

THE GOOD SAMARITAN

Luke 10:25-37

Key Verse: 10:28

"You have answered correctly,' Jesus replied. 'Do this and you will live.'"

The parable of the good Samaritan has been very familiar to the people of rank and file in history, even though this parable is utterly impossible to explain by theory. It is because the parable appeals to everybody, both young and old. Most importantly, this parable reveals the compassion of God so well. This parable is a life-giving story to the servants of God who suffer, not knowing the compassion of God. Nevertheless, this parable is the second-best parable, next to the parable of the prodigal son (Lk 15:1-32). The parable of the prodigal son portrays God himself. And the parable of the good Samaritan clearly reveals what the compassion of God is like as well as who our neighbor is. Moreover, the question, "Who is my neighbor?" is the question which leads us to understand our relationship with the helpless.

First, "What must I do to inherit eternal life?" (25-27).

Look at verse 25. One day an expert in the law came to Jesus. "Teacher," he asked, "what must I do to inherit eternal life?" An expert in the law was expected to study the Bible diligently. And he was supposed to master the Bible. Those who master the Bible have the assurance of eternal life. This young lawyer must have studied the law of God. Therefore, he also mastered the Bible. He should have experienced the compassion of God. Most importantly, he should have the assurance of eternal life. But the lawyer was blind to the assurance of eternal life. This question about inheritance was brewing in the hearts of many people, out of their desperate necessity (Mt 19:16-27; Mk 12:28-34; Lk 18:18-25). It was because they were also yearning for the living water welling up to eternal life. Here we must learn that if man does not have the assurance of eternal life, he is thirsty in his soul and desperate. The Bible says that the young lawyer asked this question to test Jesus. Outwardly, the lawyer looked arrogant. Maybe he thought that Jesus

should belong to the orthodox Jews and his disciples should observe all the orthodox rituals; otherwise, they would be considered heretics. In pretext, his question was to avoid Jesus' question directly. Why did he do so? It was because he had no assurance of eternal life in his soul.

In order to help the young lawyer, Jesus asked, "What is written in the Law? How do you read it?" (26) Jesus began to talk from the point where the young lawyer thought he could understand. The man answered, "'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, 'Love your neighbor as yourself.'" (27) Here we learn that knowing the Bible is one thing. And putting what we know into practice is quite another.

Second, "Do this and you will live" (28-29).

Jesus said in verse 28, "You have answered correctly. Do this and you will live." Jesus' question to him regarding the love of God and love of his neighbor was a favorite passage for the Jews. Jesus asked this question to know whether he loved God with all his heart. It is because one who has the divine love can have a shepherd heart. He also receives eternal life, and inherits the kingdom of God. Jesus' answer reminds us of 1 John 3:16. It says, "This is how we know what love is: Jesus Christ laid down his life for us. And we ought to lay down our lives for our brothers." 1 John 3:14b says, "Anyone who does not love remains in death." This answer unites two loves, the love for God and the love of our neighbor.

Jesus said in verse 28. "You have answered correctly. Do this and you will live." In helping him, Jesus complimented him first for his knowledge of the law. It is not easy for anyone to embrace such a proud man who came to test him. But Jesus was willing to embrace this man who was engrossed in his own superiority complex. However, Jesus did not miss the point. Jesus said, "Do this and you will live." Here, the verb "live" may well mean two things: first, to have abundant life on earth in Jesus, second, to have the assurance of eternal life and the kingdom of God as his inheritance.

How did the man respond? He said, "And who is my neighbor?" His question is the most inscrutable question because it involves the relationship problem. Since Adam disobeyed the holy command of God, the relationship

problem was not fully explained in history by any man. Only the existentialist Jean-Paul Sartre (1905-1980) said, "The best relationship is contract marriage." When the young lawyer asked, "Who is my neighbor?" it was a serious question to himself. Maybe the young lawyer did not think that Roman soldiers were his neighbors. Maybe he did not think that the vast number of Gentiles were his neighbors. In reality, the young lawyer could not tell who his neighbors were. He knew that Jesus was right. But his pride was hurt. So he immediately turned the conversation to a theological argument. The young lawyer asked, "Who is my neighbor?" His question verifies that he had not attained spiritual enlightenment yet. Third, a good Samaritan (30-37).

Jesus was sorry that the young lawyer knew the law, but had no spiritual strength to put what he knew into practice, for he studied the Bible superficially. But Jesus loved him because he was sincere. Jesus told him the parable of the good Samaritan. This parable teaches us to put what we know into practice. The meaning of the parable becomes clear when we compare the priest and Levite with the good Samaritan.

In the parable, the priest was going down from Jerusalem to Jericho. It is said that Jericho was one of the priestly cities used frequently by those who were traveling on ecclesiastical journeys. The road from Jerusalem to Jericho was a notorious place where robbers all too often attacked travelers. Jerusalem is 2,300 feet above sea level, and Jericho, standing near the Dead Sea, is 1,300 feet below sea level. Along its distance of 20 miles, the road drops 3,600 feet. This rough geological location was made for dens of brigands.

A priest happened to be going down the road. He saw a man who was stripped of his clothes, beaten and left half dead. The priest should have taken care of him, for it was a priest who was known as a shepherd for God's flock of sheep. He should take care of his dying sheep. But the priest passed by on the other side of the road. In this way, the priest did not care for God's sheep. This event tells us that he was not a priest, but an escape artist. His Bible knowledge was no more than mere head knowledge. But with his head knowledge, the priest became so powerless before the helpless. And he could not move one of his fingers to help the helpless. So he must have justified

himself with the words, "He who touches a dead man is unclean for seven days" (Nu 19:11). The priest refused to risk suffering loss. He was not a shepherd, but a hireling. As a result, he did not have the life and joy of God in himself. He was a hypocritical person.

Look at verse 32. A Levite also happened to be going down the same road which the priest had passed by. Levites were known as music ministers. So this Levite must have had an artistic temperament. Perhaps he went over to the dying man and said, "Oh, you poor guy! How sorry I am for you! And I shed two drops of tears for you. I pray that someone may come and help you, not me! It's not the proper time for me. My performance time is approaching." His emotion didn't drive the wheel of action. He hardened his heart and trudged on his way.

Then a Samaritan came along. This man seems to have been a kind of commercial traveler who was a regular visitor to the inn. Perhaps he was a man whom all the good orthodox people despised because he was a Gentile who broke the ceremonial law, and therefore, was considered a heretic. Nevertheless, he alone was prepared to help.

Let's see how he helped the injured man. Look at verses 33-35. "But a Samaritan, as he traveled, came where the man was; and when he saw him, he took pity on him. He went to him and bandaged his wounds, pouring on oil and wine. Then he put the man on his own donkey, took him to an inn and took care of him. The next day he took out two silver coins 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.'" This parable teaches us the compassion of God. This parable teaches us the mercy of God. This parable teaches us the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ and the character of a good Samaritan.

First of all, the Samaritan had pity on this dying man. He lost no time in helping him. His pity overcame all fear of danger. He did not become helpless because the man's body was badly injured and bloodstained. He acted swiftly. He skillfully applied wine and oil to his wounds. And he did not stop there. He picked him up and put him on his own donkey, and he himself plodded along on foot, steadying the wounded man on his donkey. He brought the man to the inn and generously left the money he had in the innkeeper's hands to care for

him. Here we learn that pity is the same as compassion. Even if he was a Gentile, he had the compassion of God, for he was also made in the image of God. He was a man of God even though he was a Gentile.

In the second place, the Samaritan was sacrificial. He had pity on this helpless man, and then he helped him. In order to help him, he suffered loss of his own business. He gave the man a ride while he himself walked. He spent a great sum of money. He even endangered his own life. His pity on a helpless man overcame all his calculation. He was a man of heart. We must know that a sacrificial heart comes from God. The Samaritan was a good man because he was sacrificial. To become true human beings seems to be too costly and impractical. Because of this, many people are inclined to think that selfishness is a short cut to human happiness. Selfish men are the agents of the devil. This parable teaches that the sacrificial person seems to suffer. But in the end he learns the deep meaning of the suffering of our Lord Jesus Christ. He will learn that "by his wounds we are healed" (Isa 53:5).

Who can be like the good Samaritan? There is no one. But Christ is the perfect example of the good Samaritan. Christ is God himself. But he gave up the glory and power of his kingdom and came to this world. In the course of healing the sick and preaching the good news of the kingdom of God, he was despised and rejected and became a man of sorrows. In order to raise the Twelve he had to bear all their iniquities and transgressions to the end. Finally, he gave his life as a ransom sacrifice. Thus he proved himself to be the good Samaritan. In Christ we are all, not only neighbors, but also brothers and sisters.

Jesus asked in verse 36, "Which of these three do you think was a neighbor to the man who fell into the hands of robbers?" In verse 37 the expert in the law replied, "The one who had mercy on him." Then Jesus told him, "Go and do likewise." "Go and do likewise," are very short and simple words. But when we do so, God opens our spiritual eyes and we can see the kingdom of God. We can enjoy the unutterable peace of God. We can experience unutterable joy of heaven.

"Go and do likewise," is imperative. If anyone is a child of God he is supposed to shepherd the helpless. There is a pretty and high-level lady. She

does everything very well. In addition, she loves babysitting, even though it requires a practical labor of love. The babies demand her attention day and night. Nevertheless, she is happy to stay up to babysit after a day of hard work. She is a kind of good Samaritan.

In this passage we learn that we should love the Lord our God with all our hearts and with all our souls and with all our minds, and love our neighbor as ourselves. Then God will give us the heart of Christ and make us like the good Samaritan.