

THE PARABLE OF THE GOOD SAMARITAN

Final Week of the 4-Week Series, "The Parables of Jesus"

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An older couple was in bed in their home out in the country during a really bad thunderstorm. And there was a surprising knock at the door, and the husband went downstairs to see who it was. A man stood there soaking wet in all of his clothes and said, "Can you please give me a push?"

The husband gave a response with a resounding "No!" and slammed the door in his face.

He went back up to the room, and his wife said, "Who was that?"

And the guy said, "Oh, some guy wanting a push in this awful weather."

And then the wife said, "Honey, don't you remember our wedding night? We got stuck in the mud, and some nice man came and gave us a push out."

The husband quickly realized that he should have helped this man, and he went outside to help him, and he put on his jacket and his boots and everything. He went out on the porch, but he couldn't see the man, and he yelled out, "Hey, buddy, do you still need that push?"

And the man yells back, "Yes, please."

And the husband says, "Well, just tell me where you are." And the man responds and says, "I'm over here on your swing set." [Congregants laugh] All right. All right. [Congregants applaud] I think those are just birthday applause, but thank you. [Congregants laugh]

How many people have ever had someone help you when you were in need? How many people ever had someone say or do something that was so kind, it absolutely brightened a major day? And how many people have ever felt the joy of reaching out to a stranger and giving them a helping hand?

You know, today we are in the fourth and final week of our series on Jesus' parables. And, as we know, parables are simple stories of common everyday experiences that help us get an "Aha!" to a deeper awareness and understanding of God's laws of spiritual truths.

Week #1, we looked at the Parable of the Pearl of Great Price. Week #2, we looked at the Parable of the Talents. And last week, we looked at the Parable of the Vine. If you haven't seen any of those, you can catch them online. Just click onto our website.

This morning we're going to wrap up probably the most famous parable, I think: that is the Parable of the Good Samaritan. It appears in the book of Luke in the first chapter. And it's really a conversation between a lawyer who is asking Jesus, "How do I inherit eternal life?"

And Jesus said, "Well, what is written in your law?"

And the lawyer reads, "It says, 'Love the Lord thy God with all your heart and your mind and your soul and your strength, and love others; love your neighbor as yourself.'" And then the lawyer asked the question, "So who is your neighbor?"

And Jesus replied this way. He said:

A certain man was going down from Jerusalem to Jericho, and he fell among robbers who stripped him and beat him and went away, leaving him half dead. Now, by chance, a priest was going down that road, and when he saw him, he passed by on the other side. So, likewise, a Levite, when he came to that place and saw him, passed on the other side. But a Samaritan, as he journeyed,

came to where he was and saw him, and he had compassion. He went to him and bound his wounds, pouring oil and wine. And then he set him on his own animal and brought him to an inn to take care of him. The next day he took out two dinari and gave them to the innkeeper saying, "Take care of him. And whatever more you spend, I will repay when I come back."

Which of these do you think prove to be a neighbor to the man who fell among the robbers?

The lawyer said, "The one who showed him mercy."

And Jesus said to him, "Go and do likewise."

So today we're going to look at both the face value -- the surface meaning -- of this parable, as well as look at the metaphysical meaning, where we can reveal some deeper insights and truths to help us live more fully, to live more freely, and especially to live more lovingly.

On the surface, this is a straightforward story about compassion and kindness. But it is an interesting twist in how Jesus tells it that kind of turns societal expectations upside down. The ones that you would have expected to show compassion -- the priest and the Levite, symbols of authority and piety -- did not show compassion. They chose to walk on the other side. And the one that was least likely to show compassion -- the Samaritan, who were mixed-race people who were looked down upon -- that he was the incredible example of love, mercy and compassion in the story.

To call it a "good Samaritan" was a shock to their culture, because Samaritans weren't considered good. They were more considered bad.

And so, the behavior of the priest and the Levite kind of begs the question: Who do I overlook in my life? Who do I pass by? Who do I fail to see? And who in my life do I refuse and choose not to have compassion for?

The lawyer asked the question, "*Who is my neighbor?*" And that triggers a question of how we see others and how we treat others.

"Who is my neighbor?"

There are all kinds of varying views on who is my neighbor. But culturally, they all agreed that strangers and foreigners, for sure, were not our neighbors. You know, Greeks thought that strangers or foreigners were barbarians. Jewish people thought that strangers were Gentile dogs. Muhammadans thought that strangers were infidels.

You know, back then -- and even today ... and I would say almost *especially* today -- we have a tendency to divide and separate people into all kinds of groups. Political separation, we divide. Religion. Money. Nationality. Gender. Race. We have numerous ways that we divide ourselves. And we show favor to the group we like and disfavor to the ones that we do not like or do not agree with.

And there's nothing wrong with diversity. That's fantastic! It is when it gets to the point that we withhold love and acceptance and compassion for those groups. It is when we get to the place where we create a sense of separation where we think, "*They're not like us. They're not as good as us. They're not good at all.*" And we hold back compassion at all from them.

"Who is my neighbor?" the parable asks, and also answers the question: that it is anyone that we come across that needs help. Anyone that we meet anywhere that is in need, they are our neighbor. Everyone really is our neighbor. Jesus' message is clear.

Love and compassion are not limited by social status or race or religion. And it is an invitation for us to see beyond the labels and the judgments and the divisions that we have created in our minds. Realizing

that everyone is our neighbor means that we should love everyone. We should pray for everyone. We should bless everyone. We should have compassion for everyone.

The message is saying, "Do not walk on the other side. Do not close off your heart. Don't turn away and ignore, but instead choose to open your heart to love, to understanding and compassion. It seems pretty clear in a powerful message.

Now, let's go a little deeper with the metaphysical meaning. When we say metaphysical, we mean beyond the physical. And when we look at any Bible story, we think that every character and place represents some aspect in ourselves. And that it helps us understand ourselves and in a way to utilize this understanding to help us bring forth the highest version of ourselves; to live the most spiritually centered and full life; to bring forth more light and good into the world.

So, the first thing is that **the road from Jerusalem to Jericho really represents the road of life**. That we're all moving along our own path and journey, and as part of it, there will be struggles. That there'll be hardships, and there'll also be opportunities for us to grow.

The traveler who was beaten up, who was wounded, represents the part in us that is wounded. The part in us that feels beaten up or broken or flawed, or feels hurt or feels shame. It is the part of us that feels that sometimes we don't fit in, that we don't belong. You know, that place in us that feels weak and vulnerable. And those wounds -- those places -- could be physical; they could be emotional; they could be spiritual.

Now, **the robbers represent a negative mindset and energy that we have within us**. And it could be fear; or worry; or judgment; or lack; or anger; or unworthiness. It is the part in us that sometimes sabotages and undermines -- or steals or robs -- our own peace of mind, our own level of happiness and harmony and wholeness. The robbers represent some lower nature in ourselves, where we feel stripped of our connection of unity and oneness with God, and a connection with each other.

The priests and the Levite represent a part in us that does not accept full responsibility for what we are here to do. That part of us that doesn't mind closing a blind eye; burying our head in the sand. Choosing to not see; choosing to not be willing to change. To not be willing to do what is ours to do. That part of us that makes excuses about why we can't do that, why we can't get involved, why we can't take action. And it's that part in us that gets so distracted by the appearance, rather than focusing on the personal transformation and the inner spiritual work that we need to do.

The good Samaritan represents the Christ consciousness within. That Divine Love that transcends human limitations and separations and labels and judgments.

The Samaritan's compassion represents unconditional love: an unconditional love that we're all capable of expressing when we are centered in our divine nature, when we are centered in God.

The Samaritan caring for the wounds of the traveler show us the healing power of love. How love is restoring. How love rejuvenates in those areas where we feel broken.

And, finally, **the inn and the innkeeper represent the power and the importance of community**. So this Samaritan takes this beaten up man to this inn and asks them to care for him. And it is a symbol that we need community. The community is healing. Community is nurturing. You know that thing they say: that it takes a village? It does! If we want a good and happy life in society, it takes all of us. We need each other. Community uplifts. It connects; it heals; and it nurtures us.

And so, whether it's in a church; whether it's in a small study group, that we need each other. And it absolutely makes a huge difference. Community is important. It's powerful, and it's an important part of life, and a part of healing, and a part of love.

So, let's look at the three main lessons that we get from the Parable of the Good Samaritan.

The first one is that **THE IMPORTANCE TO PRACTICE SELF-COMPASSION**. In order for us to have compassion for others, we must first cultivate compassion within ourselves. When Jesus said, "*Love your neighbors as yourself*," it implies that, if we don't treat ourselves with kindness and care and compassion and love, it will be hard to impossible to extend that same level of kindness and love and care to others.

You know, studies show that self-compassion is one of the greatest resources and ways that we can increase our sense of well-being and our ability to help others. But strangely, you know that, in all these tests, all the participants resist and are leery of being compassionate towards themselves. They are absolutely reluctant to be kind and caring and gentle and understanding on themselves.

You know why? Okay, I'll tell you. [Congregants laugh]

It is because we have been so conditioned; we absolutely believe that ... We have a fear that, if we are too kind to ourselves and too gentle on ourselves, we'll become soft. We'll become weak. We'll lose our drive and our motivation. We believe, at some level, being hard on ourselves, being tough on ourselves, pushing ourselves will push us to produce and to succeed and achieve our goals, rather than just being compassionate and nice.

How many people, at some level, have been conditioned to believe that, if you beat yourself up and if you're tough on yourself and hard on yourself, that that's the path for success? Anybody? Okay; about five of us. That's good.

And here's the interesting thing. Research shows that 100% of the time, self-compassion is always better than self-criticism. Putting ourselves down; beating ourselves up; thinking we didn't measure up; regretting; thinking I did such a horrible job; and holding that against ourselves will take us down always than having compassion and understanding. Saying to ourselves, "*Okay, you did your best; next time you'll do better. We'll learn how to do this and move in that direction*" is the greatest thing that we can do to help ourselves in our relationships, with our goals, in our work, with our health ... in all areas of life.

The Apostle Paul said, "*Love is the fulfilling of the law.*" And the truth is: we have to fulfill that law of love within ourselves first with self-love and self-compassion. There are three things that we need to do to fulfill the law of love.

The first one is self-acceptance. Anybody ever had a place in yourself where you just couldn't accept something about yourself? Or you couldn't accept that something happened? And you're still angry because you think it's unfair and it wasn't right? Or you wish this was different or that? That's one of the things we do that's really harmful for ourselves you know.

But self-acceptance is about making peace with what has happened. It's about: stop resisting it, stop hating it, and just find peace with it. No, it doesn't have to be that way forever; but find peace with, "*That is the way it is right here and now.*" That loosens up some of that negative energy and allows us to be more present, more engaged, and more open to creative new solutions and ideas to improve that situation.

But self-acceptance: Do you fully accept yourself just the way you are and your life just the way it is right here and now? That brings a great sense of peace.

The second one is self-care; that we need to practice self-care. I'll tell you, sometimes not getting enough sleep or not eating or exercise ... we give that up so quickly! It is amazing how we don't take great care of ourselves! How many people know you could do better with self-care in your life? How many people. You know that. We all know that.

And self-care is about taking care of the great gift that God's given us: our bodies. These are our body temples; they are the vehicles through which we experience and enjoy life. And it is to take care of ourselves so we could be our best for ourselves, be our best for God, be our best for one another. Self care.

And then the third one is self-forgiveness. You know, sometimes we just blame ourselves or are angry at ourselves; that we made some bad decision or this thing didn't go well. And sometimes we ... holding on to grudges, especially to ourselves, and being bitter with ourselves, is some toxic energy that we hold. And we need to be forgiving to ourselves.

I think we all get it conceptually that it's important to forgive others, but sometimes I don't think we fully get how important it is to forgive ourselves. To let ourselves off the hook for the things we may have done that's just part of life. We've got to learn; we've got to let go; and we've got to move on.

And so self-compassion requires self-acceptance; self-care; and self-forgiveness. Self-compassion is not just a selfish act. It is a divine recognition that is a creation of God: that you are God's beloved child and you are worthy of love. That you are worthy of being taken care of. You are worthy of forgiving yourself. You are worthy of accepting the amazing, unique being that God has created you to be.

Ervin Seale – in his book, *Live and Learn* – says, *“The person that fulfills the law of love within loves themselves. They are in a state of goodwill with themselves and with all others. They are at peace with themselves and all else. The person who is happy with himself is most tolerant and magnanimous in his dealings with others. He is not easily insulted; he is generous and charitable towards others.”*

The first powerful lesson we learn in being a good Samaritan is to practice self-compassion: make ourselves a greater channel of love and light.

The second thing is to **DEVELOP A CONSCIOUSNESS OF ONENESS**. You know, we're really good at focusing on what's different about us, and the divisions and separation. But it takes work to develop a consciousness of oneness: a consciousness that transcends the labels, the judgments, the division, the illusions of separation.

You know, the Samaritan didn't look at that wounded man from the lens of his wealth or religion, or race or culture. He just saw a soul in need. He saw a child of God who was suffering and needed help, and he had the opportunity to be able to help.

And he came from a place of pure compassion. You know, he didn't see him as an “other.” He actually saw him as a part of himself. He saw him as a part of us. He saw him as a part of the whole. For we are all one. We are all children of God. We are all created the image and likeness of God. We're all spiritual beings having a human experience. We all want love. We all get hurt. We all mess up. We all have goals and dreams. And we also have talents and abilities to share with the world. And we also all deserve another chance.

Jesus said, *“The Father and I are one.”* We are all connected. And we need to develop that kind of consciousness and mindset, because the consciousness of oneness is not what we think on a regular basis. And that consciousness is what gave the good Samaritan the ability and made it so easy for him to reach out and help somebody that just needed help. He was an outsider, but he saw everyone through the eyes of oneness.

And so, the man that was wounded on their own was not a stranger. He was a reflection of the Divine presence in each and every one of us. And we need to work on being able to see everyone as one, that they are a part of us.

So, I want you to think of someone you don't like. Or someone you don't see eye to eye with; someone that you've got some tension with. See them in your mind's eye. Close your eyes for a second. Take a deep breath. And sincerely, just think or say to yourself -- to them -- that, *"You are a child of God just like me. That you are a child of God just like all people. That the light of God shines in you, just like it shines in me and shines in all people."*

And say in half-voice with me: *"I am one with God."*

Together: [with congregants] *"I am one with God."* Take a deep breath.

"I am one with you."

Together: [congregants] *"I am one with you."* Take a deep breath.

"I am one with all people."

Together: [with congregants] *"I am one with all people."*

"We are all one with the One."

Together: [with congregants] *"We are all one with the One."* And take a deep breath.

You know, the Sanskrit word, "namaste" -- we're probably all familiar with it -- is the whole idea of that word. It means that the Divine in me acknowledges the Divine in you. And wouldn't it be nice if we would be able to do that?

And I realize when we're arguing with somebody, and want to rip their heads off, that might not be the moment that it'll come as easily! But if we were to practice and get there, to realize: no matter if we disagree or not, that the Divine in me honors the Divine in you. That we are still one; that we are still connected.

Because I truly believe that once we get to this place of oneness, it helps us change the way we see other people, and when we change the way we see other people, it'll change the way we treat other people. See when we get to a place where we can see and think and act from a consciousness of oneness, it makes it easier for us to express compassion to all people.

And the final thing we learn from this parable is to **PUT LOVE IN ACTION**. The last line that Jesus says to the lawyer is, *"Go and do likewise."* Go and do likewise. You know, to embody divine love means we must be willing to put it into action. That we must express that compassion. We must express that love. See, it's easy to talk about compassion, but love must be lived.

See, the Samaritan just didn't pity this guy or think thoughts of this guy. What he did was actively helped. He bandaged him. He poured oil on him. He paid for his care. He promised he'd return. His compassion was tangible. It was actionable, and it was transformative.

Jesus says that love is not a feeling, it is a verb. In 1 John, Chapter 3, it said, *"Let us not love with words or speech, but with actions and truth."* Compassion must be expressed in real, tangible ways. And they're not complicated, but they're tangible, and they are actions ... as simple as, but as powerful as, saying a kind word. Or lending a helping hand. Or being in an active service. Or letting someone in in traffic. Or opening a door for somebody, or buying them a coffee, or bringing them flowers. You know, baking them cookies or writing a card or lending my helping hand. Or smiling at them, or complimenting them or encouraging them. Or telling them, *"Thanks,"* and, *"I appreciate you."* These are powerful tangible ways that we could put love in action!

And I ask you: What are ways that you could put love in action in your life that'll bring compassion to life for you? You know, love in action happens in a number of ways and the best I think are acts of kindness.

So recently, I've been watching on Facebook, so I had to put these cute little stories that I find are just so filled with compassion. One of them has got like a deer is stuck in a fence and it can't get out by itself. And somebody brings these clippers and they worked hard, because the deer's moving around and it takes patience. And these people go and finally cut and free the deer. And they feel good. And I feel good just watching them free the deer.

I've seen other ones where polar bears have got these barnacles on them, and people are helping wash these barnacles off these polar bears. And the polar bears, amazingly, are not eating the people! [Congregants laugh] They are appreciative of the fact they're getting helped. Just watching it makes me feel good.

They had one about a gorilla saving a baby that fell into the, that fell into the gorilla cage. It was incredible! I mean, I think he just didn't kill him, which I think was saving ... because, I mean, a gorilla could have been violent, not even knowing it! And it was just so moving.

I saw one recently there was a kitten in the median on a highway. And this person stopped their car and moved across and stopped other traffic on the highway to save the kitten. Just looking at it filled me with such joy and hope!

I remember the first time I heard this Parable of the Good Samaritan; just hearing that that person stopped to help that other person just filled me with a sense of peace and hope and hope. Even as a young kid, I felt so uplifted.

Do you know scientifically acts of kindness make a difference? They do studies; the levels of serotonin in us -- the neurotransmitter that makes us feel good -- get triggered when we are kind to someone. And it gets triggered in someone when someone is kind to them. And it also gets triggered in someone just looking and seeing someone giving an act of kindness. That is how powerful compassion is!

And putting love in action makes a difference to you, to others, and to the community and world. It sets out ripples of good vibes and ripples of positive energy that bless us all!

So there's this rich guy -- this materialistic guy -- and one day he was driving his fancy car down the road. And he kept singing to himself, "*I love my BMW. I love my BMW.*" And he was so wrapped up in his own song, he missed a turn and hit a tree.

Surprisingly, he survived! But instead of calling for help, he was crying out, "*My BMW! Oh, my BMW!*"

Just then a good Samaritan stopped and wanted to help him. And he cried out, "*Sir; sir! You're bleeding! And, oh my God, your left arm is gone.*"

The rich man freaked out. He was horrified and he said, "*My Rolex! Oh, my Rolex.*" [Congregants laugh] Okay. Good news; there will be no more jokes for the rest of the talk. [Congregants laugh] I felt the love behind that.

So, one of the things I think we'd all agree on is that life isn't easy. That, even when we're successful, it is not easy. There are struggles; there are hurts; you know, there are losses that we all face. And the fact is: we should be able to be compassionate, because we all know how tough life is. It is not easy for anyone.

The Dalai Lama said if we want to experience true happiness, true joy, and feel inner peace, the thing we should all practice is compassion for others. That lowers the walls of resistance and judgments, and we get to just support and be a part of each other's lives and help create even greater things. It is the best thing we could do for our own happiness; the best thing we could do to improve our relationships, and the best thing we could do to help create a better and more loving world.

Practice self-compassion; develop a consciousness of oneness; and put love into action ... embracing, expressing and embodying the power of love and compassion. That is the great lesson in the parable of the Good Samaritan. God bless you all.

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