

The Good Samaritan story can be found in Luke 10.25-37

Read through it - maybe in a translation like The Message as well as another - to get a full idea of what's going on..

INTRO

The person who asked Jesus did so because he wanted to sound important and ask a clever question. Maybe he was trying to catch Jesus out. When Jesus answered very simply, the religious man asked another question because he wanted to sound important and didn't want to lose face in front of his mates. Jesus didn't worry, wasn't flustered, he just told it straight.

POINT 1

When the religious man asked Jesus his question, what did Jesus point towards straight away? The Word of God. Jesus asked the man what was in the law (Old Testament to you and me). Jesus expected him to know the answer and sure enough the man did.

The application for us is that our first port of call should often be The Bible. It contains a whole load of useful stuff guiding us and showing us what to do. Psalm 119.105 says God's Word is a lamp for our feet and a light for our path. Many of our questions about life would be solved if only we'd look in the Bible and ask God to show us what he wants to say.

Sometimes we're looking for complex answers to every question and read too deep into things. Jesus was clear.. he asked what was in the Law and then said 'go do what it says.' It's really that simple. We need to read the Bible and obey it. In practice it's harder but the concept is very simple.

POINT 2

The question in the parable is to identify what must be done to qualify for eternal life. The question then becomes more specific as to what the law means in practice. It's OK to know what the Bible says but here Jesus shows a practical example of how we should display God's love. Not enough to have faith. Faith must inspire us to do good works for God's Kingdom. (James 2.14-26) We cannot live our lives of faith in selfishness and away from other people and their lives. The Christian life is an involved one, a pro-active one, a Spirit-filled-inspiring-action life. People who claim to love Jesus but do nothing to activate this faith do not honour God.

POINT 3

We don't know whether the story Jesus tells was true. If it wasn't then it certainly could have been as the Youth Bible tells us that the Jerusalem to Jericho road was notoriously dangerous. Very interesting that the first 2 characters who passed by the injured man were Jewish religious figures. It is possible that they did not want to touch what they thought was a corpse as under Jewish law it meant they would have been what's called 'defiled' (this means unclean in God's eyes).

Don't we all know those very religious kind of people who know all the Bible and what it says yet they don't get their hands dirty in service for Jesus? These are the people who want to claim a faith and get the credit in church life but don't want to demonstrate their faith by getting involved.

We've got to make sure we're not like this. Many of us find it hard to demonstrate love towards people. I know I do but we need to learn. We can demonstrate God's love to other people in many different ways - caring for them, listening, involving, praying, encouraging, phoning, texting, writing, emailing, a hug, a smile, an act of kindness and so on..

POINT 4

In the story we find that it wasn't a regular Jewish man who took care of the injured man but a Samaritan (a word so hated that the religious man in the story couldn't even bring himself to say the word in verse 37). This was truly radical.

The point is that it's precisely the kind of people that don't think they deserve God's kindness that are often closest to the Kingdom of God. In Matthew 5.3 Jesus says God loves and lifts up the people who realise they really need God but don't deserve his goodness. Many times I feel so unworthy of God's kindness but this is a good place to be in because we realise that it's only God that can help us, not ourselves. This makes us thank God more, feel God's love more and keeps us humble (not arrogant). It also means that with more of God and less of us, God can work more.

POINT 5

The Samaritan took a risk in caring for the injured man. He could have been attacked. But hey, he didn't have a whole bunch of silly religious rules stopping him look out for the robbed man. Churches are good at creating religious rules but God calls us to live out a very simple faith (verse 27).

There will be times where we need to take a risk to follow God's call on our lives. Some friends of ours are going to Namibia to work with AIDS/HIV orphans. This is a risk but it is where God has called them so they are going.

We also see that the Samaritan would have been put out on his journey in order to care for the injured man. In following God we need to be aware of those times when we get a 'God nudge' - that means when God prompts us to go out of our way to do something for someone else. As I was writing this someone phoned me to borrow an extension lead. As I was busy I wasn't going to try to find the one I had somewhere but God prompted me to find it and phone them back so they could borrow it. Even stuff that simple can make a whole bunch of difference.

Don't ever underestimate God's ability to use you.

Incidentally, it was Christians who first came up with the idea of hospitals in the UK. Christianity has done far more good in this world than it has damage, it's just that non-Christians don't know that or don't believe it. But it's true!

POINT 6

Thanks to Andy S for this point. We often think we can't make much of a difference when we see the needs around us but for this Samaritan a couple gold coins paid for this man's treatment and recovery. If we offer our money to God's service it will go a whole lot further than if we keep it to ourselves.

So why not invest in people's lives - there are plenty of good causes, Christian charities and missionaries you can support. I think it's so important to invest in people, to give to people out of whatever we can offer - money, time, prayer, help, comfort, whatever..

POINT 7

The Samaritan didn't just say 'here's some cash, hope it's enough, see you..' No, he said, 'here's a few quid, I hope it's enough. If it's not enough, I'm stopping back after I've done some business deals and I'll pay whatever is owed.' He didn't ask for change, he didn't ask for anything from the injured man. It was unconditional love that was shown.

This is what God calls us to - unconditional love - this should be the love a parent has for a child. It's certainly the love that God has for us. Unbelievable as it seems the Almighty God loves you and me so much he sent his only Son who willingly died on a Cross for you and me. What God's love did for us on the Cross, can and should be demonstrated through us in our daily living.

POINT 8

A question - in verses 2-28 Jesus tells us that we should love our neighbour as we love ourselves. Someone asked a great question - what if I don't love myself? Nice question - here's my reply:

When Jesus said love your neighbour as you love yourself, he didn't mean that we our love for our neighbour should be dependent on how much we 'love' ourselves - but on how much God's love in us should make us love ourselves and others. We need to see ourselves as God sees us.

A lack of help for the Samaritan or anyone else who needs our help is really about a lack of God's love shining through us. It isn't an excuse if we don't 'love' ourselves if we then don't help others. That's why it's so important to keep growing in God so that we can accept God's love for us more and more, then let it flow through us to others more and more!

You see, this parable isn't some religious rule to get us to wander round randomly stopping people asking how we can love them, it's about a change in our hearts - getting saved. Out of this change and knowledge of God's love for us should spring a well of Spirit-filled water that longs to pour out love, help and action towards other people.