pass out.

And so the guy says, *"What's your name?"*

I said, *"It's Richard Maraj."*

He said, *"Where do you live?"*

"I live in Hamilton, Ontario."

"What day is this?"

"It's July the 1st; it's Canada Day."

And a couple of minutes go by, and the guy says, *"What's your name?"*

I said, "My name is Richard Maraj."

"What day is it?"

"It's July the 1st, Canada Day."

"Where do you live?"

"I live in Hamilton."

Pain getting worse; laying there. A couple of minutes to go by. The guy says, "What's your name?"

I said, "My name is Richard Maraj. Man, I don't want to talk to you. I really don't want to talk to you!" [Congregants laugh] And I smiled a little bit.

Anyway, the ambulance came; they put me in. And, you know, in the ambulance, they put you in headfirst, so you're looking out the back. And then, as they were about to close the doors I see the guy. And he's there with a fist as if to say, "Kid, hang in there. Everything's going to be alright." And they closed the doors. And I never saw that guy again, but I'll tell you: he was my good Samaritan. He was an angel that made a difference.

And so I told you a family member; a friend; and a total stranger. People can help us! We are all here to love one another, if we're willing to open our hearts, you know?

A young minister was listening to a seasoned minister. And the congregation was, first, engaged in the talk. And, after a while, they started getting bored. So, the savvy older minister said something that would catch their attention, and he said, "The best years of my life were spent in the arms of another man's wife ... my mother." [Congregants laugh]

And they got ... and so he got their attention! And the young guy thought, "Wow, this is bright! 'm going to save this one day for when I get to do a talk."

So he got invited a month later to a different church, and he was doing the talk. And he started out okay, but then they started getting all bored. And so he said, "Let me try the trick."

So he said, "The best years of my life were spent in the arms of another man's wife ..."

And the old ladies' jaws dropped; the old guys were all perked up. Everybody was paying attention to him. He was so overwhelmed, with this many people looking at him, his mind went totally blank. [Congregants laugh] And he thought, "Let me say that line over again, maybe it'll come to me."

And then he said, "The best years of my life were spent in the arms of another man's wife." And he said, "And for the life of me, I can't remember who she was." [Congregants laugh]

So, if you remember only one thing, I want you to remember that love is the greatest commandment. That love is the reason that we're here. Love is a power that everyone has within us, if we open our hearts to express it. Paul said that love is the fulfilling of the Law. Love is the thing that makes life meaningful and fulfilling! But we've got to bring love alive! You know, we've got to be willing to feel and expand that love in our hearts. We've got to be willing to not judge, and to open our hearts to see that we are all one. And, finally, to be willing to be there: to be there as a stand for love, care and compassion to our family, friends and strangers.

Fulfilling of the law of love and the law of life. That is the message in the Parable of the Good Samaritan.

God bless you all.