Popular opinion – “It’s easy to become a Christian” – “All you have to do is pray and ask Jesus into your heart”

“Good Samaritan” is most often associated with giving humanitarian aid – often used in secular sense – but that is a secondary theme – Jesus told this story to answer the question in Luke 10:25 – “‘…what must I do to inherit eternal life?’” – basic theme – “you must act on your belief” – a true believer sees pain, lays aside his inhibitions, and offers aid – thus proving he has eternal life – ultimately, these are spiritual lessons – observing sinners, discarding religious answers, offers grace, thus:

I. IT IS HARD TO BELIEVE PEOPLE ARE LOST

Luke 10:30 – the road between Jericho and Jerusalem was isolated, steep, and treacherous – Jerusalem is 2,300 feet above sea level – Dead Sea (near Jericho) is 1,300 feet below sea level – road rises 3,600 feet in 17 miles – Jerome called it “The Red, or Bloody Way” – 19th century accounts of travelers paying safety money to local sheiks to guarantee safety – even today, it is very dangerous

Down this road walks a foolish man – no one should be walking this road by himself if he values his life – he was robbed, stripped, beaten, left half dead – he had no resources, no hope, no help, no way out

The world is filled with people in physical need – maybe not as drastic, but still needy – the natural response of the Christian is to help them

Jesus is calling us first to Christ-like benevolence – helping those in need – but the Bible is clear that this isn’t all man needs – the greatest needs go beyond the physical – they are spiritual – the greatest need of man is a darkened heart – harder to see, but more dangerous

Matthew 10:28 – “Do not fear those who kill the body but are unable to kill the soul; but rather fear Him who is able to destroy both soul and body in hell.” – at times it is hard to believe that the spiritual condition of man is worse than the physical condition of this man, but it’s true:

- Romans 3:10-12 – “…there is none righteous, not even one; there is none who understands, there is none who seeks for God...
- Ephesians 2:1 – dead in trespasses and sins – by nature children of wrath
- Romans 8:7 – hostile and unable to be subject to law of God

All who do not know Christ are utterly and hopelessly lost – stripped of all spiritual truth by Satan who has blinded their eyes – beaten by their own foolish walk down the path of sin – left spiritually dead and unable to spiritually respond.

- Their destiny is sure – Revelation 20:15 – “…if anyone’s name was not found written in the book of life, he was thrown into the lake of fire.”
- The solution is also sure – Acts 4:12 – “And there is salvation in no one else; for there is no other name under heaven that has been given among men by which we must be saved.”

At times our reaction to the lost is the same – it’s hard to believe people are really lost – some are afraid to come close to them for fear of becoming contaminated – some think they are only “misguided” – they are only wounded – it’s not fatal – they’ll get better – some believe in annihilation and inclusiveness

What would it be like if we saw the realistic condition of each unsaved person around us? – naked without the clothing of respectability – robbed of spiritual sight by Satan – beaten and mortally wounded by Satan’s deceptions – would it make a difference to us?

II. IT IS HARD TO BELIEVE RELIGION IS NOT THE ANSWER

Jesus was speaking to a Jewish audience – the man was a Jew – also seen by contrast with Samaritan – Jesus was demonstrating that the priest and Levite were not even interested in stopping for a fellow Jew
The priest “passed by on the other side” – indicates he may have been trying to avoid touching a dead body for fear of becoming unclean – Numbers 19:11 – “The one who touches the corpse of any person shall be unclean for seven days.” – would have left him unfit for service in the Temple – unfounded speculation – Luke 10:31 – “…a priest was going down on that road...”, indicating he was going from Jerusalem to Jericho – probably returning home to Jericho since many priests lived there – Lightfoot says 12,000 priests lived there – he would not be required back in the temple for some time to perform service – certainly not for a week or more – touching the man, even if he had been dead, would not have prevented him from service – in addition, the Old Testament is clear about doing justice and loving kindness (Micah 6:8) as well as loving strangers even like yourself (Leviticus 19:34) – there is simply no excuse for the priest – he was merciless – he “didn’t want to get involved.”

Levite – tribe of Israel assigned to be assistants to the priests – divided into four classes – 1) Assistants to priests in the Temple – slaughtered and skinned sacrificial animals; 2) Judges and scribes; 3) Gatekeepers; 4) Musicians – further divided into 24 families each who rotated in service of Temple – the Levite was a professional religious leader – if anyone should have exhibited compassion it should have been him.

The Old Testament was full of instruction on neighbors – those who shared in rights and duties implied by those who shared covenant relationship with God – they were so closely bound that a neighbor was to be treated as a brother – at times “brother” and “neighbor” were synonymous – Old Testament law summarized in Leviticus 19:18 – “You shall not take vengeance, nor bear any grudge against the sons of your people, but you shall love your neighbor as yourself…”

The priest and Levite knew the law – they blatantly disobeyed it here – left a fellow Jew to die in a ditch – simply because they didn’t want to be bothered.

Jesus did not leave a system of professional priests to lead the church – Matthew 23:8-11 – Jesus says, “But do not be called Rabbi... Do not call anyone on earth your father... do not be called leaders...” – don’t give spiritual position and titles to people as if they were the source of truth instead of God – verse 12 – “Whoever exalts himself shall be humbled...” – ultimate spiritual answers do not come from those who posture themselves as religious leaders in robes and ritual – organized religion is not the answer.

III. IT IS HARD TO BELIEVE IN GRACE ALONE

Luke 10:33-34 – if the man is conscious, he must think things are getting worse – if a Jewish priest and Levite wouldn’t help him, he would have thought he was finished for sure when he saw a Samaritan approaching – Samaritans hated Jews and vice versa – in Luke 9:53 they wouldn’t even provide food and water to Jesus – wouldn’t even let Him enter their town – during exile in 7th century B.C. Jews left in Israel intermarried with pagans – 90 years later their offspring were rejected as half-breeds – rejected all of Old Testament except Penteteuch – erected own temple on Mt. Gerizim and formed own priesthood – thus, specifically rejected Jewish priests – hated by Jews – they were racial mongrels – spiritual pagans – The rabbis said, “Let no man eat the bread of the Samaritans, for he who eats their bread is as he who eats swine’s flesh.” – to top it off – several years before this the Samaritans had murdered some Jewish travelers passing through Samaria – and then some Samaritans had defiled the Jewish temple with human bones.


Luke 10:34-35 – wine served as a disinfectant – oil was a salve – bandages from his own clothes – stabilized and transported him “on his own beast” – he walked – took him to an inn – could have left him – paid for a room and provisions until he returned

Spiritually this is called grace – grace goes beyond mercy – mercy extends compassion – grace withholds punishment and brings reward

Dean Brown of Yale University – the three people here represent three philosophies of life:

- The thief – “What you have is mine” – socialism or communism
- The Priest and Levite – “What I have is mine” – selfish capitalism
- The Samaritan – “What I have is yours” – Christ-like love
That’s grace – it’s what Christ offers – Romans 5:20 – “...where sin increased, grace abounded all the more...” – 2 Corinthians 8:9 – “For you know the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, that though He was rich, yet for your sake He became poor, so that you through His poverty might become rich.” – He extends grace to us so that we might extend it to others – 2 Corinthians 9:8 – “And God is able to make all grace abound to you, so that always having all sufficiency in everything, you may have an abundance for every good deed...”

Who are your neighbors? – afflicted or sick or in prison or poor or an orphan or a pagan or a slave or mentally ill or starving or dying – blacks? – whites? – immigrants – Jews? – Asians? – application for us – Hispanic, Iranian, Korean

IV. IT IS HARD TO BELIEVE HOW SALVATION IS PROVED

The essence of the story – Luke 10:36 – “Which of these three do you think proved to be a neighbor...” – Jesus is still answering the lawyer’s question of verse 25 – “...what shall I do to inherit eternal life?” – His answer? – “You must prove your salvation by your actions.” – not the same as saying you must earn your salvation by your actions – James 2:14–18 – “What use is it, my brethren, if someone says he has faith but he has no works? Can that faith save him?...show me your faith without the works, and I will show you my faith by my works.”

Startling to most Christians – we’ve been told all our lives – just believe – pray this prayer – raise your hand – walk the aisle – Jesus’ statement is antithetical to that.

- Luke 18:22 “...sell all you possess” – Jesus wasn’t making this the way of salvation – he was exposing the man’s heart – if you really believed Jesus taught true knowledge, and you asked Him this question, and He said, “Sell all you own” – what would you do? – the man did not want to accept Jesus’ terms
- Luke 18:26 – “...Then who can be saved?”
- Luke 18:27 – “…The things that are impossible with people are possible with God.” – what? – Jesus is saying it is impossible for man to be saved on his own – salvation isn’t “easy” – it isn’t even “hard” – it is impossible!!

John 6:60-66 – Jesus fed 5,000 – many seek Him for “free lunch” (vs. 26) – He offers Himself as “true bread” (vs. 32) – they see Him as “local boy” – not God (vs. 42) – offers Himself as “true food” and “true drink” – life itself (vs. 55) – “Many of His disciples” said, “This is a difficult statement” (vs. 60) – some didn’t believe (vs. 64) – “many of His disciples withdrew and were not walking with Him anymore” (vs. 66) – false believers

It is hard to believe – that’s why grace is so important – Romans 1:16 – “…I am not ashamed of the gospel, for it is the power of God for salvation to everyone who believes...” – pray for it, proclaim it, practice it!

QUESTIONS FOR FURTHER STUDY

1. What do you think most Christians believe is necessary in order to be saved?


3. Why didn’t the priest and Levite stop to help the wounded man?

4. What is the significance of a Samaritan helping a Jew? What application might there be for today?

5. What is the true spiritual identity of the “disciples” in John 6:60-66? What happened to them?

6. How do you apply the message of the Good Samaritan?