

The Good Samaritan, A Story Jesus Told

(Luke 10:30-37)

by

Joelee Chamberlain

Jesus did a lot of teaching when He was here on earth, didn't He? Sometimes He told true stories when He was teaching, like when He told stories of things that had happened in the Old Testament. But sometime Jesus made up little stories to teach people things. These little stories are called parables.

Yes, in the first 4 books in the New Testament Jesus tells many stories, doesn't He? Some of these stories really happened, and some are just parables (stories that probably didn't actually happen). Some of the stories were very short, and others were longer. But Jesus wasn't just trying to entertain people when He told them stories, was He? No. Jesus told stories to teach people things. One very interesting story Jesus told we call the parable of the Good Samaritan. I don't think this story really happened, but I don't know for sure. Would you like to hear it? All right, then, I'll tell it to you.

Now, often these stories Jesus told were about things that the people already knew about. So before I tell you this story, I'll tell you about the road to Jericho and also explain to you what a Samaritan is, since these both come up in the story I'm going to be telling you today.

First, since this is the story of the Good Samaritan, what is a Samaritan? Well, at the time Jesus was on earth, the land of Israel was divided into 3 big parts. At the top of the land of Israel was the part called Galilee where Jesus grew up. And in Galilee is where Jesus met Peter and Andrew and James and John, men who became His disciples. Then, at the bottom of the land of Israel was the part called Judea where Jerusalem and the temple were and where Bethlehem was where Jesus had been born. Then in the middle of the land of Israel was the part called Samaria, and the people who lived there were called Samaritans. As I understand it, it seems that the Samaritans were only part Jewish, and some may not have been Jewish at all. Also, though they worshipped the Lord, they wouldn't go to Jerusalem to worship Him as the Lord had said, but instead they worshipped Him on a mountain in their own country of Samaria. Anyway, the Jews and Samaritans didn't get along well together, so they didn't have much to do with each other.

Next, about Jericho. Jericho is a city near the Jordan River. It was a very important city. And yes, this Jericho in the story was at the same place as the Jericho that Joshua had destroyed way back almost 1,500 years before, with the walls falling down! (I told you about that before, didn't I?) Later Jericho was rebuilt. Also, at the time Jesus was on earth Jericho is the city where Zaccheus lived, Zaccheus, the man who climbed up into the sycamore tree so that he could see Jesus walking by. (I've told you about Zaccheus before, too, haven't I?)

Now, anyone who wanted to go from Jerusalem up to Galilee would take the road to Jericho and then go along the Jordan River up past Samaria, and up to Galilee. Also, people who wanted to go to many other places would take the road to Jericho. But this road to Jericho could be

dangerous, because often there were bandits, there, thieves, who would rob travellers.

Okay, now, on to our story for today, the story of "The Good Samaritan"! We find this story in the book of Luke, the third book in the New Testament part of the Bible. The time that Jesus tells this story is, of course, when Jesus, the Son of God, was on earth. Jesus would often teach the people about the kingdom of heaven and about God. And one day a lawyer who didn't believe in Jesus was there, and this lawyer decided to try to trick Jesus. (That doesn't sound very smart of the lawyer, does it?!) Anyway, this lawyer stood up and said to Jesus, "What must I do to have eternal life?" He was sort of asking how he could be able to go to heaven some day, wasn't he?

Well, as I said, this man was a lawyer, so, of course, he would know the law of Moses, wouldn't he? Now, Jesus didn't come right out and answer his question. Instead, Jesus asked the lawyer another question. Jesus just said to the lawyer, "What does the law say? What do you understand it to say?"

The lawyer said, "The law says that you should love the Lord your God with all of your heart, soul, strength, and mind. And that you should love your neighbor as yourself."

Jesus then said to the lawyer, "You have given the right answer; do this, and you will live."

Now, of course, we should love God and our neighbor, but we know we need to trust in Jesus to be saved, don't we? So why did Jesus just say this? Well, sometimes people thought that they deserved to be able to go to heaven because they had been good. Then Jesus would show them what they were supposed to do, and hopefully they would then see that even though they might be good, they were still sinners, so they needed a Saviour. But what did the lawyer do after Jesus told him this?

Well, the lawyer, wanting to make himself look good and probably also still trying to trick Jesus, next asked Jesus, "And who is my neighbor?" In other words, he asked who it was that he was to love (besides God, of course).

Again, Jesus didn't just come right out and answer the lawyer's question; He didn't tell the lawyer who his "neighbor" was. No. Jesus wanted the lawyer to do some thinking! So Jesus told a story that was to make the lawyer think. And this is where the story of the Good Samaritan comes in!

So Jesus said to the lawyer, "There was a man who was going from Jerusalem to Jericho. As he was traveling, thieves attacked him. They stole his clothes, beat him, and then went away, leaving the man half dead.

"As the man was lying there wounded, a priest happened to be coming along the road. The priest saw the hurt man, but he just went to the other side of the road and kept going on his way.

"Then a Levite came by. (Levites helped with the worship of the Lord and were important

men.) The Levite saw the hurt man lying there. The Levite went over and looked at him, but then he also crossed the road and kept going on his way.

"Now a Samaritan man was also going along that road to Jericho. This Samaritan saw the hurt man, and he felt sorry for him. The Samaritan went over to the hurt man. He cleaned the wounds and then bandaged them. Then he put the hurt man on his own animal. Then he took the hurt man to an inn and took care of him.

"The next morning the Samaritan got ready to leave. But first he took out some money and gave it to the man who ran the inn and said to him, "Take care of this man. If you have to use more money than I gave you, I'll repay you when I come back."

And that is the story Jesus told the lawyer. Then Jesus said to the lawyer, "Now, which of these 3 men do you think was a neighbor to the man that the thieves had hurt?"

Now, who had been like a neighbor to the hurt man? Had the priest of the Lord? No. Had the Levite? No. Neither of these important men had stopped and helped the hurt man at all, had they? So who had helped him? Yes, the Samaritan had stopped and helped the hurt man, hadn't he?

But the lawyer didn't like Samaritans, so he didn't want to say, "The Samaritan was like a neighbor to the hurt man." So when Jesus asked the lawyer, "Who was a neighbor to this man?", the lawyer just answered Jesus by saying, "The man who showed mercy to the hurt man."

Then Jesus said, "You go and do the same thing."

And that's all the Bible tells us about this lawyer and about the good Samaritan.

So why did Jesus tell this story? Yes, to make the lawyer think. And to do this, Jesus used as the good person in His story, a Samaritan, the kind of man that the Jews usually didn't like and who usually didn't like Jews!

Now, as I said earlier, I don't know if the story of the Good Samaritan itself actually happened or not, but it can teach us things, can't it? Yes, we can learn some things from this parable.

So what can we learn from it? First, we learn that we should be good neighbors ourselves and help other people. But should we just help our family and friends? No. We should be like a good neighbor to everyone. In fact, Jesus tells us in the Bible that we should even love our enemies! (By the way, even today someone who helps someone else is often called "a good Samaritan" because of this little story that Jesus told.)

But we can learn even more from this little story that Jesus told to the lawyer. It can also teach us that all people are important. After all, we're all made in the image of God, aren't we?

Also, it teaches us that it isn't just the preachers and missionaries who should be good neighbors to other people. We should all be good neighbors to other people. Even children can be good neighbors, can't they?

But another thing we learn from this little story is that we can't be good enough to go to heaven, can we? After all, we don't always do everything we should, do we? And wasn't that something that Jesus was trying to show the lawyer? Yes, we all sin sometimes, don't we? And sinners can't go to heaven.

But that points us to the very best neighbor of all. Do you know Who is the very best "neighbor" of all? Jesus is! Ye-e-ss, I know! You're probably saying, "But how could Jesus be like a good neighbor to us?!"

Well, Jesus was like a good neighbor in that He helped us. In fact, that's why Jesus came to earth; He came to help us. But how did Jesus help us? I'll tell you. You see, we are all sinners, and since sinners can't go to heaven, we shouldn't ever be able to go to heaven, should we? But God the Father loves us very much, doesn't He? Yes, God the Father loves us so much that He sent Jesus. And Jesus, God the Son, loves us so much that He came to earth. Why did God the Father send Jesus and then Jesus come to earth? Yes to make a way so that we can go to heaven someday. Why, that's even better than just helping someone who's hurt, isn't it?! Just think! To be able to go to heaven someday!! How wonderful that would be!

But how did Jesus do this? How did He make it so that we might be able to go to heaven? Yes, Jesus, who never sinned at all, died on the cross for our sins. Jesus took our sins on Himself, taking the punishment for our sins. But did Jesus, the Son of God, stay dead? No, of course not! After 3 days He was alive again! (That's what we celebrate at Easter time, that Jesus rose from the dead, isn't it?) And He's still alive in heaven. And if we just believe this and then trust in the Lord Jesus to save us from our sins, He will. And then someday we can go to heaven and be with Him forever!

So Jesus didn't make a way to help us just for a little while, like if we were hurt, like when the Good Samaritan helped the hurt man until the man was well again, did He? No, Jesus made a way so that we could be helped forever and ever!

Yes, God is the very best neighbor we could have, right? He really loves us!

Well, I don't know if the lawyer learned anything from this parable of the Good Samaritan, but it can teach us lots of things, can't it? Did you enjoy hearing it? I hope so.