



A Bible Study from the LCMS Northern Illinois District

Incarnate Community Bible Study Sermon Series
Session III Following Christ as the Community of Faith



Helping congregations be more centered on a rich life of Word and Sacrament,
with congregational support in transitions as well as time of joys and sorrows.



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Incarnate Community
Northern Illinois District Bible Study and Sermon Series
Week III Following Christ as the Community of Faith – Sermon Notes
Pastor Matt Hoffmann

“Parable of the Good Samaritan”

Luke 10:25-37

²⁵And behold, a lawyer stood up to put him to the test, saying, “Teacher, what shall I do to inherit eternal life?” ²⁶He said to him, “What is written in the Law? How do you read it?” ²⁷And he answered, “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.” ²⁸And he said to him, “You have answered correctly; do this, and you will live.” ²⁹But he, desiring to justify himself, said to Jesus, “And who is my neighbor?” ³⁰Jesus replied, “A man was going down from Jerusalem to Jericho, and he fell among robbers, who stripped him and beat him and departed, leaving him half dead. ³¹Now by chance a priest was going down that road, and when he saw him he passed by on the other side. ³²So likewise a Levite, when he came to the place and saw him, passed by on the other side. ³³But a Samaritan, as he journeyed, came to where he was, and when he saw him, he had compassion. ³⁴He went to him and bound up his wounds, pouring on oil and wine. Then he set him on his own animal and brought him to an inn and took care of him. ³⁵And the next day he took out two denarii and gave them to the innkeeper, saying, ‘Take care of him, and whatever more you spend, I will repay you when I come back.’ ³⁶Which of these three, do you think, proved to be a neighbor to the man who fell among the robbers?” ³⁷He said, “The one who showed him mercy.” And Jesus said to him, “You go, and do likewise.”

Humans love to put things in categories. We classify animals in different kingdoms and species and we say “ahhh, isn’t this chart so neat and tidy!” Then along comes the duck-billed platypus. Where do we put this thing that has a bill like a duck but is covered in fur? Where on the chart do we have a space for an animal that lays eggs, yet has mammary glands? Fur covered creatures often have claws, but the Platypus has venomous hind claws! I think God gave us the platypus to remind us that some things defy our categories and definitions. And we need reminders of this.

Jesus spent much of His three years of earth ministry challenging the popular notions of WHO can be included in the Kingdom of Heaven. And He faced many challenges from people who didn’t like Jesus messing up their neat boxes and tidy categories. It’s



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always so much easier if we can draw a hard line between US and THEM. It's always easier to have some surface deep-measure to tell whether someone belongs or is an outsider. She's an Israelite, she's in! He's a Roman Centurion? He's out!

As we start our Gospel reading, we meet a man who loves those categories. *"And behold, a lawyer stood up to put him to the test, saying, 'Teacher, what shall I do to inherit eternal life?'"* This man knows his stuff, he's studied Torah Law, and he's ready to show the world his knowledge and skill. He starts off by asking what he thinks is a simple question: *"What must I do to inherit eternal life?"* He knows that Jesus will likely respond the way he does:

²⁶He said to him, "What is written in the Law? How do you read it?" ²⁷And he answered, "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."

²⁸And he said to him, "You have answered correctly; do this, and you will live."

This was only the setup to the REAL trap. The killer question meant to discredit the Messiah: *But he, desiring to justify himself, said to Jesus, "And who is my neighbor?"* Ahah! Get your way out of THIS one Jesus! This lawyer must have been patting himself on the back so hard, thinking, "If Jesus says, 'our neighborly responsibilities are only the Hebrew people,' I can hammer him!"

So far in His ministry in Luke up to this point, Jesus has healed a servant of a ROMAN SOLDIER, touched a dead body (raised him also, but let's not lose sight of the main point), let a prostitute praise Him and anoint His feet with perfume ... in public, let a woman who was ritually unclean for 12 years put a hand on His cloak and praised her for it! Obviously Jesus cannot say this.

So the Lawyer must be thinking, if Jesus says, "All people are our neighbors and should receive our love," this will be like shooting fish in a barrel! I have so many rules and laws the Pharisees have instituted to avoid Gentiles! Jesus can't win against this beautifully crafted oral argument!

But Jesus doesn't take the bait. In fact, He goes on offense and tells a story about a man "Going down from Jerusalem to Jericho." A man had to be full of confidence to take this 17 mile, 3000 foot decent down a winding, rocky, and lonely road. The lawyer could likely relate to a brave man going it alone, relying on his own abilities and strengths. But Jesus doesn't let this man stay upright very long. Immediately Jesus says, *"and he fell among robbers, who stripped him and beat him and departed, leaving him half dead."*

More than likely, even if you're not a regular church-goer, you are aware of what happens next. A priest walks by and sees the man, broken and bleeding on the road,



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and he does nothing to help. *“Now by chance a priest was going down that road, and when he saw him he passed by on the other side.”* For centuries we have tried to figure out WHY he doesn’t stop. Many explanations come up. The one I resonate with is that argument that the priest could hide behind the Law. If he touched a dead man, or human blood, he’d be unclean and therefore unable to complete his duties at the temple. It almost makes not helping seem like a HOLY thing to do. Sometimes we can hide behind the Law.

The Levite, one of the priestly tribe, also comes by and does the same as the priest. He doesn’t have the same excuse. He doesn’t have all the same laws as the priest. So he must have a different excuse. It could be anything: Is the man even Jewish? Did he DESERVE to get beaten? Even if I help, he will still likely die! You can add your own excuses to the list.

The point is, the men who should have helped, who were in a position to help, who had opportunity to help, simply found a way to stay uninvolved. The result – they kept themselves clean and neat and tidy. They got to their destinations completely unchanged and exactly on time. They succeeded in keeping everything in their right boxes and categories, all the while breaking God’s heart.

The surprise in the story. The one we don’t fully grasp is that Jesus tells of a third man who enters the scene, *“Now a Samaritan.”* I would have loved to have been there to see the looks on the faces of those hearing this parable for the first time. It would be easy to imagine them thinking, *“Wow, if the priest and Levite didn’t stop for this guy, the Samaritan is going to KILL him!”* The Jews and Samaritans had a long and storied history at this time. Over the centuries of worshipping on different mountains and arguing over whether the whole Old Testament or just the Torah was considered God’s Holy Word, they had put each other in the “THEM” box. They hated each other, and there was an ever-escalating tension that carried on throughout the passing years.

But Jesus shows us the messiness of His love, the beautiful messiness of real ministry involving real people and real challenges that often won’t fit into the boxes we’ve prescribed for them. The Samaritan is the hero in this parable. He stops. He gets involved. He inconveniences himself. And he certainly doesn’t come away neat and clean and tidy. Just the opposite, in fact.

The Samaritan gets his clothes covered with all the things your mom would yell at you for spilling on your shirt – oil, wine, blood, and dirt. We read so much in these few sentences: *But a Samaritan, as he journeyed, came to where he was, and when he saw him, he had compassion. ³⁴He went to him and bound up his wounds, pouring on oil and wine. Then he set him on his own animal and brought him to an inn and took care of him.*



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Picture the Samaritan doing this. Getting off his animal. Kneeling in the dirt next to the victim. Opening his oil and wine and splashing them on the helpless man's open wounds. Scooping his arms underneath the man's bloody body and lifting him back towards his chest. Right there, all that blood and oil and wine and dirt would cover his tunic. Never mind, though, this man needs help. And I can help him. And he does. Not just for the day, or the night in the inn watching over him, but for an indeterminate amount of time.

We are the wrecked man helplessly dying on the road. And along comes Jesus, the one who SHOULD be our enemy every bit as much as the Jews to the Samaritans. But like the Good Samaritan, Jesus shocks us. He is holy, we are not. He is righteous, we are in throes of sin. He should just let us be, but He doesn't. He lowers himself down to our level and scoops us up. In the process of healing us, He gets our sin all over Himself. What a picture of the cross and that wonderful, completely unfair exchange. Jesus takes our sin upon Himself and in its place He gives us His holiness and forgiveness and life. It's too much for words.

We have hope for one reason and one reason only. Jesus saved us. We have hope because He died on the cross for our sins and rose again from the dead. We have hope because Jesus was not afraid to enter into the hopeless messiness of our sin. And because He did, we have real community with Him.

The challenge is also there. If we want to follow in the path of our Messiah, we, too, answer the call of walking into the real lives of real people who, like us, are totally messy and messed up! But this is where the beauty of ministry is found. This is where God does His work. He came to Seek and save the lost. That's what He did for you, and that's what we do as we follow Him.

So go and celebrate God's beautiful, messy ministry. Go worship with your imperfect brothers and sisters in Christ, sit in the pew that is missing some veneer, sing a little off-key, and pay attention to that sinner in the pulpit. Go out and have a conversation with that guy who just can't stand Christians. God is working through all of us and that is just miraculous! But He works best when we serve Him together.

What beautiful mess is God calling you to walk into today?

