

The Exemplary Samaritan
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The Parable of the Good Samaritan is one of Jesus' most famous parables, found only in Luke
Good Samaritan Laws are even part of our legal system today!

Some states require that if you see a person in distress, you must help

Other states, like Massachusetts, protect anyone who helps someone from liability just in case things don't go as planned[1]

Centers around proper behavior, considered by Biblical scholars to be an "exemplary story"

Once Upon a Time nature

Setting examples for us to either follow or avoid

Stems from the question, "Who is my neighbor?"

Really means: where can I draw a line/make a distinction/how large is my circle?

Categorizations of people important in this context and for ancient peoples in general

3 traditional divisions among Jews-

Priests, Levites (from the tribe of Levi, assisted priests with sacrifices), All of Israel

So Jesus' audience would have expected that passerby #3 would be an ordinary Israelite, instead we get a Samaritan!

Samaritans despised for departing from some Jewish customs, only keeping a form of the Torah, and having their own Temple at Gerizim

So rejected that the lawyer can't even declare the Samaritan the hero--

Jesus: "Which of these three, do you think, proved neighbor to the man who fell among the robber?" (verse 36)

Lawyer: "The one who showed him mercy." (verse 37)

Overall, the question for a disciple of Jesus is, "Am I a neighbor to a person in need?"

We aren't called to define who are neighbors are, we are called to be neighbors to those in need—authentic call to love

Basic command we have in Christianity is to love your neighbor as yourself

Breaks down distinctions that we may try to make, breaks down our categories that can be too important to us[2]

Examples of modern-day Good Samaritans (submitted by readers from the BBC News Magazine)

When John Tindall was a theological student he was preaching 30 miles north of his school. He traveled on his motorcycle with his fiancé, was not dressed warmly enough, and they ran out of fuel. Tindall recalls, "We stood at the side of road shaking with cold and not sure what to do. Suddenly a passing car stopped just past us. The driver got out, popped his boot, took out a gallon can of petrol and poured it in my tank without saying a single word. He put the tank back in his boot and drove off."

Or Ian Geddes, who was drunk at a soccer game between Millwall and Portsmouth when a policewoman came over to arrest him. But instead, they began to have a conversation, Geddes recalls, "Seeing that I was not disorderly, she asked if I was OK. I said: "Yes, fine, just having a good time." She said it didn't look like much fun and asked whether I drank often. I replied:

"Every day" and cried." She touched his arm and told him "to stop drinking. Life was too good to drink every day." Two months later Geddes got sober and hasn't had a drink in 17 years.[3]

Both instances show acts of compassion and understanding, living into the commandment to love our neighbors as ourselves and not be obsessed with defining our neighbors

Whether you're a sinner or a saint, we are all worthy of authentic love and called to be neighbors to one another. So I say, like Jesus, "Go and do likewise."

[1] Massachusetts Law Updates, "Good Samaritan Laws," 16 August 2006, <http://masslawlib.blogspot.com/2006/08/good-samaritan-laws.html>

[2] Arland J. Hultgren, The Parables of Jesus: A Commentary, 92-101

[3] "Your Good Samaritan Stories," BBC Magazine, 7 January 201, <http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/magazine-12122809>