



THE PARABLES OF JESUS

SESSION 8

Parable of the Good Samaritan: *Leaders Guide*

ICE BREAKER

Start off with an ice breaker to get everyone warmed up.

WELCOME

This week we conclude our study of Jesus' parables with one of the most well-known: the Good Samaritan. Chances are, you're familiar with this story from childhood Sunday School or hearing it preached as an adult. Its widespread popularity suggests we know it inside and out. So, today we'll revisit it. We will focus on this idea of justification. In culture, we define justification as "a good reason or explanation for something." But in Christianity, we define justification as "an act' of God in the sense of a legal declaration, a judicial pronouncement." The difference in these definitions of justification lean on who is doing the work of justifying – the individual or God. In our parable today, we will look at justification and how Jesus answers a lawyer who was seeking to "**justify**" himself.

QUOTE

For the love Jesus demands is love of one's neighbor, that is to say, not some general love of mankind, but a love that does not pick and choose, that is unreservedly and principally committed to God's will and guidance also with respect to its object. For the neighbor is anyone whom God places in our way, as is described in such an unparalleled and beautiful way in the parable of the Good Samaritan.

– Herman Ridderbos

SCRIPTURE

Have someone in the group look up and read **Luke 10:25-28**

So, in this parable we are immediately introduced to the context [always the first thing we should look at in order to understand what is going on]. The context is a lawyer intended to put the Teacher [Jesus] to the **test**. Now, when we think of lawyers today – and we try not to do – we picture those who are experts in criminal or civil law. But, this was not the case in Israel. Lawyers in Israel in the 1st century would have been professional students in the Jewish [law of Moses] and rabbinic law. These were not only the laws that governed the religious community but also the laws that governed the people of Israel.

This lawyer is the expert and he has purpose – to put Jesus [the Teacher] to the test. The Greek word for tested is **ekpeirazó**. The idea behind this word is **to test thoroughly, tempt**. Based on this definition, we can read the lawyer's intention another way – the lawyer came to challenge Jesus. His challenge was intended to expose Jesus as an **amateur** as well as expose himself [the lawyer] as the **expert**. Not arrogant at all – right?

QUESTIONS

What did the lawyer – the man who is an expert in the Jewish law – ask Jesus?

- Based on his words, how do you think he understood God's law?

SCRIPTURE

Have someone in the group look up and read [Luke 10:29](#)

In [verse 29](#), we see Luke's editorial comment on the lawyer – and maybe providing more insight into the [heart](#) of the lawyer – by saying the lawyer was “*desiring to justify himself.*” And this tends to fit with our culture today. We seek to justify ourselves – not by God's law BUT we judge ourselves by our friends and our neighbors. When we compare ourselves to our friends and neighbors tend to pick the friends and neighbors that we would “ace the test” against. We pick drunkards, or murderers or jerks – and we [pass](#) our own justification test. **BUT** when we compare ourselves against God's law – not only do we discover who God is – but we also discover who we are...stinking sinners who are hopeless to justify ourselves. So, the law exposes our sin and pushes us to Jesus Christ – the only One who can justify us.

But this lawyer made the worst mistake he could possibly make – he thought he could [justify](#) himself. I think we could all agree that the majority of people either think OR they hope that they will be able to justify themselves at the day of judgment – by saying “*I was a good person, compared to other people.*” or “*I led a good life, compared to other people.*”

QUESTIONS

Why do you think the lawyer attempted to justify himself?

- Based on what standard – the law he is to be an expert of OR his own standard?
- Did the lawyer understand God's law or the law in such a way that it benefitted him?
- Do we do the same? Meaning do we tend to judge others based on our moral standard rather than God's standard?

SCRIPTURE

Have someone in the group look up and read [Luke 10:30-35](#)

And Jesus replied, let me tell you a story/ parable...

In this parable, Jesus introduces five characters:

- A [man](#) traveling from Jerusalem to Jericho who had been beaten, stripped, destitute and half dead.
- A batch of [robbers](#) [plural] who did the beating, stripping, robbing and committing borderline murder.
- A [priest](#) - who when he saw the man who had been beaten, stripped, destitute and half dead - [passed](#) on the other side of the road.
- A [Levite](#) - who did the same as the priest - and he also [passed](#) on the other side of the road.
 - Both the priest & the Levite [failed](#) – and both would have been an acceptable neighbor for the lawyer to love.
- And, a [Samaritan](#) who had [compassion](#) on the man. This Samaritan was truly [generous](#).

But, he was a Samaritan – and not even a man that the lawyer considered to be a neighbor. You all have heard the history between Israel and Samaria – they didn't like each other. But in this story, the Samaritan the compassion of God and the Israelite religious men didn't even come close.

QUESTION

Why do you think Jesus responded to the lawyer's questions by telling this parable?

- In [verse 25](#), Luke states that the lawyer intended to put Jesus to the test. How do you think the lawyer would have reacted to this parable?

Why do you think the priest and the Levite did not stop to help the dying man?

- Are these good reasons?
- When you see someone in trouble, what is your first instinct? Why would you respond this way?

Which character do you see yourself - Robbers, Priest, Levite or Samaritan?

SCRIPTURE

Have someone in the group look up and read [Luke 10:36-37](#)

Now, who is the lawyer's **neighbor**? This is precisely the question that Jesus is asking the lawyer. He wants to know which one proved to be a neighbor to the man who was beaten, stripped, left destitute and half dead. This lawyer, however, was asking Jesus how, through his own **efforts**, he could achieve eternal life, not salvation. In the end, Jesus answered this by saying, "be like the Samaritan." Of course the answer is the hated and despised Samaritan, but the lawyer would NEVER acknowledge that. He would only say, "**the one who showed him mercy.**" The lawyer came to realize that he couldn't justify himself any longer. He lacked the kind of compassion that the Samaritan reveal. This kind of compassion extended beyond his narrow definition of "neighbor."

Jesus simply responds with "**you go, and do likewise.**" Jesus allowed the parable to answer the lawyer's question. The same goes for us. We are to love our neighbor, and our neighbor is the one who we might consider to be an enemy. Our neighbor is the one with a need right in front of us. Only the law of God and the love of Jesus Christ can reveal this kind of compassion toward others.

QUESTION

How did Jesus' definition of a neighbor differ from the lawyer's idea of a neighbor?

What if the injured man was from Israel? The United States?

- And what if the Samaritan was a Palestinian? Iraqi? North Korean? ISIS?

How do Jesus' words challenge your own way of thinking about who your neighbors are?

CONCLUSION

Was there anything that stood out to you from the parable today?

- Was there any "aha moment" for you?

Next Week: Final Hangout Night for the Spring