

Extreme Compassion – Luke 10:25-37

Last in series – Going to Extremes; Started with Extreme –

Love, Forgiveness, Evangelism, Warfare, Allegiance . . . Extreme Compassion

The time is late 19 AD – Jesus is heading toward Jerusalem; Crucified in Spring of AD 30

Only Luke records this time in Christ’s life – about 4 months fr Ch 10 to 18

Focus on familiar text to many of you – Parable of the Good Samaritan in **Luke 10:25-37**

Just said that God hides his teaching from the so-called wise and understanding

The hard of heart; Who think they know it all in their religious piety

Instead, reveals it to little children – those soft of heart, who hear and believe

Immediately, he’s confronted by a “wise/understanding” lawyer who didn’t get it

29 – show that he of all people was righteous; 33 – compassion – deep feeling of symp.

How many times has this story been repeated over the centuries?

More importantly, how often do we fail to live up to it?

Be honest – we love the *idea* of extreme compassion, far more than we love to show it

Don’t want to get our hands dirty; Get involved; Get entangled in a mess

We minimize the need, and hand pick our neighbors

Isn’t that your tendency? It is mine!

Jesus goes to extremes to counter it, teaching us that our neighbor is *anyone* who needs

help; Treatment should *always* include EC

Extreme compassion knows no color

Not constrained/inhibited by racial barriers, cultural differences, or lineage

Samaritan’s and Jews had plenty of that – hated each other just because of lineage

So much so that the Jewish lawyer in v37, couldn’t even *say* Samaritan

Racial hatred went back to 922 BC, when King Solomon died, and the kingdom was split

N. tribes formed a nation called Israel in the area of Samaria

2 S. tribes formed a nation called Judah, in Judea (around Jerusalem) – called Jews

Split widened when the Sam’s began intermarrying with other nations . . .

Prompting the Jews of Judah to view them as compromising mongrels and half-breeds

Add to that recent murders of Jewish travelers in Sam, and you begin to understand why

there was no such thing as a *Good* Samaritan in a Jewish person’s mind

So imagine the shock when Jesus portrays the Sam to a Jewish audience, not as the villain,

but as the hero

Closest analogy – cultural diff’s betw W. countries like ours, and Islamic ones like Iran

Because Arab Muslims look different and think different, there’s an inherent animosity between us, just because of our color (culture)

So much so, it’s unpopular to even *express* compassion toward Muslims these days, let alone show it

I think that’s because we take our cues more from the biased banter of CNN/FOX News, than we do from God’s Word

Base our attitude of compassion more on the knee-jerk reactions of the water-cooler brain trust, than we do the example of Jesus

Let parables like this shape your view of Muslims, not the prevailing mindset of hatred and distrust

Your neighbor includes those who are different than you – EC knows no color

Extreme compassion knows no status

Priest and Levite were too good/proud to help such a commoner – it was below them

So they avoided him like the plague

Or maybe they thought their ministry was in the temple, and that someone else could take care of the needs outside those walls

There’s a subtle but dangerous attitude

Is that you? Do you think you’re above showing EC outside these walls because you show plenty inside them?

Didn’t matter to the early believers in first few centuries after Christ

Time in Roman Empire when babies who were unwanted, deformed, or of the wrong sex were often discarded on the dung heaps outside the city gates

It was the Christians, oblivious to the lowly status of such dung-babies, who routinely gathered them up, nourished them, and raised them in their own homes

EC knows no status

It’s blind to the social circles people run in

Blind to the extent of their physical condition

Blind to their standard of living

God is not a respecter of persons (he doesn’t look on the externals); Neither should we

Sam obviously didn’t care how rich or poor the man was – he saw the need and met it

Didn’t matter if he was the mayor or a garbage collector

Didn’t matter how rough he looked; How bad his condition was

How unshaven, unclean, or un-kept

Whatever repulsion he first felt (you know what I’m talking about) – he set it aside and *helped* him

If God puts someone in your path who needs EC, it’s yours to help them

You can’t pick and chose your neighbors

Doesn’t mean you have to help them all alone – can and should enlist the help of others

Contact your SG; Church office; Alert deacons to the need

Get help yes, but don’t shirk your responsibility because you’re too busy, prissy, good

Your neighbor includes those you think are below you – EC knows no status

Extreme compassion knows no religion

Religious differences shouldn’t matter when it comes to showing compassion

For Sam’s/Jews, religious differences ran just as deep or deeper than racial differences

Just one chapter back, James and John wanted to rain down fire on a Sam village because of religious differences (9:51-56)

They refused to receive Jesus for the sole reason that he was going to Jerusalem

James and John were so infuriated, and so hated them for it, they wanted to kill them

Differences began ~700 years earlier when Sam’s developed their own religious writings and methods of worship

When the Jews rejected their offer to help rebuild the temple in Jerusalem, they built their own on Mt Gerizim

By Jesus' day, the hatred over religious differences was so ingrained that Jewish rabbis said – “Let no man eat the bread of the Sam's, for he who eats their bread is as he who eats swine's flesh.” (Hughes 391; Stein 318)
They even prayed – “God, do not remember the Sam's in the resurrection” (!)
Remember when Christ's opponents said – “Are we not right in saying that you are a Sam and have a demon?” (Jn 8:48)
There was no greater insult

In spite of all that, the Sam showed the man, presumably a Jew, EC
Who would have faulted him if he had just called 911, and went on his way?
Instead, he went *out* of his way to put his compassion to work . . .
Because EC knows no religion – religious differences don't matter

Who is it that you have hesitations about helping?
Who infuriates you because of their religious/philosophical differences?
Who is it that you hope you'll *never* have the opp to help?

Let me clue you in to something – chances are you will
Because God's not one to let you continue in sinful attitudes toward your neighbor
Chances are he'll force the issue and present an opp
Your action then, depends on your decision now
Especially with those you don't agree with; EC knows no religion

Extreme compassion knows no past

Doesn't matter what has transpired in the past
EC doesn't keep a record of wrongs – not in your home, community; not even in world
It looks past the past to see the person in the present

Remember that temple that the Sam's built on Mt Gerizim?
The Jews destroyed it in 128 BC – think that qualifies as a past wrong
And yet the Sam looked past the past, and helped the man in the present
Same man whose forefathers burned his church
Critical at the personal level, and national level – especially for *our* country these days

As despicable as the WTC attack was
As terrible, wrong, sinful, sickening, disturbing, wicked as it was . . .
It should never prevent us from showing EC to our neighbors
I'm not talking about laying down and allowing Islamic militants to maim, kill, conquer, and destroy our country
I'm not talking about overlooking their crimes
I'm not talking about embracing their beliefs, practices, or religious differences –
Especially those that are contrary to Scripture
I *am* saying that their methods, agenda, and history of wrongs should *never* prevent us from cultivating an attitude of EC, and helping them when they need it

I know that flies in the face of the American mindset these days, but we shouldn't care
Because the way of Jesus is to show EC that knows no past
That's the example of the Sam; That's the way of the cross

EC knows no – color, status, religion, past, and . . .

Extreme compassion knows no limit

How much compassion is enough? Is there a limit to how far we need to go?
Can we ever stop trying to help? Or stop offering help?
No, no, and no – our compassion is finished only when the need is met
Whether in emergency situations, or the mundane routine of life . . .
If looking for a cap on compassion benefits, you're looking in vain – there is none

“What if they don't really need my help? Taking advantage of the situation?”
Then it's no longer compassion and this doesn't apply
But more often than not, we use that as an excuse to get ourselves off the hook
To the extent that help is genuinely needed, EC knows no limit

It's not limited by the risk involved (whether get hurt or sick)
Size of the problem – can't beg off just because the need is too much to handle
Your inconvenience, time (except the 24 hours in a day), money (except what you have)
No limit to the help you should give

Just like there was no limit to the help the Sam gave; He used his own . . .
Bandages for healing (probably strips of his own clothing)
Wine as a disinfectant; Oil as a soothing lotion
Animal as transport; Money for care; Time to do it all – even promising to follow up
He used everything he had, and committed whatever was needed beyond that (35b)
His compassion knew no limit

Mentioned the early Christians taking in orphaned babies
Also during that time that epidemics/plagues ravaged the population of the Roman Empire
2nd century – killed 30% of the people; 3rd century – killed 5000/day in Rome
Read excerpt from *Christianity on Trial*, Vincent Carroll and David Shiflett about the
EC of Christians at that time (p146; fr *The Trouble with Jesus*, Stowell, 116-18)

Any pagan who could leave town when major epidemics struck, quickly did so. This was, after all, an age that had little understanding of the origins of diseases, but understood very well the wisdom of putting as much distance as possible between oneself and a stricken neighbor. [One person wrote that] the pagans “pushed the sufferers away and fled from their dearest, throwing them into the roads before they were dead and treating unburied corpses as dirt, hoping thereby to avert the spread and contagion of the fatal disease; but do what they might, they found it difficult to escape.”

The Christians' response was different from their neighbors'. They tended to stand fast in the cities and nurse the stricken – providing food, water, and basic sanitation. It was not enough to save all of the diseased, but it did save many. However, it also cost many Christians their lives.

Dionysius, bishop of Alexandria at the time, spoke of their [compassionate] sacrifice in an Easter letter: “Most of our brother Christians showed unbounded love and loyalty, never sparing themselves and thinking only of one another. Heedless of any danger, they took charge of the sick, attending to their every need and ministering to them in Christ; and with them departed this life serenely happy. They were infected by others with the disease, drawing on themselves the sickness of their neighbors, but cheerfully accepted their pains.”

Your neighbor includes those who exhaust your resources – even your life if necessary
EC knows no limit

Summary

So who are you?

Are you the Priest – too good to help?

The Levite – too uppity to get involved?

The Lawyer – too pious and self-righteous to even hear this teaching

Hope not

Hope you're the Sam who shows EC that knows no – Color, Status, Religion, Past,
Limit

God help us in that