

Sermon Manuscript | Orlando and the Good Samaritan

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*Luke 10: 25-37*

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**INTRODUCTION**

Fifty dead, 50 wounded, and the worst mass shooting in recent American history – this is the time in which we live and there is no guarantee whatsoever that there will not be other such incidents in our lifetime – or in our city.

This carnage in Orlando is potentially the perfect storm of prejudice that challenges all Americans, especially Christians. The victims were in a gay nightclub, 74% of the victims were Hispanic, and they were gunned down by a radicalized Muslim murderer.

It is a perfect storm indeed, but we are in the presence of Jesus who knows how to command the storm to cease – and it does – and it will. One utterance from the lips of the Sovereign Son of God – *Peace, be still* – and the storm ceases, and tranquility replaces the turbulence. May He so speak to us today.

***The Parable of the Good Samaritan***

*<sup>25</sup>And behold, a lawyer stood up to put him to the test, saying, “Teacher, what shall I do to inherit eternal life?” <sup>26</sup>He said to him, “What is written in the Law? How do you read it?” <sup>27</sup>And 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.” <sup>28</sup>And he said to him, “You have answered correctly; do this, and you will live.”*

*<sup>29</sup>But he, desiring to justify himself, said to Jesus, “And who is my neighbor?” <sup>30</sup>Jesus 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. <sup>31</sup>Now by chance a priest was going down that road, and when he saw him he passed by on the other side. <sup>32</sup>So likewise a Levite, when he came to the place and saw him, passed by on the other side. <sup>33</sup>But a Samaritan, as he journeyed, came to where he was, and when he saw him, he had compassion. <sup>34</sup>He 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. <sup>35</sup>And 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.’ <sup>36</sup>Which of these three, do you think, proved to be a neighbor to the man who fell among the robbers?” <sup>37</sup>He said, “The one who showed him mercy.” And Jesus said to him, “You go, and do likewise.”*

Let us walk through the text of this well-known parable and identify the cast of characters and the penetrating profoundness of it.

## (1) The Questioner

What do we know about this lawyer who had an audience with Jesus? - quite a bit.

First, he was disingenuous. <sup>25</sup>*A lawyer stood up to put him (Christ) to the test. Whenever we do something or fail to do something, God sees the thoughts and intentions of our hearts (Hebrews 4:12-13).* This man's agenda is to make Jesus look bad, to place him in an intended theological predicament. His agenda-hidden question, <sup>25</sup>*Teacher, what shall I do to inherit eternal life,* has an appearance of sincerity but is rooted in prideful antagonism.

Second, he was learned. As a Jewish lawyer, he would have been well trained in the civil and religious laws contained in the Old Testament. He knew and could site Scripture. If you gave him a written test on the Old Testament, he would ace it.

Third, he was pridefully self-righteous: <sup>29</sup>*desiring to justify himself.* . . . Self-reliance and self-justification are rooted in a heart of pride, which is a spiritual virus that all of us have contracted. It makes us spiritually sick, it seeks ways to look morally good, and it compares ourselves to others in order to give us a sense of superiority.

## (2) The Lawyer's First Question

<sup>25</sup>*Teacher, what shall I do to inherit eternal life?* Self-righteous people want a shopping list of virtue that they can check off and thereby conclude that they have earned favor with God in this life and eternity with God in the life to come. All religion is rooted in the fallacious notion that we can do something or be something that wins the favor of the god of our own vain imagination.

## (3) Our Lord's First Answer

Our Lord's answer comes in the form of a question: <sup>26</sup>*What is written in the law? How do you read it?* Jesus is not baiting or intimidating the witness. In baseball terms, He is throwing him a pitch over the center of the plate that the lawyer should be able to crush.

## (4) The Lawyer's Response

The lawyer quotes *Leviticus 19:18* accurately: <sup>27</sup>*You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart and all your soul and all your mind, and your neighbor as yourself.* At this point he is acing his Bible knowledge exam. Our Lord affirms the accuracy of his answer: <sup>28</sup>*You have answered correctly; do this and you will live.*

## (5) The Lawyer's Second Question

You've heard the term, "legal loophole" I trust. We see it here, and the lawyer exposes his heart of pride and his real agenda. <sup>29</sup>*But he [lawyer], seeking to justify himself said to Jesus, 'And who is my neighbor?'* The technical theological terms for what is happening here is - "busted." His real agenda is exposed. He knew the answer to his own

question before he asked it. He would have known:

*Leviticus 19:34 You shall treat the stranger who sojourns with you as the native among you, and you shall love him as yourself, for you were strangers in the land of Egypt; I am the Lord your God.*

*Psalms 37:21 . . . the righteous is generous and gives*

*Micah 6:8 He has told you, oh man, what is good, and what does the Lord require of you: but to do justice, to love mercy, and to walk humbly with your God.*

But the legalist is always looking for loopholes. I will perform limited acts of righteousness, but it will be on my terms, in my strength, for my purposes.

#### (6) Our Lord's Answer via the Parable

A parable is a fictitious story crafted to drive home a significant spiritual truth. This would have been a very believable parable. It begins with a geography lesson, and ends with a profound spiritual lesson.

*<sup>30</sup>Jesus 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.*

Jerusalem is 3,000 feet above sea level, and Jericho is about 1,000 feet below sea level. An unnamed traveler is indeed going down, and the mountainous path is winding and narrow. Some of you who have toured the Holy Land know of this path. The Hebrews attached a name to it which means, "bloody pass." Robbers took advantage of this pass as it afforded them many places to lie in wait for their victims.

The victim is unnamed, but not unharmed. These criminals *stripped him, beat him, and left him half dead (vs. 25)*. They most likely used rocks or rods to beat him with, and his injuries would most likely result in death. He is described as being *half dead* which means he would have been unconscious and unable to stop the hemorrhaging. His loss of blood would send him into shock, and he would die a slow and painful death.

But wait, help is on the way in the form of *priest*. He would have been a descendant of Aaron and, like the lawyer, very knowledgeable of God's law. He too would have memorized *Micah 6:8* and have known that the Lord *loves mercy*.

The story is told many years ago of a New Testament professor at Princeton Seminary, which in the 19<sup>th</sup> century was a bastion of sound orthodoxy, who was teaching his students the gospel of Luke in general and the parable of the Good Samaritan in particular. At the end of the semester, the final exam was given. This professor always insisted on students being prepared and punctual. He secretly selected prior students to position themselves around campus so that his current students had to walk by them on the way to their exam. These prior students were to pretend to be injured or ill and to cry out for assistance. Those students that stopped to render aid, and consequently were late to their exam, all received an "A" grade. Those students who passed by those in need to be

punctual for their exam all received an “F” grade. The priest in the parable received an “F”.

A Levite comes upon the beaten and dying man. He would have been a kind of assistant to the priest, a temple servant, and a person who specializes in hands on, practical ministry. He too passes by, and receives a failing grade.

## THE SAMARITAN

Now comes the Samaritan (vs. 33) who was despised by the Jews. The animosity between Jews and Samaritans is hard to overstate. Samaritans were half-breeds – Jews who had intermarried with pagan Gentiles. They opposed the rebuilding of the Temple in the days of Nehemiah. They built their own Temple on Mt. Gerizim. They only accepted the first five books of Moses and rejected the prophets. They were viewed as tainted, corrupt, wicked, and heretical. In *John 8:48*, the Jewish opponents of Jesus accused him of being a Samaritan and *having a demon*.

Breaking all stereotypes and demonstrating *compassion*, this dirty and despised unnamed Samaritan rendered aid, lavish aid. He flushed and sterilized the wounds with wine which would have served as a kind of antiseptic. The oil would have soothed and softened the tissue. The verb *pouring* means that he was using valuable wine and oil which any frequent traveler would typically carry with them (one for drinking and one for cooking). He tore his own clothes to make bandages. He was not concerned about dressing for success. He was concerned about loving his naked neighbor.

Why did the Samaritan care for his neighbor in this way? The answer is two-fold. First, *he saw him*. That is, he saw someone in need. As Christians we often never leave the so-called “evangelical ghetto.” We are at times oblivious to human pain and need because of our isolationistic tendencies. It is much easier to ignore someone who is invisible. Second, *he had compassion on him (vs. 33)*. The root word of the long Greek word translated *compassion* refers to internal organs of your body. Literally, *to be moved in the inward parts*. It is the same word used to describe Jesus Himself.

*Matthew 9:36 - When He saw the crowds, He had compassion on them, because they were harassed and helpless, like sheep without a shepherd.*

*Matthew 14:14 – When He went ashore and saw a great crowd, and He had compassion on them and healed their sick.*

*Luke 7:13 (the widow of Nain at the death of her son) – And when the Lord saw her, He had compassion on her and said to her, ‘Do not weep.’ (Jesus then raised her son from the dead)*

*Luke 15:20 (the parable of the Prodigal Son, in his return to his father) – But while he was still a long way off his father saw him and felt compassion, and ran and embraced him and kissed him.*

Behold the heart of God toward undeserving sinners! Compassion is not a box that

we check off on our self-righteous scorecard. Compassion is not a duty that is rooted in a self-coerced act of the will. Compassion is a radical, heart posture of mercy to the person in need. Compassion is the goggles through which we view our world. Compassion is the impulse of the heart toward a neighbor in need.

## APPLICATION

May I ask you a very personal question: what was your first reaction when you learned of last week's mass shooting in Orlando? Was it a quietly guarded judgment against the victims because they were gay? As one pastor stated on Facebook: "that's just 50 less pedophiles we have to worry about." Or was your first reaction anger toward all Muslims: "they are just all cold blooded killers." Or was it anger at our government: "if they just kept all Muslims out of our country this would never have happened." Or was it fear: "my family and I will never be safe because of people like that."

What would a heart of compassion look like in response to this tragedy? Do you remember the classic book, *The Bridge of San Luis Rey*? Written by Thornton Wilder in 1927, it tells the story of people who died in the collapse of an Inca rope bridge in Peru. It won the Pulitzer Prize in 1928 and was required reading in English literature classes in American schools for many years. In short, it probed the individual history of each victim leading up to that fateful day of their death.

What would happen if someone investigated in detail the life of each of the 49 victims who were murdered, and the life of the murderer? What would we find? We would find, beyond a shadow of a doubt, several things. First, if we looked at each one through the lenses of Scripture, we would see human dignity. These were all image-bearers of God, created by Him with inherent value and dignity. Second, we would also see human depravity, a spiritual and moral corruption in each and every heart – and that includes our own. Third, we would see that every death is a perversion and distortion of God's original creational design. It is a tragedy that compels our sympathy.

Let me share a personal reflection with you. When we lived in Orlando for four years I was a volunteer chaplain with the Orange County Sheriff's Office. We had over 30 chaplains including Muslim, Jewish, Catholic, and Protestant. Most of the Protestant chaplains were Hispanic, which makes sense since Orlando is about 60% Hispanic. We would meet monthly, and try to get to know each other, and pray together for our city and the law enforcement community. I would imagine that some of them are conducting funeral services for the victims, as about 2/3 of them were Hispanic. Did any of those victims attend any of those churches? If so, what did they experience? Did they encounter the love of Christ or the rejection of Christians? If our souls are built for relationship, and our churches close their hearts and doors toward gays, should we be surprised that they go to places like the Pulse Club in Orlando? But wait, some say, didn't they go there to find a sex partner? Perhaps. Isn't it disgusting to even think about what goes on in places like that? Probably. But all of that begs the question at hand which is – *Who is my neighbor?*

My *neighbor*, Biblically speaking, is not someone who lives in close geographic proximity to me; my *neighbor* is one who shares close creational proximity to me – they are

*created in the image of God. My neighbor is any image-bearer in need. Perhaps you have heard well-intentioned people say, "We are all children of God." That is an inaccurate statement, because Jesus Himself taught that it is only those who receive Him, who believe in His name, are called the children of God. Non-Christians are not our brothers and sisters, but they are all our neighbors. Scripture makes this distinction in Galatians 6:10 – Therefore, as we have opportunity, let us do good to all men, especially those of the household of faith.*

## CONCLUSION

I would hope this sermon, as it concludes, starts a conversation with yourself, a conversation with others, and a conversation with the Lord Himself. I leave you with four words, four exhortations, and four desires.

First, let us REFLECT. In humility before God, let's ask Him to help us see our own hearts. As we have responded to this tragic evil, what comes to light – His light? The Christian is called to *walk by faith* and not by sight, not by feelings, not by emotions. But those emotions are often windows to our own soul. Was there a hint of quiet approval of these deaths, because they were gay (or at least attending a gay bar)? Were you somewhat relieved that the shooter was Muslim, as this conveniently reinforces your presupposition that all Muslims are murderers and haters of all non-Muslim humanity? To be more explicit, if you were on that street and a gunshot victim collapsed in front of you as you were driving by, would you stop and render aid? If you knew they were gay and they went into cardiac arrest, would you render CPR and place your mouth over theirs for ventilations? In humility, let us seize the moment to reflect in our own hearts – *do we truly love our neighbor?*

Second, if appropriate, let us REPENT. Repentance is rooted in your relationship with God, and perpetual repentance and faith are the marks of a true follower of Christ. I can speak to you but not for you. Search your own hearts in the prayerful presence of Christ. Ask the Spirit to bring clear conviction and godly sorrow. Lord, does my heart hold onto prejudice, hatred, and disdain? Lord, is my heart full of compassion for people in general and especially people who despise me because I am a Christian? As the Puritans prayed, "Lord, tear out the poisonous weed of self-righteousness that grows in the garden of my soul."

Third, let us RESIST. Let us resist the depraved cultural corruption that would seduce us into abandoning our biblical convictions about the definition of marriage as between one man and one woman, and the biblical prescription that all expressions of sexual intimacy are reserved for marriage alone. Let us also understand that this resistance rooted in fidelity to God's Word brings accusation and persecution to our front door and we will pay a great price in the months and years ahead for those convictions. If we are to *suffer for righteousness sake*, let us do so with courage and dignity. Let us also resist the temptation to fear. As Pastor Phil Vischer has written: ...resist the siren song of fear. This side of heaven, security is an illusion at best. We are never more than one drunk driver or cancer diagnosis away from a life-altering or life-ending event. Never. And yet paradoxically, as followers of Jesus, we are always secure. The love of Christ is all we need,

and no event of Earth can take that away from us . . . {facebook blog}

Fear and compassion do not mix well. If you fear the person lying in the street, beaten and bleeding, you will not stop to render aid. The Good Samaritan did not stop to ask the beaten man, “Are you gay or straight . . . Republican or Democrat . . . rich or poor”? He simply saw a neighbor in need, and responded with *compassion*. Politicians in both parties know how to manipulate our fears to solicit our votes. The Christian courageously responds: *God is our Refuge and Strength, a very present help in time of trouble. Therefore we will not fear . . . (Psalm 46:1).*

Let’s be sensitive to the fear that permeates both the gay and Muslim communities in our country. Can you imagine the level of anxiety that they must be feeling and the question that must be haunting them – are we next? The church of Jesus should be a “safe place” for them. We welcome you. To welcome is not to condone or endorse. To welcome is to welcome, to say, as did Fred Rogers for decades, “I want to be your neighbor.”

Let us resist the temptation to condemn. That is not our job, that is God’s job. Everyone must appear before the judgment seat of Christ. There is a heaven and there is a hell and there will be perfect and ultimate justice. Do not, however, misinterpret this statement. God has given, in this life, the *power of the sword* to civil authorities who are called by God to protect human dignity and restrain human depravity (*Romans 13:1-5*). Our government has failed to do so, but even so, *even though we walk through the valley of the shadow of death, we will fear no evil, for Thou are with me, Thy rod and Thy staff they comfort me . . . (Psalm 23).*

Let us resist the temptation to disengage from people who do not share our beliefs and values. Do you have a gay friend or co-worker? Do you have a Muslim friend or co-worker? Are you being a good neighbor? Do you see them with eyes of *compassion*?

Fourth, let us RETURN – return to the gospel, return to Christ. *Compassion* is not generated by an act of my will, it is birthed in my heart by Jesus Himself. The gospel reminds me that at one time we were *enemies* of God (*Romans 5:10*); we were *by nature, children of wrath* (*Ephesians 2:3*); and we were once *separated from Christ, having no hope and were without God* (*Ephesians 2:12*). In God’s sight, we not only visited the Pulse Nightclub on a Saturday night, we lived there – it was our home address. But what did God do, what does the gospel teach?

*But God, being rich in mercy, because of the great love with which He loved us, even when we were dead in our trespasses, made us alive together with Christ – by grace you have been saved – and raised us up with Him and seated us with Him in the heavenly places in Christ Jesus. For by grace you have been saved through faith. And this is not your own doing; it is the gift of God, not a result of works, so that no one can boast. For we are His workmanship, created in Christ Jesus for good works which God prepared beforehand, that we should walk in them. (Ephesians 2:4-10)*

And what, you ask, are the *good works* that God has prepared for us?

*“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.” (Luke 10:27)*

You remember the national controversy of several years ago about Chick-fil A and the LGBT community. Dan Cathy, CEO of Chick-fil A and son of founder Truett Cathy, took a clear biblical stand on the definition of marriage as between one man and one woman. However, Dan reached out and built a personal friendship with a leading gay activist by the name of Shane Windmeyer. Imagine that, a personal friendship with a leading gay activist!

In the morning of the Orlando shooting, did you know that Orlando Chick-fil-A employees were called to work on Sunday (when they are typically closed) to prepare and distribute free food to the people standing in long lines to donate blood for the shooting victims? That, dear church, is seeing your neighbor in need and responding with compassion. What a living testimony of God’s truth and grace! That’s the power of the gospel at work.

The Orlando shooting is the perfect storm for fear and prejudice to prevail. But we have a Savior who has shown us compassion and grace. His bloody cross, His empty tomb, and His occupied throne bear three-fold witness that we are loved and secure in Him. Every hair on your head is numbered. You will not live one minute longer or one minute shorter than what your Savior and Lord has ordained for you.

This perfect storm has created high winds of fear and turbulent waves of prejudice, and the boat of the evangelical church can easily capsize. Now hear this - the voice of the One who loves you, who died for you, who rose again for you, who reigns over you, and is coming again to renew you and all things: *Peace, be still*. And as the sea submits to Christ and is calmed, likewise may our hearts do so as well. With calm and grace-filled hearts, let us love our neighbor – for their good and for God’s glory. Amen.