

SERMON NOTES

From *In Touch With Dr. Charles Stanley*



A Modern-Day Samaritan

KEY PASSAGE: Luke 10:25-37

► SUMMARY

One of the most familiar and well-loved stories in the Bible is that of the Good Samaritan.

However, we must ask ourselves whether we leave it in the past, thinking of it as merely a good story, or look at it from a modern-day perspective. We certainly live in days when the spirit of the good Samaritan is needed, and the place it should be displayed is in the lives of Christians.

► SERMON POINTS

The Setting

Before we examine the story of the Good Samaritan, we must understand the context (vv. 25-29). A lawyer who was an expert in the law of Moses asked Jesus a question to test Him, saying, “Teacher, what shall I do to inherit eternal life?” Jesus answered, “What is written in the Law? How does it read to you?” In reply the lawyer said, “You shall love the LORD your God with all your heart, and with all your soul, and with all your strength, and with all your mind; and your neighbor as yourself.” Jesus affirmed that he had answered correctly, saying, “Do this and you will live.” But the lawyer wanted to justify himself by bringing into question who qualified as a neighbor.

In this passage, Jesus is not discussing how to be saved, but is helping the lawyer see a problem in his heart. He thought that being good and keeping the law was the most essential issue, but using a simple story, Jesus shows him that it’s a matter of the heart.

The Traveler

“A man was going down from Jerusalem to Jericho, and fell among robbers, and they stripped him and beat him, and went away leaving him half dead” (v. 30). The road from Jerusalem to Jericho was 17 miles of rugged and dangerous territory. The altitude decreased 3,000 feet, and there were many caves and rocky places for thieves to hide. Travelers were continually in danger, which explains why this Jewish man was attacked.

The Religious Passers-by

On the same day, two other men were also going down this road. The first one was a priest who served in the temple, offering sacrifices to the Lord. When he saw the man lying in the road, he passed by on the other side. The next man was a Levite whose responsibility it was to take care of the temple. He too saw the dying man but passed by on the other side.

Although they were both religious men, they didn’t stop to help. Since the man on the road is described as being half dead, they may have thought he’d already died and didn’t want to defile themselves by touching a dead body. So they just looked, went around him, and kept going.

The Samaritan

The next person to come down the road was a Samaritan who was on a journey. The Jews and Samaritans wanted nothing to do with each other, yet when he saw the injured Jewish man, “he felt compassion” (v. 33). He “bandaged up his wounds, pouring oil and wine on them;

and he put him on his own beast, and brought him to an inn and took care of him” (v. 34).

This was amazing kindness, yet the Samaritan man did even more. “On the next day he took out two denarii and gave them to the innkeeper and said, “Take care of him; and whatever more you spend, when I return I will repay you” (v. 35).

At the end of the story, Jesus asked the lawyer which of the three proved to be a neighbor to the man who’d been robbed. The lawyer had to admit that it was the Samaritan because he’d shown mercy. Jesus’ command to the lawyer is one we should take to heart today, “Go and do the same” (v. 37).

Our country has no shortage of needy people, but are we as God’s people willing to help? The Christian life is not something we merely do on Sundays by going to church. Our Christianity should be on display in our daily lives. Therefore, we must ask ourselves if we are merciful and compassionate to those in need.

The Characteristics of the Good Samaritan

As we study the characteristics of the good Samaritan, let’s ask ourselves if these qualities are true of us as well.

- **He opened his eyes.** Although all three men physically saw the critically wounded man, only the Samaritan looked and stopped to help. Before we can meet needs, we must be aware of them.
- **He opened his heart.** The difference between the priest and Levite’s gaze and the Samaritan’s was compassion. The Samaritan saw the helplessness and suffering of the dying man, and his heart went out to him. Even though he knew that pausing on this dangerous road could result in being attacked and robbed himself, his compassion overruled his caution. Instead of being preoccupied with his own safety, he focused on the suffering of another.

- **He opened his hands.** The Samaritan didn’t just feel sorry for this poor man, he relieved his suffering by pouring oil and wine on his wounds and bandaging them. But if he had merely treated the wounds and left him on the road, it wouldn’t have been much help. The Samaritan didn’t leave him behind, but lifted him onto his donkey, brought him to the nearest inn, and took care of him.

- **He opened his purse.** Since the Samaritan was on a journey, he needed to continue traveling even though the injured man needed time to recover. Instead of simply dropping him off and leaving, the Samaritan paid the innkeeper to look after him. Then he promised to return and repay him for whatever more he had to spend for this man’s care.

- **He opened his schedule.** The Samaritan was willing to have his trip interrupted in order to offer aid to a needy, helpless man. He put his journey on hold for a while in order to do that which was more important—show compassion and care to someone in need.

What we see in the good Samaritan is a genuine Christlike attitude. Today we don’t lack opportunities to be good Samaritans, but we must first see the needs, feel compassion, and be willing to be inconvenienced in order to give of our time and resources to help. As we allow the love of Jesus to flow through our hearts, we will understand more and more what it means to love our neighbor.

► RESPONSE

- As we look over the ways God wants us to open ourselves to the needs around us, which one is the biggest struggle for you?
- When you see someone who needs help, what prompts you to act? What keeps you from helping? At the moment, what seems more important than meeting that person’s need?

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