

## Introduction

- <https://nypost.com/2023/04/04/ryan-roberts-pulls-over-to-save-choking-100-year-old-woman/> - First sentence of the article - “thanks to a Good Samaritan...”
- If you do a quick google search you can find story after story of real-life “Good Samaritans...”
- This short parable that Jesus tells might be in the “Top 5” of most famous Bible stories... Even people who have little exposure to the Bible seem to know this story.
- And... we live in a culture that wants “good neighbors.” State Farm claims to be a good neighbor. We want more people in this world who do the right thing, who are kind, and who help those in need.
- After all, that’s what this parable is about, right? This parable is about our need to be good neighbors so that our society can be better. Just think how much better the world would be if we all focused on being good neighbors. That’s what this story is calling us to, isn’t it?
- I think many of us miss the point of this famous story. Yes, we need to be good neighbors, but there’s a greater point that Jesus is driving home in this story.
- This morning, I want to show you why Jesus told this story, and how we are to respond to this story. Two truths from this story that I think will help us to understand what it means to be a “Good Neighbor.”

## Story:

- “An expert in the religious law...” (Some translations = lawyer) - a Jewish scribe. A Jewish scribe was looked to as a teacher/interpreter of the Hebrew Bible. He encounters Jesus not as someone who wants to learn but to test Jesus.
- His heart is closed to Jesus - He’s not a seeker ([Luke 10:21](#)) and Jesus knows it.
- Simple question: “What must I do to inherit eternal life?” How can this scribe know if he’s on the right track?
- Jesus’ reply: “You’re the expert. What does the Law say?”
- Scribe’s answer based on his knowledge of the Law - Love God and love your neighbor as yourself ([Deuteronomy 6:5](#), [Leviticus 19:18](#)). Jesus Himself stated that the entire law hinges on these two commands ([Mathew 22:36-40](#)).
- Jesus’ response: “Do this and you will live!” BUT... that’s the problem. Who can do this?
- vs. 29 - the religious expert “wanted to justify his actions.” Wanted to plead his case - that he had kept the Law - that he had done enough to inherit eternal life.
- Logical question: “Who is my neighbor?” Or, who am I required to love? Certainly not everyone. For this lawyer: “I can’t love the Romans. Look at what they’re doing to our country. I can’t love the Samaritans. They are our hated enemies. There’s even some Jews I don’t love... Who is my neighbor?” Does neighbor have to do with proximity? Family members? Close friends? Church members? Who am I supposed to *agape* - love with an unconditional, sacrificial love?
- Jesus tells a parable - a made up story. This is a simple story with a powerful punch. Jewish man traveling from Jerusalem down to Jericho - Literally traveling down... Jerusalem = 3,000 ft above sea level. Jericho = 1,000 feet below sea level. Well known road in ancient Israel - a long, windy descent of 17 miles. The Jewish people called this road “the bloody way” - a notoriously dangerous road where robbers would hide out looking for their next victim.

- And in this story, on this day, the robbers found their victim - an unsuspecting Jewish man; stripped, beaten, and left for dead.
- Everyone in the audience nodding their head as Jesus tells the story... "Yup. We've heard this story before. That happens all the time."
- vs. 31 - "By chance a priest came along." Some hope for this half-dead man. A priest traveling from Jerusalem. He's been at the temple serving the Lord, leading people in worship. Leading people to love God with all their hearts. Yet, this priest returning home from worship moves to the other side of the street to avoid this man. Commentators try to read into the story: he didn't want to touch a half-dead man because it might make him ceremonially unclean. Or, he didn't stop because he was afraid the bandits would pounce on him. Who knows... It's a made up story. Jesus doesn't tell us. Not the point...
- vs. 32 - A Levite - People in the crowd probably weren't all that shocked by the story. They knew the priest should have helped, but they also knew some priests like the one Jesus describes. A Levite? Priests came from the tribe of Levi - but many in the tribe of Levi weren't priests but temple servants. BUT... he passes on the other side just like the priest.
- The religious establishment - the very people who should have upheld the two great commands - fail.
- The crowd listening - perhaps expecting Jesus to end the story with a Jewish layperson as the hero of the story... BUT no one expecting this hero: a Samaritan. Samaritans were hated by Jews. They intermarried with Assyrians. Rejected most of the Hebrew Bible. Built their own temple. James and John wanted to call down fire from heaven on the Samaritans ([Luke 9:54](#)). At one point, the Jewish establishment was so mad at Jesus that they called Him a Samaritan possessed by a demon ([John 8:48](#)).
- Jews hated Samaritans and Samaritans hated Jews. To think that a Samaritan would help a Jew or vice versa was absurd.
- Yet, in this story, a Samaritan treats this half-dead Jew like he would want to be treated no expense too great to help this man. He loves his neighbor as he loves himself.

- Samaritan takes him to an inn. “Do whatever it takes to care for him. When I come back, I’ll pay whatever extra you spend.”
- Jesus asks a question: “Who acted like a neighbor?” The lawyer won’t even say the word *Samaritan*: “The one who showed mercy.”
- “Go and do likewise...”
- Story started with a question: “Who is my neighbor?” By the end of the story, Jesus flips the question, “Are you a neighbor?” Does this man desire to show the same kind of love that the Samaritan did in this story. The answer a resounding “no...” The lawyer wanted to limit who his neighbors were, Jesus wanted him to see that his neighbor was anyone and everyone. The love of God that we are called to imitate knows no bounds. It’s not limited by proximity, social conditions, race, etc. The call of the Jesus follower is to love sacrificially. Period. The lost world around us should not love better, care better, and show more compassion than we do as the people of God.
- “Go and do likewise...” That’s the problem. We can’t go and do likewise. That’s the point. Jesus showing this expert in the law that he’s not an expert in keeping the law. Jesus is humbling this lawyer. He can’t live up to the law’s expectation. No one can. None of us our good neighbors. Sure, every now and then we have our moments of sacrificial love - but treating others with sacrificial, compassionate, merciful love every day in every situation, who does that? Yet, that’s what the Law requires - that we live neighborly towards everyone.
- This story is about far more than being nice to those who are hurting. That’s not the point. The point is that we’re NOT good neighbors. We fail. What we need is a good neighbor.
- We can’t justify ourselves. We can’t say, “I haven’t been a good neighbor to everyone, but I’ve been a good neighbor to enough people to gain eternal life/favor with God. Reality: even the people you love, who you consider “close neighbors” you don’t always

## You need the ultimate good neighbor.

- Jesus is the ultimate good neighbor.

- Jesus is the neighbor who came close to us. The second person of the Trinity who has existed in fellowship with the Father and the Holy Spirit for all of eternity stepped into this broken world to come close to you.
- You were left for dead. Because of your sin, you were condemned to eternal death. But Jesus showed you love. He did far more for you than the Good Samaritan in this story did for the half-dead Jew.
- Jesus went to a cross, and He suffered in your place. He was beaten. He was scourged. He was punished for your sin. He took what was coming for you so that you could inherit eternal life not through trying to keep the law, but by embracing the gift of His grace. By believing that he died for you and then rose for you three days later. Through faith, your sins are forgiven and you can experience life.
- **You can never be neighborly enough to earn eternal life.**
- **Jesus is the neighbor who wants to transform you into a good neighbor.** (What does this mean? Next point...)

## **You cannot meet every need, but you can rely on Jesus to meet every need.**

- Tendency to walk away from this story overwhelmed by thinking, “I have to meet every need that I see.” That’s not possible. Nor is that the point of the story.
- You are not a good neighbor when you choose to ignore the physical and spiritual needs of those around you. That’s sinful. You are a good neighbor when you live a Spirit-empowered life on Jesus’ mission. When you answer the call to discipleship in [Luke 9](#).
- I cannot “go and do likewise” to earn my salvation.
- BUT, I can and I want to “go and do likewise” because of the salvation He has given me.
- If I follow the Spirit’s leadership, and you follow the Spirit’s leadership, God will use us to be a blessing to many.

- Jesus wants to meet every person's greatest need: forgiveness of sins, and He wants to use you to graciously minister to the needs of others, as He leads, for the sake of His Kingdom.
- **Being a good neighbor is keeping my heart open.**
  - It's a willingness to be used by Jesus however He desires to use you in the life of someone else.
  - It's repenting of ignoring and judging people.
  - It's willing to be "inconvenienced" and live on God's time instead of my time.
  - It's growing in the Fruit of the Spirit so that the character of Christ is on display in the way that you live before others.
- **Being a good neighbor is keeping my eyes open.** It's asking God to help you see the divine opportunities that He has placed around you.
- **Being a good neighbor is keeping my hands open.** It's messy. It takes time. It's sacrificial. It means you're going to give of the resources that God has given you, and it means that it won't always go well. People are sinful. Sometimes you'll follow Jesus' leadership to minister to someone and they'll take advantage of you. Sometimes people will hurt you. But, that doesn't stop us from being obedient because there will many moments when people respond to the work of God.
- **Being a good neighbor is keeping my mouth open.** We help not for our glory but the glory of Jesus. We meet needs as the Spirit leads so we might open our mouths and share the hope we have in Jesus. It is NOT neighborly to NOT tell others about the ultimate neighbor.
- This morning, you need the Ultimate Neighbor. Turn to Jesus by faith.
- If you are a follower of Jesus, are you a neighbor? Who is Jesus leading you to show neighborly love to?