river west church

The Parable of the Good Samaritan
Luke 10:25-37
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Throughout Jesus' public ministry people would often travel incredible distances to ask Him questions. Many times Jesus answered people's questions by asking questions of His own and telling them parables. Such is the scenario we encounter today in Luke's gospel. In today's passage, an expert in Jewish law approaches Jesus to *"put him to the test"* (v 25). He hopes to trap him in a theological debate. However, you don't get far into the passage before you realize that Jesus is actually the one putting the religious scholar to the test. He does this by asking the man a *penetrating question* and telling him a *penetrating parable*—the parable of the Good Samaritan. Although the parable of the Good Samaritan is one of the more popular parables of Jesus, it's also one of His most penetrating. It cuts through our religious veneer and exposes what we believe about the Bible, our neighbors and the Gospel.

The Bible: How Do You Read It?

How do you read the Bible? This is the question that Jesus poses to the religious scholar (v 26). From what we know about this scholar that Jesus encountered, it was his job to know and teach the Hebrew Scriptures to people. If he were around today he would most likely be something similar to a pastor or a seminary professor. And yet, in spite of this scholar's extensive knowledge of scripture, Jesus uses this "expert in the law" to show us how NOT to read the Bible. Instead of reading the Bible to love God and his neighbor, this man scoured the pages of scripture to "justify himself" (vs. 29). This man reads the Bible in order to feel better about himself. However, the Bible is not meant to be read in order to for us to feel self-righteous. Instead, love for God and our neighbors ought to be the inevitable result of our time in God's Word. Jesus desperately wants to drill this truth down into the religious scholar's heart. So He tells him a parable.

Our Neighbors: Who Is My Neighbor?

Jesus begins the parable of the Good Samaritan by introducing a Jewish man in dire need—he's been robbed, beaten, stripped and left for dead (v 30). Before long, two Jewish religious leaders encounter their beaten Jewish brother. But, just when you think help is on the way, both men keep walking. As time passes, a Samaritan man shows up on the scene. Unlike the religious leaders, the Samaritan not only sees the man in need but also comes to him (v 33). Now, it would have been scandalous in Jesus' day for a Jew to hear this. No Jew would ever help a Samaritan. To a Jew, a Samaritan is a "dog" to be avoided. However, the hero in Jesus' parable is Samaritan who has mercy on a Jew! Without anything to gain, the Samaritan offers medical attention, transportation, friendship and financial assistance to his dying enemy (v 34-35). Christ ends this parable with a simple command: "*You go, and do likewise"* (v 37). It's almost as if Jesus is saying, *"This is the way I want you to love. Go to those our world leaves in the gutter. Bind up their wounds. Don't keep your time and finances to yourself. Love anyone in need lavishly…even if they happen to be your worst enemy."*

The Gospel: The Message That Motivates Us

For many of us, it's easy to read the parable Good Samaritan and walk away feeling not-so-good about our Christian life. After all, which of us hasn't walked passed a neighbor in need like the priest and Levite in this parable? Which makes you wonder, *"What power can truly motivate us to love both God and our neighbors with abandon?"* The answer is this: Only the message of the Gospel can truly motivate us toward the kind of mercy we see in this parable! The message of the Gospel reminds us that Christ found us helpless and left for dead in our sins. Our Savior stopped to help when others walked on by. He bound up our wounds by being beaten Himself (Is 53:5). He was left for dead so we could live! In company with such a merciful God how can we keep mercy to ourselves? Before such a Savior how can I not serve Him and others with abandon?