

LOOKING AT LUKE
WHY IS MY NEIGHBOR?

Tuesday, August 25

Reading: Luke 10

Luke 10:33 *"But a Samaritan, as he traveled, came where the man was; and when he saw him, he took pity on him. 34 He went to him and bandaged his wounds, pouring on oil and wine. Then he put the man on his own donkey, brought him to an inn and took care of him. 35 The next day he took out two denarii and gave them to the innkeeper. 'Look after him,' he said, 'and when I return, I will reimburse you for any extra expense you may have.'* **36** *"Which of these three do you think was a neighbor to the man who fell into the hands of robbers?" 37 The expert in the law replied, "The one who had mercy on him." Jesus told him, "Go and do likewise."*

Dr. Scott Kurtzman, chief of surgery at Waterbury Hospital in Connecticut, was on his way to deliver a lecture when he witnessed a horrible crash involving 20 vehicles. The doctor shifted into trauma mode, worked his way through the mess of metal, and called out, "Who needs help?" After 90 minutes of assisting and the victims were taken to area hospitals, Dr. Kurtzman commented, "A person with my skills simply can't drive by someone who is injured. I refuse to live my life that way."¹

The parable of the Good Samaritan is one of Jesus' most popular stories. Even non-churched people know something about it. Unfortunately, its' popularity has not made its application any more prevalent. Few people have the attitude of Dr. Kurtzman.

A tricky lawyer was discussing with Jesus the two greatest commandments - love God and love your neighbor. Knowing he was losing, the lawyer asked Jesus "Who is my neighbor?" Instead of a direct answer, Jesus told him this story.

The audience must have expected the priest or the Levite to be the hero. After all, they were "men of God." But both ignored the man in need and "passed by on the other side." It must have brought a gasp from the Jewish crowd when Jesus revealed the true hero of the story! The Jews and Samaritans despised each other, yet it is the Samaritan whom Jesus chooses as the example of loving your neighbor. When Jesus asks the lawyer who was the neighbor in the story, the man cannot even say the word "Samaritan" but instead refers to him as "the one who had mercy on him."

It has been suggested that this parable displays three philosophies of life. The robber's philosophy was "What you have is mine, and I will take it." The priest and Levite had the philosophy that "What is mine is mine, and I will keep it." The Samaritan's philosophy was "What is mine is yours, and I will share it."² His actions were motivated by compassion. There was no logical reason for the Samaritan to rearrange his plans and spend his own money just to aid an "enemy." But mercy does not need a reason. It is motivated by love for God.

The commands to love God and love others are forever united. We cannot say we love God and not love our neighbor (see 1 John 3:16-18; 4:7-8). Our love for God is shown in our actions of love toward others. By choosing the "hated" Samaritan as the hero, Jesus makes it clear that everyone is our neighbor. "Go and do likewise."

¹ Marvin Williams. Our Daily Bread, "Stop to Help" June 11, 2010

² http://www.preceptaustin.org/luke_commentaries_3#10