



Speaker:
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Christ: our Good Samaritan

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And behold, a certain lawyer stood up, and tempted him, saying, "Master, what shall I do to inherit eternal life?" He said unto him, "What is written in the law? How readest thou?" And he answering said, "Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy strength, and with all thy mind; and thy neighbour as thyself."

And he said unto him, "Thou hast answered right. This do, and thou shalt live." But he, willing to justify himself, said unto Jesus, "And who is my neighbour?" And Jesus answering said, "A certain man went down from Jerusalem to Jericho, and fell among thieves, which stripped him of his raiment, and wounded him, and departed, leaving him half dead."

"And by chance there came down a certain priest that way. And when he saw him, he passed by on the other side. And likewise a Levite, when he was at the place, came and looked on him, and passed by on the other side."

"But a certain Samaritan, as he journeyed, came where he was. And when he saw him, he had compassion on him, and went to him, and bound up his wounds, pouring in oil and wine, and set him on his own beast, and brought him to an inn, and took care of him. And on the morrow when he departed, he took out two pence, and gave them to the host, and said unto him, 'Take care of him, and whatsoever thou spendest more, when I come again, I will repay thee.'

"Which now of these three, thinkest thou, was neighbour unto him that fell among the thieves?" And he said, "He that shewed mercy on him." Then said Jesus unto him, "Go and do thou likewise."

A number of weeks ago, we discussed this encounter as recorded by Mark. There, we focused on how this ruler showed the impossibility of salvation without the intervention of God.

Today, I'd like to talk a bit about kindness, of course. But I especially want to lift up the name of Jesus as the ultimate Good Samaritan, the one who saved you when you were in the gutter of sin.

The passage we read is one of the most well-known in scripture. And it's not only believers who like to hear about it. People generally also think it a good story, encouraging us all to be kind to our fellow man.

The Jesus Christ the world loves is a teacher, a good man, who tells us to love others, and who forgives everyone, because he's such a nice person. The presentation of the saviour in this way is, I think, one of the reasons there's no fear of God today.

The real Christ, who we know, is different, as **he the holy God, manifest in the flesh**.

It's true; this passage does have a message about being kind to our fellow man. But it causes us to think of things much higher than that.

So today I want to briefly consider this encounter between the lawyer and Jesus Christ, the story Jesus told, and how it relates to salvation.

The "lawyer" here is the same thing as a scribe. They had exceptional knowledge of the Mosaic Law and taught in the synagogues. And this lawyer asked Jesus how he might obtain eternal life.

His motive wasn't good though; he was testing Jesus, probably to see if he could catch him out.

Jesus answers with a question: "What does the law say?" The answer given was perfect:

And he answering said, "Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy strength, and with all thy mind; and thy neighbour as thyself."

Luke 10:27

You might recognise this phrase because Jesus himself said these were the greatest commandments. He said all the teachings of the scriptures could be summed up by these two commands: love God, love others.

Christ told him plainly, "Go and do them". This is still his command for those who want to earn their own salvation. "Here are God's standards. Meet them, and you shall live." That is, if you kept these two commandments, perfectly, all your life, you could live forever with God.

Every one of us has spent years—*decades* even—trying to keep these two rules. We've tried to love God, and we've tried to love others. Sadly, we've shown ourselves unable to keep them for just 24 hours. This is why our confidence isn't in our puny efforts. Although we must try to achieve perfection in our obedience, we confess *continually* the merits of Jesus Christ as the basis for our adoption into God's family.

Now the lawyer's response reveals something about him. Firstly, he skipped over the command to love God with all his being. Now he was either ashamed that he hadn't done this, or he believed he was doing it by his religious life.

In any case, he sort of changed the subject; he deflected the spotlight from his own obligations to Jesus's definition of "neighbour". It's very likely that he knew Jesus's teachings were not orthodox from the Jews' point of view.

The answer from the saviour this time is in the form of a parable. We'll run through it briefly now.

In the story, a man's travelling to Jericho from Jerusalem. There's not a great distance between these two places—it's the distance from Liverpool to Southport—but the listeners would understand it was far from an easy journey, because of muggers. And that's what befell this man. He was attacked, battered and robbed of his clothes.

Fortunately, a devoutly religious man came by and spotted him. He was not just a Jew, but a priest. If anyone would be an example of charity, it must be him. But he looked the other way, as if he hadn't seen anything, and walked off.

Then came a Levite, another God-fearing man. Surely, now he would be helped. But no, he also walked away on the other side.

These were men who devoted their lives to serving in the temple. In fact, the road they were on in the story was commonly used by priests and Levites as they travelled to and from Jerusalem, because they lived in Jericho and commuted in when they were “on duty”.

So these two examples of men were either on their way to, or had come from, serving God in the temple. They were glad to conduct rituals and make sacrifices; but they didn’t understand God’s will in this respect: through Hosea the prophet, God said, “I will have mercy, and not sacrifice”.

Then the Samaritan comes into the story. Remember, now, the Samaritans were a people despised by the Jews. Generations before, the lands of the northern House of Israel had been invaded, and the people taken as slaves into Assyria. In their place were planted foreigners. So of all the people the Jews didn’t like—which was nearly everyone—the Samaritans were perhaps the worst. Infidels, living on stolen land.

Yet it was this hated foreigner who helped the poor one lying bleeding in the dirt. He had compassion on him. He bandaged up the stab wounds, and poured in this mixture of oil and wine, which was commonly used in those days. The wine made the wound clean, while the oil took the edge off the pain.

He then put the man on his own beast of burden, so that he had to walk. The victim was taken to an inn, the owner was asked to care for him, and he was given money to look after the poor fellow.

Jesus asks him, “Out of the three of them, which one was the best neighbour?” The scribe, well he couldn’t even bring himself to say, “The Samaritan”. He just said, “The one that showed mercy”. It must have killed him to say even this!

Christ ends the discussion with the command to “Go and do the same”.

There are three simple challenges to his attitude. Here they are:

- He was told how a Samaritan showed mercy, where two Israelites didn’t
- He was shown that the Samaritan showed mercy *to one who hated him*
- And he was instructed to be like the Samaritan, one who he despised

This story was devastating to the attitude of the Jews. The enemy had been cast as the hero.

Is there anything we can learn from this? Well these lessons, these outward challenges to behaviour can even be discerned by the natural man. The world can understand this: that you love your neighbour, and by “neighbour”, Jesus means *everyone*.

Think for just a minute: do YOU love your neighbour?

- *Your family* are your neighbours. Do you love them? Even your in-laws?
- *Your Christian brethren* are your neighbours. Do you love them? Even those believers who act just like the world?
- *Your colleagues at work or fellow students at college* are your neighbours. Do you love them? Even the ones who despise your faith?

- *Your fellow residents where you live* are your neighbours. Do you love them? Even the ones who let the street down by their behaviour?
- *Your fellow men* are your neighbours. Do you love all of them? Even the thieves, the degenerates, the drug dealers? You might want them all locked up. But can you still love them?

These are just a few lessons from the saviour in decency. Even if the world ignored God, if they would only treat each other with kindness—even their enemies—the world would be a better place, undoubtedly.

But there's something else here of more substance. A Christian who is truly in love with Christ and loves the gospel will see throughout the scriptures prompts which remind him of both.

I had this discussion again about whether God intends us to see more of Christ when we read the scriptures or he thinks we go too far in seeing things which aren't there.

I tentatively concluded that we shouldn't be surprised if almost everything reminds us of something of Christ. So we don't need to worry too much about whether this interpretation is valid or not. I am, though, a lot less bold about saying, "This is obviously a reference to Jesus Christ."

So if you'll allow me, I'll share some of the elements of this story which reminded me of the redeemer's work in delivering us from sin and its terrible penalty.

1. Sinful man went down from Jerusalem

This city's associated with the worship of God, and the man's heading towards a cursed city. We see in this a figure of going from the good to the bad. We're reminded of how men have all departed from that which is good and find themselves drawn towards Vanity Fair. The well-known Psalm 53 says this:

All we like sheep have gone astray; We have turned every one to his own way; And the LORD hath laid on him the iniquity of us all.

Isaiah 53:6

2. Fallen man was given over to sin and the devil

Our victim was on a road which wasn't safe, but he took the risk and fell foul of the gangs. This is what happened to our father, Adam, and this is what we all do as soon as we're born into this world. We follow courses of action which make it likely we'll fall prey to sin and Satan, and these robbers take away our focus from the word of God and anything which might lead to a relationship with God.

Even after a converting work in us, we still find ourselves robbed of joy and peace—and it's often our own fault. But whatever the cause, be it laziness in us or a test from the Lord, the solution is to make real effort, undergirded by constant prayer, to obey. Here's how it's described in Galatians 5:16:

This I say then: walk in the Spirit, and ye shall not fulfil the lust of the flesh.

Galatians 5:16

We carry out our lives with an eye to the guidance of the Bible, because it's in here we find *how* to walk in the Spirit.

3. Sinful man lost his natural righteousness

This man's clothing was lost, it says. It reminds us of that righteousness which enabled Adam to walk in the presence of Christ. When Adam sinned, it's said he and his wife knew they were naked. Although it was nakedness in the normal sense, **"being naked" before God is having your sin exposed**. In Revelation ch.16 and verse 15 Christ said,

"Behold, I come as a thief. Blessed is he that watcheth, and keepeth his garments, **lest he walk naked**, and they see his shame."

Revelation 16:15

4. The sinner is terribly wounded

The story's victim was, like Jonah, as good as dead. Although we can say all men are by nature dead in sin, there's another type of death experienced by someone before conversion which we find in the Bible.

As strange as it sounds, a man can be better off if he's never heard of the standards of God's holy law. When he hears this truth of God's, the scale of his falling short becomes apparent, and it's like a dagger to the heart. The apostle Paul said,

For I was alive without the law once. But when the commandment came, sin revived, and I died.

Romans 7:9

Just like Adam knew nothing of indwelling sin until the commandment came from God, it was when Paul knew the demands of the Law that the knowledge of his sinfulness killed him.

5. The rebel cannot be saved by the law

These two Jews who passed by are representatives of the Mosaic Law. And the Law of God is *completely without mercy*. Consider:

- The law demands perfect obedience, and will not allow for sincere effort on man's part
- The law makes no allowance for man's fallen condition
- The law is no less fierce to sinners in this age of the gospel
- The law is deaf to cries of repentance
- The law can bring no relief to a sinner conscious of his sinfulness
- And the law cannot give a robe of righteousness to the man or woman who is naked before the Lord

It tells us in Galatians, ch.2 v.21:

I do not frustrate the grace of God. For if righteousness come by the law, then Christ is dead in vain.

Galatians 2:21

That is, if you and I could get right with God through doing what God says, *then Calvary was a complete waste of time.*

In Dante's famous work, *Inferno*, he gets a vision of the gateway to the lake of fire. Above the doorway is the inscription, "Abandon all hope, all you who enter here." If there was such a thing as a gate to heavenly glory, I imagine a sign above it might say, "**ABANDON ALL HOPE OF SAVING YOURSELF, ALL YE WHO ENTER HERE.**"

It has always been the case that entrance to the kingdom of God is by faith in the Christ.

6. Jesus Christ is the ultimate Good Samaritan

HE IS THE ONE WHO CAN SHOW MERCY WHERE THE LAW OF GOD KNOWS NOT HOW TO. He had compassion, where in the law there was none.

For the law was given by Moses, but grace and truth came by Jesus Christ.

John 1:17

In John Bunyan's book, *Pilgrim's Progress*, the man tries to get rid of the sack on his back, which represents his sin. He's side-tracked and is encouraged to go to the town of Morality, where someone would help him with his burden. He is like the man or woman who tries to please God by going to church and being a real upstanding pillar of the community.

Where he ends up is Sinai, where he encounters the terror of the merciless law of God. Moses, the ambassador of the Law, stands over him, beating him severely. When Pilgrim asks for mercy, Moses says, in a grave voice, "I know not HOW to show mercy!"

Don't be distracted, friend. If you have a burden of unforgiven sin, don't make the mistake Pilgrim made. **DON'T TRY MORALITY WHEN ONLY CHRIST THE SAVIOUR CAN HELP.**

7. Christ heals our wounds

Our blessed physician says, through the prophet Isaiah:

The Spirit of the Lord GOD is upon me, because the LORD hath anointed me to preach good tidings unto the meek. He hath sent me to **bind up the broken-hearted**, to proclaim liberty to the captives and the opening of the prison to them that are bound.

Isaiah 61:1

Mirroring the rescue in our story, Jesus is the physician above all others. If you belong to God, consider how lovingly he poured out his own blood, and as it were applied it to the wounded soul, and by this healed the fatal wounds of your sin!

Does your heart not overflow with love for the one who so loves you?

8. Christ exalts the ransomed soul

The poor man has been humbled, and now he's now lifted up and set on a donkey. Similarly, when God's dealing with a sinner in grace, he exalts him.

For whosoever exalteth himself shall be abased; and he that humbleth himself shall be exalted.

Luke 14:11

Jesus Christ himself is said to ride triumphantly, and we are with him as he rides forth “conquering and to conquer”. We are exalted to such a degree, we’re said to be *joint heirs* with Christ. After all this time, I still can’t get my head around this. God didn’t think it enough to just save us; he made us his heirs.

9. Christ places us in the care of ministers of the gospel

We aren’t placed in the care of an innkeeper, but of ministers of the gospel. God has entrusted them to serve the people at his table with gospel food. Peter, in his letter, advises the pastors to:

Feed the flock of God which is among you, taking the oversight thereof, not by constraint, but willingly; not for filthy lucre, but of a ready mind;

1 Peter 5:2

This message I’m delivering to you may be simple. It may not be expressed as well as it could. But in so far as I take this word of God and express it to you faithfully, I serve you with manna from heaven. All the wealth in the world couldn’t pull me away from this servant role.

The man called of God to this immense responsibility nurtures the people with wonderful gospel promises and teaches them to grow in the knowledge of Jesus Christ. Not just historical facts, but *knowledge*, that the people might really *experience* Christ.

10. Christ furnishes his gospel preachers with all they need

You saw in our story how the innkeeper was given what he needed to look after the man who’d had his wounds looked after and been placed in his care.

The preacher of righteousness, assuming he hasn’t called himself to the ministry, is given gifts to carry out his work. The Lord doesn’t raise a man and not grant him the things he needs.

- He’s given a desire to spend time in the word and in prayer
- He’s given an ability to speak and to teach others
- He’s given a special love for the redeemed souls in his charge
- And he’s given a burden to take the gospel to the masses, knowing that the Lord has his elect somewhere out there.

11. Christ rewards his under-shepherds with eternal riches

The good Samaritan in the story considered that the innkeeper might have to spend more on the care of the saved man, so he promises to make it up to him on his return.

And so it is with our Saviour. Because those who he puts into the ministry of the gospel frequently suffer above what they expect. They find they often have to make sacrifices, not getting the recreation or the sleep they need. They find themselves, having spent all their

energy, having to go on and finish the course. But their master promises them an eternal inheritance.

And here's the thing. **You'll get exactly the same reward.** That's what I believe. I know some believers think if they dedicate themselves to the work of God, it seems evident their reward will be different than the one who has had a faint profession and done little for God.

They should think on the eleventh-hour worker. They shouldn't DARE expect more. They have everlasting life. What, do they expect extra?

For my part, I wouldn't *want* more than others. I mean I spend more time in the word than most, but it's only because you folks support me and enable me to do it. And the very burden I have to minister; the very ability to anything; the fact my life's preserved to *do* these things *is all of God*. It's by his grace.

This eternal inheritance is yours, brethren. **If you have faith in Jesus Christ as Lord and Saviour, you are rich beyond your wildest dreams.** After all, the wealth of this world will disappear.

Those who've spent their lives trying to get more money will find as they're about to leave this world what it feels like to leave every penny behind. Those who focused on getting houses and cars that'd outdo their friends will find they'd swap all their money and possessions for just one more day of life.

But your inheritance is a gift which goes on and on into eternity, and you'll NEVER be required to give it up.

Christ, the Good Samaritan. The one who the world hates becomes the Saviour of the world. He has compassion on his elect children, even though they too were children of wrath, even as others. In their natural state, they too hated God and his Christ, yet they were joyful and glad that this Jesus became their Good Samaritan, and forever forgave their sin.

The church at Rome was told,

For when we were yet without strength, in due time Christ died for the ungodly. For scarcely for a righteous man will one die. Yet peradventure for a good man some would even dare to die. But God commendeth his love toward us in that, while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us.

Romans 5:6–8

Rejoice, believer, and wonder at his great love for you.

Amen.