

THE GOOD SAMARITAN

As preached by Thomas Black at Jones Crossroads Baptist Church on September 12, 2012

The Story of The Good Samaritan

“Then an expert on the law stood up to test Jesus, saying, ‘Teacher, what must I do to get life forever?’ Jesus said, ‘What is written in the law? What do you read there?’ The man answered, ‘Love the Lord your God with all your heart, all your soul, all your strength, and all your mind.’ (Quotation from Deuteronomy 6:5 NCV) Also, ‘Love your neighbor as you love yourself.’ (Quotation from Leviticus 19:18 NCV) Jesus said to him, ‘Your answer is right. Do this and you will live.’

But the man, wanting to show the importance of his question, said to Jesus, ‘And who is my neighbor?’ Jesus answered, ‘As a man was going down from Jerusalem to Jericho, some robbers attacked him. (The road from Jerusalem to Jericho descends almost 3000 feet in about 17 miles. It was a dangerous road to travel because robbers would hide along its steep, winding way.¹) They tore off his clothes, beat him, and left him lying there, almost dead. It happened that a priest was going down that road. When he saw the man, he walked by on the other side. (A priest, a Jewish religious leader and one expected to love others, avoided the wounded man, probably a fellow Jew. Why did the priest do this? Maybe he justified his actions by upholding the teaching given to Moses from the Lord in Leviticus Chapter 21 Verse 1 NCV: “A priest must not

make himself unclean by touching a dead person.” The scripture described the man as “almost dead.”¹⁾

Next, a Levite came there, and after he went over and looked at the man, he walked by on the other side of the road. (The Levite was also a Jewish religious leader. Levites assisted the Jewish priests with their work in the Temple.¹⁾

Then a Samaritan traveling down the road came to where the hurt man was. (Samaritans were part Jewish, but the Jews did not accept them as true Jews. They were scorned by the Jews because of their mixed Jewish and Gentile ancestry. Basically, Samaritans and Jews disliked each other.¹⁾ *When he saw the man (Probably a Jew.¹⁾, he felt sorry for him. The Samaritan went to him, poured olive oil and wine on his wounds, and bandaged them.* (Oil and wine were used like medicine to soften and clean wounds.¹⁾ *Then he put the hurt man on his own donkey and took him to an inn where he cared for him. The next day, the Samaritan brought out two coins (Probably Roman Denarii—one coin was the average pay for one day’s work.¹⁾, gave them to the innkeeper, and said, “Take care of this man. If you spend more money on him, I will pay it back to you when I come again.”*

Then Jesus said, ‘Which one of these three men do you think was a neighbor to the man who was attacked by the robbers?’ The expert on the law answered, ‘The one who showed him mercy.’ Jesus said to him, ‘Then go and do what he did.’”

Scripture: Luke Chapter 10, Verses 25-37 NCV

Down on Luck

The man in the story who was attacked, clothes torn off, beaten, and left for dead on the side of the road, I believe we would all agree that this man was down on his luck that day. But we've all had days when nothing seemed to go right in our own lives—a flat tire causing you to be late to work or a meeting, the washing machine leaking water all over the floor, the microwave not working, or the power going off and dinner being served late—small things that beat us down. It's easy to feel alone and defeated in life, just like the man in the story probably felt that day. He was definitely down on his luck.

So, what do I believe Jesus' message is in His story? That He calls ordinary people like you and I, "Samaritans," to show mercy and compassion to others. Our neighbors are the people we come in contact with everyday; they are the ones we are called to help. We aren't simply to wait on a preacher to minister to someone in need; we are Jesus' called servants. And just like in Jesus' story, there are many experts on this Bible story, people who have read or heard it preached maybe a half-dozen times, but have never lived it out, or acted on it. Just like the expert in the law in Jesus' story, we know the answer too. We know which of the three people who passed by the man lying on the side of road that day we are supposed to be. When are we going to stop listening to the words in the story and start living out this story in everyday life?

"My brothers and sisters, if people say they have faith, but do nothing, their faith is worth nothing. Can faith like that save

them? A brother or sister in Christ might need clothes or food. If you say to that person, ‘God be with you! I hope you stay warm and get plenty to eat,’ but you do not give what that person needs, your words are worth nothing. In the same way, faith that is alone—that does nothing—is dead.” Scripture: James Chapter 2, Verses 14-17 NCV

For me, it was a Sunday afternoon in May. I had attended a friend’s brother’s funeral and was returning home when I stopped at a gas station to fill up my truck. When travelling, I often say a short prayer like, “Lord, show me someone to help today.” As I pumped my gas, I looked over and saw a young woman sitting on the sidewalk in front of the station’s building, with her back against the wall. She had her head lowered between her knees, and was holding a small sign in front of her head she had made from the flap of a cardboard box. On it she had written these words: “Need help. Down on Luck.” As people would pass by and enter the store, I noticed that she never once even raised her head.

After I finished pumping my gas and got back into my truck, I remember saying to myself, *Lord, I see the person, but what can I do to help her. I’m not a trained professional or a minister. What do I say to her, ‘God bless you.’* So, I did what all of the other people had done that day, I drove off. But as I sat at the green light behind the large tractor-trailer, wandering why he was still sitting there idle, I made the last left hand turn back into the gas station parking lot. This was purely a step of faith, because I did not have a clue at what I was doing or about

to do. The gas station parking lot was full, and it was hard for me to maneuver around all of the oddly parked campers and vans to find a parking space, but I eventually did.

I entered the restaurant side of the building and made my way to the drink coolers. *Well, I thought, I can at least buy her a bottle of water, since Jesus would often satisfy a person's physical need before addressing their spiritual need.* As I walked over to the large display of flavored waters, I thought to myself, *Is this what I would want someone else to buy me?* I grabbed a 20 ounce bottle of Coke, and immediately the old Coca-Cola television commercial with the well known tagline came to mind, "Have a Coke and a smile!" I glanced over the selection of chocolate candy bars, because that's what I would want someone to buy me, but figured a candy bar would make a melted mess in her hands, so instead picked up a pack of crackers.

Making my way to the checkout counter, I became very nervous. I seemed to have plenty of time to think of what I would say as I waited in line behind the other patrons purchasing packs of cigarettes that were on clearance. Finally at the counter, the total came to a little over two dollars. Now, what would I say to this lady? For me, when I get nervous or put on-the-spot, I get tongue-tied and forget even the simplest things. I said a quick prayer. Then the thought came to my mind, *Tell her what I put at the end of my g-mail signature, if that scripture is truly what I believe in my heart.*

So, going on nothing but faith and a prayer, I slowly pushed the door open and stepped to the front of the building. The young woman was still there with her head hung down between her knees, holding the cardboard sign out in front of her. *What a sad sight.* Then several other thoughts raced through my mind, *What if she's drunk or on drugs and lashes out her anger at me? What if someone I know is watching.* Putting all of these thoughts aside and trusting in God to take control of the circumstances, I walked along the sidewalk until I was standing directly in front of her.

It took her a moment to realize my presence. She raised her head just enough to see what I was holding in each hand. She slowly put down the sign and reached out, one hand taking hold of the soda and the other grasping the pack of crackers. She seemingly paused while holding the soda and crackers, so I slowly took a deep breath and boldly stated, "We should love people not only with words and talk, but by our actions and true caring." At that moment, she glanced up at me, looked me in the eyes and softly said, "God bless you." And that was it, because there was nothing more to say at that moment, a moment shared between two strangers on a warm Sunday afternoon. Leaving the parking lot, I felt really good inside, like maybe I had made a difference in her life, maybe even made her feel warm inside. I believe I did, because no woman should feel alone . . . especially when it's Mother's Day.

The Bridge for the Community in Nicaragua

When the winter rains pour down and the river rises, the farmers cannot cross to sell their produce, the children cannot cross to attend school, and the women cannot access medical treatment for their babies. As the community stands helpless at the bank of the river, you can see their sign too, written on their faces—“Need Help. Down on Luck.”



“Vision 2012—Will you be ONE?”—it’s not just a slogan—
“It’s the dream of the people.” If you will give on faith, I will
go and help these people build their bridge.