

## The Good Samaritan

Read Luke 10:17-37

Verses 25-37 are almost universally considered to be a parable.

### What is a parable?

Greek: *paroimia* is used four times in John and one time in 1 Peter 2:22 (proverb). Literally it means "by the way," figuratively a "dark saying" more is meant than meets the ear.

Greek: *parabola*' is never used by John; but it is the only word used by Matthew, Mark, and Luke. Literally it means to throw or place "side-by-side." Therefore, an utterance used in comparison.

The narrative of a parable is self-contained, i.e., has interest or meaning, BUT, as a parable, is intended for deeper understanding.

"A parable is an earthly story with a heavenly meaning."

A parable is different from a fable, i.e. a story with a moral message. Fables aim at earthly wisdom. Parables convey spiritual truth. Fables are not real, e.g. animals and trees, etc. that talk, i.e. fables violate nature. But what about Balaam's ass that talked? Well, that was not a fable or a parable, Balaam's ass actually talked.

In a parable, the lesson is not forced, i.e. it is true in itself.

The parable may or may not be historical, e.g. the Good Samaritan or the Prodigal Son.

### Why use parables? Cf. Matthew 13:34-35

Jesus was a "Master Teacher." A story will interest us. A mystery gets our attention. Meaning? Jesus knew what was in man; that we have a curious nature. Jesus used simple subjects that were familiar to the people of the area. He never used anything as a parable that the hearer would not understand on its surface. E.g., a sower of grain; a fisherman casting his net; a woman kneading dough.

His hearers among the religious leaders were prejudiced against the truth. Using parables, Jesus could present profound truth, but reveal its depth of meaning to whom He would. The plain statement of truth in many cases would have hindered His purpose (Mt 13:13). Thus He taught with parables what He wanted the apostles and other disciples to know - and postponed the crisis of the cross until the precise time, i.e. {His hour}.

Parables were used as a method of reproof. E.g. Nathan to David. What if Nathan had just walked up to King David and accused him? That's what John the Baptist did and Herod ordered that John's head be taken off.

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So Jesus tells of the wicked husbandmen (gardeners) who beat the servants of the owner of the vineyard and finally kill the son. The chief priests and Pharisees did not understand until the end of the parable that He spoke of them.

Jesus used parables to stimulate inquiry. The hearer who saw nothing would just turn away. But some would ask what does this mean? Jesus would often explain the parable after someone asked Him. E.g. sower, wheat and tares, Cf. Mt 13:12

When a person grasps the meaning of a parable he won't forget it. We call them "mental hooks." Dale Carnegie didn't discover how the memory works, he just worked out a profitable way to exploit it.

### **How do we interpret parables?**

The Lord gives us the clue as He explains some of them. Each parable is told to enforce one main truth. Please don't fall into the method of trying to assign meaning to every minute detail. The main point of the parable is usually discerned from the circumstances in which it is delivered.

What must I do to inherit eternal life? Luke 10:25

Often the meaning is given in the opening words, e.g. "The kingdom of heaven is like ..." Sometimes it is plainly expressed {Luke 18:9}

Sometimes the parable is given in answer to a question, e.g. "Who is my neighbor?" The Good Samaritan.

We will confuse the point of the parable if we try to assign hidden meaning to every word. Take the Good Samaritan. Jesus simply says, "Go and do likewise." But here is another version:

The man who fell among thieves was Adam. The thieves were the devil and his angels. The priest and Levite were the Mosaic dispensation. The Good Samaritan was Christ. Oil and wine were the comfort and blessing of the gospel. The beast on which he rode was the humility of Christ. The setting of the man on the beast was vicarious salvation. The inn was the church, the two pence were the life now and the life to come.

Where in all this is the great practical lesson of beneficence, which the Lord designed to teach? The parable is the simple answer to, "Who is my neighbor?"

May we all be open to the profound truth from a few simple words from the Lord Jesus Christ.

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This parable {an argument can be made that it was an actual event, “a certain man, a certain priest, a certain Samaritan”} is known as the Good Samaritan.

Its lesson is what it means to be **good!**

Let’s set the stage for this encounter between the expert in the law and Jesus.

Jesus had sent out the seventy missionaries [Luke 10:1] with specific instructions about how to conduct themselves and what to expect.

In verse 17, they have returned and they are so excited: “Lord, even the demons are subject to us, in Your name.”

That’s all good in its place, but what is really important?

“Do not rejoice in this, that the spirits are subject to you....” Verse 20,

“But rather...” “rejoice because you are saved!”

How about all those so-called preachers that strut and prance around a stage and boast about their power over illness, disease, and debt? What about this priority you snake-handlers? Satan tempted Jesus by asking Him to leap off the temple; Jesus said we were not to tempt God. Paul, while gathering firewood, was bitten by a snake and was expected to die, but God saved him.

But Paul wasn’t tempting God.

The devil doesn’t care how religious you are, in fact religious and lost people are in the most dangerous position spiritually. The devil doesn’t care what you talk about and do as long as the Gospel is perverted and kept in the background or better yet, out of sight.

Jesus, in the Spirit, praised God the Father that salvation is completely in the will of the Son of God {21-22}. How about those misguided preachers who beg men to perform some act, make a decision, or beg people to “let God save you,” when men do not have the ability to respond unless God the Son reveals Himself to them! Preach Christ, as Spurgeon said, “The sermon is the invitation.”

Then Jesus told His disciples privately that they were blessed to see and hear things that had not been revealed to prophets and kings.

And now to the parable of the Good Samaritan

## The Good Samaritan

The providence of God is indeed a mystery. Yesterday I received an email from a friend in Australia that contained a link to a sermon on Sermon Audio by John Green in Northern Ireland on the parable of the Good Samaritan. He had “accidentally” started playing this sermon that he had downloaded and forgot about. He said he had no idea how it started playing.

Now I had not had a recent contact with my friend in Australia and he thought I might like to listen to the sermon [it is really very good]. What he could not know is that I had planned on teaching on the Good Samaritan the next day.

That was just too much of a coincidence for me to mark it up to “chance.”

**Vs. 25 BEHOLD!** What was there to “behold?” Well, just as Jesus had privately instructed and encouraged His disciples about how blessed they were to understand who He is, an expert in the Jewish Law stood up to test Jesus. The lawyer is a perfect example of spiritual blindness.

The lawyer here is not a courtroom ambulance chaser but is an expert in the Scriptures and their interpretation.

His motive was not to learn, but to tempt Jesus in order to accuse Him.

Spiritual blindness:

Indulge me while I tell you about something that happened that, to me that illustrates spiritual blindness. Over 35 years ago and 35 pounds ago, when we lived in Franklin, TN, I rode my bicycle 15 miles every morning. One morning as I rode along a lonely country road I saw a dog that had gotten a hind leg tangled up in a barbed-wire fence. He was hurting, hopeless, helpless, hostile, and he was hungry, he stank, he was ugly, and he was in bondage. No one in a car would have seen him; no one walked that far on that lonely road, only Jim on his bicycle. When I approached the dog, he snarled and snapped and blamed me for his predicament. I was the enemy of his kind. But I used a long stick to keep clear of his teeth and opened up the strands of barbed wire and set him free. He contributed nothing, in fact he resisted with all of his might. His struggles only made his situation worse. But when I determined to save him, he didn't have to “let me” save him. All he could do was be grateful that I had shown him mercy. Can you see it?

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That dog was me when the Lord found me. Just like that dog I resisted the only one who could save me, but praise God, once He set His affections on me, I was set free!

Let's get back to the lawyer. He wanted to "test" Jesus and did not expect to be tested himself. The question he asked was, "Teacher, what shall **I do** to inherit **eternal life**?"

The lawyer's entire concept of eternal life was based on law-keeping.

The Gospel is not **DO**, the **GOSPEL** is **DONE**!

The Gospel is what Jesus Christ has done one time in history for sinners.

What is "**eternal life**?"

The only Bible definition of eternal life that I know of is John 17:3.

*"And this is eternal life, that they may know You, the only true God, and Jesus Christ whom You have sent."*

Eternal Life? It is not a question of how long you will live. The old Puritan preacher, Brownlow North said, "You will live as long as God lives and you will live somewhere. Either with Jesus in glory or separated from Him in Hell!" So it is not the duration of your life, but the quality of eternal life that matters.

So the law expert asks his test question and Jesus parried him by asking, "How do you read the Law, how do you interpret it?" [26]

The lawyer's answer combines two great Scriptures, Deuteronomy 6:5 and Leviticus 19:18.

Deuteronomy 6:4-5

<sup>4</sup>"Hear, O Israel: The LORD our God, the LORD *is* one! <sup>5</sup>You shall love the LORD your God with all your heart, with all your soul, and with all your strength.

Leviticus 19:17-18

<sup>17</sup>You shall not hate your brother in your heart. You shall surely rebuke your neighbor, and not bear sin because of him. <sup>18</sup>You shall not take vengeance, nor bear any grudge against the children of your people, but you shall love your neighbor as yourself: I *am* the LORD.

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Note that Jesus gave this answer Himself as recorded in Matthew 22:34-40 & Mark 12:28-31.

Here in Luke 10, it is October A.D. 29. The Matthew / Mark event is six months later during the week of Jesus' trial and crucifixion. Here the lawyer gives the answer and Jesus told him he had it right, just do it and he would live. In Mt/Mk Jesus gives this answer but the question is different. Here the lawyer is asking about eternal life; in Mt/Mk the question is which is the great commandment.

In this encounter, there is no sense of personal guilt in the lawyer;

“But he, wanting to justify himself,” [29] shows that he did not consider himself to have broken these commandments.

So he asks, “And who is my neighbor?”

To the Pharisee, it was my neighbor, the Pharisee. To the priest, it was my neighbor, the priest. To the Jew, it was my neighbor, the Jew.

How does Jesus answer the lawyer's question, “And who is my neighbor?”

Jesus answers with a story about a Jew {if the “certain man” was not a Jew, Jesus would have identified him as such} that was attacked by robbers who surrounded him, beat him nearly to death, took everything he possessed and left him for dead.

**Religion** in the form of a priest happens to pass by. When the priest saw the man he crossed over to the other side so he wouldn't even have to get close to the poor man. Next, a priest's helper, a Levite, even walked up and looked him over, and concluded, “This is not my neighbor.” And he too, crossed over to the other side of the road.

But a certain Samaritan... Do you know about the Jews and the Samaritans? Jews hated Samaritans and Samaritans hated Jews. But Jesus is demonstrating the spirit of the Law.

How do I inherit eternal life?

Answer. Do what the Samaritan did [33-35], and from the same motive.

Although the Samaritans hated the Jews this Samaritan loved his neighbor.

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Then Jesus asks the lawyer [36], “Who of these three do you think was neighbor to him who fell among the robbers?”

The lawyer gave the correct answer, “He who showed mercy on him.” It appears that the lawyer could not acknowledge that it was a Samaritan.

Jesus said, “Go and do likewise.”

Does Jesus answer the lawyer’s original question about how to inherit eternal life?  
Yes!

But the answer is not in some legalistic law-keeping. Not just by being a good-neighbor. Eternal life is reflected in the spontaneous compassion shown to anyone in need.

In the sermon by John Green he says that the Good Samaritan is Christ, or a type of Christ. Mr. Green points out that the attribute of “compassion” elsewhere in the gospels is only assigned to Christ.

The question then is not “Who is my neighbor?”

Why even ask “Who is my neighbor?”

So that I can excuse myself from getting involved.

The question is “Whose neighbor am I?”

We need to be shown mercy first; and then as a result, we will be merciful.

The story of the Good Samaritan is a picture of the Gospel. When the “Good Samaritan” found me, I was as helpless as the dog caught in the fence; as helpless as the man who was robbed and beaten and left for dead. Jesus healed our wounds of sin and carried us to a place of safety. And what more do we have to do to keep our salvation. Nothing!

When I come again, I’ll take care of it!

If the Lord has saved you, you will have as much to brag about as that old dog did when he got turned loose.

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What does it mean to be “good”? True goodness flows from knowing Jesus and being clothed in His righteousness.

Do you know of anything better to stand before God with than the righteousness of Jesus Christ?

Can you trust Jesus? Not, “will” you trust Jesus, but have you been given the ability, a revelation from the Son of God? Cf. vs. 21. Has it pleased Jesus to reveal Himself to you? Have you been convinced by the Holy Spirit that you are a sinner and that you deserve to go to hell?

Do you have any hope besides Jesus? Not Jesus and baptism; not Jesus and church membership; not Jesus and anything you can add to it! Only Jesus!

Have you been so blessed?

If you have never made a public confession of your faith in Jesus Christ now would be a very good time to do it. If you need a church home where the Gospel is preached and the Bible is studied this would be a good time to come forward and join with us.

Jim Gunn

[www.vinelandparkbaptist.org](http://www.vinelandparkbaptist.org)

March 7, 1971: Reformed Baptist Church, Franklin, TN

March 10, 1971: Third National Bank, Nashville, TN

May 30, 1971: First Baptist Church, Marion KY

October 13, 1974: Reformed Baptist Church, Franklin, TN

February 2, 1977: Vineland Park Baptist Church, Hueytown, AL

July 15, 1981: Vineland Park Baptist Church, Hueytown, AL

October 25, 1998: Vineland Park Baptist Church, Hueytown, AL

November 4, 2009: Vineland Park Baptist Church, Hueytown, AL