

Do. May - Sept 13, 1976 A.M.

HIDING IN RELIGION

Luke 10:25-37

INTRODUCTION:

The Parable of the Good Samaritan is one of the most noted passages in the Bible. It is worthy because it illustrates one of the most important truths, of the Christian religion. It gives us the answer to who is my neighbor.

We are confronted with people who have needs. And how these needs can be met in today's world. How can the peasant who is hungry in Vietnam be deprived of every nation. The poverty stricken of our own city. The question is ever the same. Can man use his resources to meet human needs?

To meet this challenge our religious faith cannot be an instrument of hiding. Our religion must be a door which is open, to the value of every person.

This is the emphasis in the program of Southern Baptists this year. In fact, this is the structure of the Sunday School in its re-organization as we begin another year. The key word will be "outreach". Every Member - Record Septem - Made an attempt to witness or enlist someone into the church's program during the past week - Now if outreach is to be come a reality, then there is no room for us to hide in our religious shelter, as you would in a fall-out shelter.

The parable of the Good Samaritan is a fine example of this truth.

Now it is surprising for this parable did not start out to be the answer to who is my neighbor, but to answer the question, what must I do to inherit eternal life.

Therefore, you consider first the setting of the occasion.

Why did our Lord tell this parable. To answer a question. The question had been put to him by the lawyer.

Now you must understand that the lawyer was a student - an interpreter of the Old Testament law. He was one who told the people how to apply the law to the details of their lives. Some of them were called Scribes. This lawyer stood up and was going to test Jesus. What shall I do to inherit eternal life.

Now being an expert in the Jewish law, he was a man who was supposed to know all the answers. So Jesus asked him, what is written in the law? How do you read.

The lawyer had a ready answer - he quoted Deut. 6:5 and Lev. 19:18. Where we have the command, thou shall love thy neighbor as thy self. And he showed that the law required perfect love for God and perfect love for man.

You are right said Jesus. If you keep the law as well as you quote it, you will have eternal life. Now the lawyer really didn't raise that question for the answer he received.

The lawyer wanted to put Jesus on the spot. So he thought of a way of escape. His next question, who is my neighbor? The lawyer is struggling with self-defense. He wanted to somehow get around his own responsibility.

You recall that Peter, even after the pouring out of the Holy Spirit, required a special revelation before he would go to the household of Cornelius, a Gentile. Because very deep seeded, he had the wrong conception. And this is the thing that puzzled the lawyer. Just who was his neighbor. Did he define his neighbor as a Jewish brother. Did he draw the lines somewhere that eliminated certain people. Did he

think that just the children of God, a brother Hebrew. Were they neighbors. Jesus sought to lead men to error and darkness into spiritual truth. There seems to be no question in the lawyer's mind (about loving God.) He is already convinced that he does love God. But the part of the answer that troubled him, is who is my neighbor. That is, he was troubled with his outreach.

Many of us do not have a question about the matter as to whether or not we love God. We feel deeply within ourselves that our relationship with God is there. But the hard question to swallow, is the outreach. Who is my neighbor.

Now Jesus does not reply the expected word. He seldom does. Jesus could have said, well, anyone who has a need is your neighbor.

Instead, he responded with an example. And this story has come to be known as the Good Samaritan. It has drama - where four main characters are. Now the man who was robbed, the first character of the parable. He was living a routine life.

So the first character is the man who was robbed. And he was traveling the road from Jerusalem to Jericho. We know not his destination. We do not know the purpose of his journey. He is just a man who was living on this earth, like you, and yet he got to be the central character in this drama - on how to inherit eternal life and who is my neighbor. Now this man's need is what this story is all about.

The unknown man emphasizes the reality of how important the question of eternal life is to every man. The matter of Christian faith then becomes more than where we are going to spend eternity. It deals then with our commission, our outreach, of the Gospel with our direction of life to every person. We desire life for ourselves, for everyone else. The realization of this is in the center of the stage.

And the drama continues with the Good Samaritan. Because he is someone we do not know and someone whom we do not know - he is a symbol of all humanity. How many people today awake us to realize this. To carry them the message, of redemption and reconciliation.

The answer to this question is beyond our ability to understand. Yet, just as this man waited for someone to bind up his wounds. The people of the here and now in the world wait for someone to bind up their wounds and to minister to their needs.

The povertystricken people wait. They wait for us to recognize their poverty. We have forgotten them in our march toward prosperity. The plight in some cases may be due to laziness or immorality - or even because of sin. But they are a product of our society.

These people are the unknown man lying in the ditch of today's world. Waiting and dependent upon someone stopping and helping them.

Now these people are not in a far off land. They are all around in our community. We know the streets on which they live. We know some people by name. God waits, he waits for us to see their needs.

If somehow we could realize that Jesus is telling the story about our own salvation, if it is true - we will rise up. As we see the needs of others about us.

The remarkable thing about this story is its shortness. It takes about 143 words to tell it.

Another thing, it is full of action - every sentence is a picture.

Another thing, it is full of human interest - robbers, travelers, a man half dead,

people passing by.

But the startling feature of it, is the vital concern, the common people knew these men, who passed by. And they knew the man who stopped and ministered in the matter of outreach.

The Good Samaritan all centers in him. Now the great purpose is not to make the robbers prominent, nor is it to make the wounded traveler the main figure, nor does it make the inn-keeper. The priest and the levite are not heroes.

But the story compells moral ascent, and agreement.

Now the road connecting Jerusalem and Jericho is famous because of its dangerous - they tell us it is 19 or 20 miles. The first city to be destroyed by the Israelites under Joshua according to history, had a curse put on it - that no man was to rebuild it. Josh. 6:26. This was carried out - a man named Hiel in the days of Ahab. I Kings 16:34. They say you travel from Jerusalem about 2300 feet above sea level but when you reach Jericho, near the plain of the Dead Sea, you are 1100 feet below sea level. So it is winding, turning, dropping, down the rocky road. A narrow valley, a miserable descent. Slippery rocks, as you descend - not even a tree or a house is to be seen. They tell us that there is one small place which is supposed to have been the inn-keeper's house. But that it is much like it was in the days when Jesus told this parable.

Therefore, first, there was the victim. Now he was doubtless a Jew. He might have been a reckless fellow traveling alone on such a dangerous road, by himself. So this first victim was robbed, stripped of his means, beaten, and left half dead by the roadside.

IV C

The second character was a priest. He was a minister. And Jesus said, he came along upon this man by the side of the road - and he was determined not to meet the man. He perhaps was surprised to see the wounded man. And here is an example in hiding in religion. First he probably thought the wounded man was dead. Now the law says you must not touch anything that is dead - therefore, he crossed to the other side of the road and went on his way.

Now the real sin of the priest, he did not take time to stop and to investigate and to see if there was some outreach ministry that he could perform.

Or perhaps, had he known the man who was dying, he probably would have done as much or maybe even more. This points up to the attitude of the church today. We are too busy to stop and see the needs of one another.

We pass by on the other side of the road from the needs of the world.

In a world which the church had many times caused the preacher or the minister to become encumbered with so many mechanics in which Christian love has de-generated to liking those who like you. We have no time left to tell the story of Jesus and his redemption to those who have lost their way.

We are too busy deciding which one is the greatest instead of ministering to the needs of the people around us. We are too busy thinking that a minister ought to be pleasing, out-going, to see that God has always intended that we owe allegiance to His Son, and to his cause.

We are too busy in religion to stop and see the real problem. Is our world already dead, or is it just dying. Is it in a ditch like the man who has been robbed. If Christian people ever needed to stop, it is now.

Brother ignored the man - preoccupied with his journey to Jericho!
-7-

" Confronts ~~the~~ Dead in ~~In~~ Possess of Sin
" Stripped of reason for living

We seem to become afraid to be involved in important and significant matters.

The real issues of today - meeting the political action, working out solutions,
and needs of the other people. Dealing with the population. God never intended us
to pass by on the other side. To run by on the other side without taking a close
look.

III

The third character - the Levite.

Now these brethren were assistants to the priests. Sometimes they were judges,
sometimes they were gate-keepers, and sometimes they were musicians -- singing in the
Temple.

In today's language, we would perhaps call them Ministers of Music, or Educational
Directors, or Ministers of Youth. But the Levite, like the priest, here is the
emphasis on religion. These men were hiding in religion. And it seems to say some-
thing to us today. Aren't you glad that our church is to be involved in outreach.

In the time of Jesus, these religious people passed the time of opportunity to the
needs of the wounded man. The Levites, Tribe of Levi, assist the Priest
in administration of The Ordinances. Not only counterpart of minister
Music but church members called to assist in Ministry -

I think the great sin here is that the man failed to see his mission. He
couldn't see beyond his own little group. And this happens in our Sunday School
Classes, our little group.

He just was too busy to stop and see if the man was dead, or if he needed some
assistance. Now this seems to be something of what Jesus was telling those who
heard him. Those who passed by the man in need were the very ones everyone expected
to be the first to stop and help.

The church is expected to help today. We are the ones that God is looking too.
Those who are crying for help, often we give them a deaf ear. Can the under-
privileged, the emotionally disturbed, ill people turn to God's people who know God's

love. Can the person who needs compassion turn to Christian people today?

Now the world needs scientists, engineers, needs new plans, big ideas. But it also needs the compassion of your heart. Blessed are the merciful. We too hesitate and we make our excuses for not helping others. Many times, we say Lord, these folks do not deserve any help.

But the point is, that Jesus said, it is not who deserves your help - but who needs your help. And this is different.

It is like the fellow who during the depression in 1930 was begging - he couldn't find work. He met a man well-dressed on the street. He said Sir, could you spare me something to eat. The man began to put him off - make one excuse after another. Finally the beggar said, Sir, if you couldn't let me have something to eat, would you mind shaking my hand. What the man needed more than food was understanding and sympathy.

Are you hiding in religion. Will you become a part of the outreach. Do you have the idea that might makes right. Is that the rule you live by. Do you live by rule, do as you wish men would do to you - do so to them. Christianity is more than going to church, saying a few prayers.

Someone has said the other side of the road was the easiest side. The most pleasant side, the least expensive side.

IV Fourth, the Good Samaritan. You would have thought that this man would have been a good Israelite layman. The priest, the Levite - were Israelites. But in fact, the Samaritan was a layman. And he knew something about outreach.

There is also something else here. The Jews and Samaritans were enemies - to such an extent that the Samaritans were not too welcome in the courtyard of the temple.

When this man saw the wounded person - he had compassion on him.

This caused him to go to the man.

To bind up his wounds - using oil and wine.

To place him on his donkey - took him to the Inn, and stayed with the man over night. To be sure that he had done all that he could. Then he paid the next few days lodging, in order that the man might fully recover.

Now Jesus asked the lawyer - which one of these was a neighbor. And the lawyer answered, the one that showed mercy. Jesus then said to the man, if you want eternal life - then you go and do likewise. For the original question was you remember was not who is my neighbor - but what shall I do to inherit eternal life.

Now if you want to inherit eternal life, we must understand what Jesus is illustrating here. Love begins with God. He loves us. And we are able to love him.

Then we are able to love others - Christian love - to love each other.

And we love out beyond our own circle. The Good Samaritan did not hide from human needs. He met those needs. He knew who his neighbor was.

What are we going to do about the needs of the people in our community. Are

we going to get down and be involved.

I expect the lawyer wanted to hear what he wanted to hear. But Jesus told him this parable. The lawyer probably had an idea that he was free. That he could do as he pleased - but Jesus brought him face to face with responsibility.

You remember the Prodigal Son wanted to be liberated. But he returned home because his freedom was too much for him. He took his piggy bank, his bag of marbles and he left on an exciting trip. When he left home - but he soon discovered that he was responsible.

People today must recognize - there was a time when the flag was a symbol of pride. But now it is a symbol of politics. And men do not like any kind of restrictions at all. I heard that they had restrictions at one of the assembly grounds and in order to put the restrictions Scriptural - they had a sign by the swimming pool. Don't walk on the water."

We must live within limits. They are fixed. When man sinned - he surrendered his control to the world and turned it over to the snake.

Sometimes we hide in religion. As a Scot lady once said about her neighbor's son - she said he would make a good candidate for the ministry. Why, she thought so, he is such a harmless little lad.

Remember, you are responsible for you. You may try to blame someone else - put it off on alcohol.

You are responsible for the other person. There are others all about us that we are responsible for - and we disregard each other.

We know that we have a positive responsibility to God. And we must give God all that we have. And this outreach will take us beyond our own church. We just can't sit down and pass by on the other side. Sometimes we have so many meetings - like the woman who attended the Revival Meeting - she attended so many services she was worn out. The usher could tell that she was tired as they were going down the aisle, he said to her - how far down do you want to sit. I'd like to sit all the way down if you don't mind.

Times are bad - and Christians must be the most sensitive people. We can't run away from inflation or the things that are taking place in this world today - but we must press on against the tides of the world.

It is like a sailing boat - the waves and the wind against the sail give a pinching affect upon the boat and pushes it forward. And as we step out into this world of immorality and anxiety, we might well take this story of outreach.

Lloyd Whitesides told a story once how he was caught in a snow storm in Kansas. A young man came with his horses and pulled him out of the snow drift. And sent him on his way. He tried to pay the young man something for helping him out of the snow. The young man being a Quaker said, "I charge thee nothing. But that thou will promise to help the next man you find in trouble." Sure enough Lloyd said, the next man he found in trouble was stuck in some water in Arkansas. So he took a line and helped pull the man's vehicle out of the water. And from that man he extracted the same promise. And he said as time went on, the years went by, he was up on the James River in a boat in distress. And a man came along and helped him back to the shore. And it so happened to be the man that he had assisted back in Arkansas. The question is how far one eager act of love, one man's act of love and influence had traveled. The love of Christ can travel.

Many times with us, it is like poor T. V. reception. We have poor spirit reception. With all of our concerns and our defeats, let us remember that it is outreach.

It is like a man from Houston who stopped in a park and his child disappeared, and the church prayed. And somehow they found the body later. There was no explanation for it. And some fellow sent it to the computing center in N. Y. And the answer came back, it just doesn't compute.

Sometimes the best we have is just not enough in this world - nomatter how we look at it. But it is like the lily among the thornes in the song of Solomon - their nature is different. They had the same rain, sun, and soil.

So it is in the church. We can hide in our religion or we can assist in meeting the needs of others.

Richard Bryant San Diego, Calif - 18 yr. old young woman dropped out from 6th grade - ditched from the Northwest - Greenwich Village. Miami - 77 with Sacramento San Francisco - Mexico San Diego, where she is in a jail. She was saved - made this trip over a period of two yrs & without any expressed care by Christians. A young minister was used of God to register God's care for her - There is no way to know how many priests & Levites passed her by.