

Go and Do Likewise  
Jeff Clinger  
July 15<sup>th</sup>, 2007

Luke 10:29-37

*But wanting to justify himself, he asked Jesus, "And who is my neighbor?" Jesus replied, "A man was going down from Jerusalem to Jericho, and fell into the hands of robbers, who stripped him, beat him, and went away, leaving him half dead. Now by chance a priest was going down that road; and when he saw him, he passed by on the other side. So likewise a Levite, when he came to the place and saw him, passed by on the other side. But a Samaritan while traveling came near him; and when he saw him, he was moved with pity. He went to him and bandaged his wounds, having poured oil and wine on them. Then he put him on his own animal, brought him to an inn, and took care of him. The next day he took out two denarii, gave them to the innkeeper, and said, 'Take care of him and when I come back, I will repay you whatever more you spend.' Which one of these three, do you think was a neighbor to the man who fell into the hands of the robbers? He said, "The one who showed him mercy." Jesus said to him, "Go and do likewise."*

Over the last few years GM has been equipping many of their new vehicles with a feature called Onstar. I imagine many of you have seen the commercials or heard some of the conversation about what Onstar can do. Through Onstar you can connect with an operator if you're lost or need directions, it can help you find a restaurant or store that you're looking for, if your vehicle is lost or stolen Onstar will help track and find it for you, Onstar will periodically send you updates about the functioning and well being of your vehicle, and should you ever be in an accident and your airbags deploy, Onstar will automatically dispatch emergency personnel to your location.

I recently heard about another way in which Onstar is being used. If you have Onstar in your vehicle you are being encouraged to use it to contact emergency help whenever you witness an accident or come across a person or a situation in need of emergency or medical help. Thousands of people are using Onstar to help others in this way each year and GM has taken to calling these persons who help others, a catchy nickname – any thoughts on what that might be?

That's right, GM is calling persons who use this new technology to help others, Good Samaritans. This labeling is representative of the way in which our culture has allowed the phrase Good Samaritan to become synonymous with simply doing a good deed, sharing a random act of kindness, etc. As we continue our summer journey through the parables this morning we're going to investigate the ways in which the parable of the Good Samaritan is much deeper than this simple, surface reading.

The parable of the Good Samaritan is told in the Gospel of Luke. A young lawyer has just asked Jesus what he must do to inherit eternal life and Jesus responded by asking him, "What is written in the law? What do you read there?" The young lawyer answers, "You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, and with all your soul, and with all your strength, and with all your mind; and you shall love your neighbor as yourself." Jesus affirms the answer of the young man, but the young man wants to clarify a step further. This is where we pick up with the story in today's reading from the Gospel of Luke (10:29-37).

*But wanting to justify himself, he asked Jesus, "And who is my neighbor?" Jesus replied, "A man was going down from Jerusalem to Jericho, and fell into the hands of robbers, who stripped him, beat him, and went away, leaving him half dead. Now by chance a priest was going down that road; and when he saw him, he passed by on the other side. So likewise a Levite, when he came to the place and saw him, passed by on the other side. But a Samaritan while traveling came near him; and when he saw him, he was moved with pity. He went to him and bandaged his wounds, having poured oil and wine on them. Then he put him on his own animal, brought him to an inn, and took care of him. The next day he took out two denarii, gave them to the innkeeper, and said, 'Take*

*care of him and when I come back, I will repay you whatever more you spend.' Which one of these three, do you think was a neighbor to the man who fell into the hands of the robbers? He said, "The one who showed him mercy." Jesus said to him, "Go and do likewise."*

Upon an initial reading or hearing of this story it does share the important lesson that we are to do good things and take care of one another. This passage concludes with Jesus telling the young lawyer, to go and do likewise, to go and show mercy as the Samaritan showed mercy to the man who had been robbed. But, if we take a minute to more fully understand the characters that play a part in this story we can begin to understand that what Jesus is telling the young lawyer to do is something even more radical than we can imagine.

The story opens with a man traveling from Jerusalem to Jericho and finding himself attacked, beaten, and robbed on the way. The road from Jerusalem to Jericho was a tough road to travel and scenes like this one were likely not uncommon. It would not be like someone being jumped and robbed while traveling the road from Munster to Dyer, it would be more like someone being beaten and robbed while traveling from the Robert Taylor Homes to the far south side of Chicago. It would not have been unlikely to see the victim of a crime as one passed that way, and while traveling that way it would not be uncommon for one to be worried about and concerned for their own well being.

So when the priest approaches the scene and sees this traveler laying by the side of the road what might he be thinking that causes him to cross to the other side? That it might be a trap? That whoever did this to that man might still be lurking in the shadows to do the same to him? That his own well being might be in jeopardy? And so while we

might be quick to judge the priest for not stopping, the reality is, whether we find them acceptable or not, the priest has his excuses for not stopping to help. And a very similar list of excuses might have been held by the Levite, traveling past the beaten man for fear of his own safety.

As Jesus tells the parable to the young lawyer we hear about the priest that passes, about the Levite that passes, and then a Samaritan comes onto the scene – and the Samaritan stops to help. Yes, the Samaritan helped, and so yes the parable teaches that we should all be like the Samaritan and help one another, but that's just the beginning. There is something else significant about the role of the Samaritan.

You see in the first century of Palestine Samaritans were an ethnic group that were despised and looked down upon. Israelite's wouldn't even talk to them when they passed on the street and they were seen in many ways to be a nuisance and an annoyance to Israelite's. When the young lawyer hears Jesus begin to talk about a Samaritan he likely feels uncomfortable and wonders why Jesus would even be talking about such a person or a situation like this. But the Samaritan stops and helps.

So, what does it say that the Samaritan does what he does? It says that sometimes those we look down upon surprise us by being more humane and caring than those who we think would or should be. It shows us that even those who might be looked down upon can show mercy and can be a good neighbor. All people are to be understood as neighbors, but this is not an easy task. The priest fails to do this, the Levite fails to do this, they are simply too wrapped up in their own stuff. But the Samaritan, does what needs to be done, he shows mercy to one in need. And as Jesus concludes the story he

tells this young lawyer to be like the Samaritan! The Samaritan, one who would be despised and looked down upon, is lifted up as the hero!

Earlier this week in Sanford, Florida a tragic accident occurred. A small private plane was flying from Daytona Beach to Lakeland when its cockpit began to fill with smoke. The plane was cleared for an emergency landing, but struggled to do so safely and ultimately ended up crashing down in a residential neighborhood. The plane came to rest on and between two different homes setting both of them on fire. As hundreds of gallons of aviation fuel poured into the homes the flames were stocked and the fire spread rapidly.

Ryan Cooper, an off duty firefighter was telling his wife goodbye as she left for work when he saw the plane crash into the neighborhood a short distance away. He grabbed his gear out of his car and rushed over to see what he could do. He pulled a 10 year old boy from one of the homes and also rescued the boy's father. He also tried to rescue people from the second home, but was forced out of the fire for his own safety by a police officer when the smoke and heat became too much.

People around the country are calling Cooper a hero, but he has said that he doesn't want to be called one, that any person with his training would have done the same thing. Regardless of whether he wants to be called a hero or not, there is no doubt that what Cooper did was heroic. He took a risk, he was helping his physical neighbors. This is the kind of action that would typically earn someone the title of Good Samaritan, but again the point of the Good Samaritan, the point it seems Jesus is trying to make to the young lawyer, is about more than simply doing good deeds and helping others out.

Wednesday at Youth BS we talked some about who the Samaritan's of our world today might be. I asked the youth to name the groups of people that tend to be despised, looked down upon, and treated poorly in our culture. They named persons with developmental disabilities, the elderly, and immigrants as groups that are often looked down upon. And as we reflected some on the story of the Good Samaritan the connections between immigrants and the Samaritan became more and more clear.

A little more than a year ago now thousands of protestors in white t-shirts marched through downtown Oakland calling for immigration reform. As they did so, 21 year-old Arnaldo Calderon stood out on the sidelines watching, wearing his Marine Corps dress blues. Calderon, the son of an illegal immigrant from Guatemala, is an Iraq war veteran and one of approximately 25,000 of our nation's military personnel who are not United States Citizens.

Calderon was born in Guatemala and brought to the United States in 1992 when he was seven years old. Like the nearly 20,000 non-citizen's who have earned their citizenship already and the approximately 25,000 non-citizen's who are currently serving in the armed forces, Calderon put his life on the line to serve a country in which many tend to look down upon people like him.

Calderon, like the Good Samaritan, took risks to serve others even though he, as a non-citizen immigrant, might be looked down upon and treated poorly by many of the people he was called upon to protect. And so in the same way that Jesus tells the young lawyer that this Samaritan, this foreigner, is the good neighbor, I believe that through the parable of the Good Samaritan Jesus says to us today, that non-citizen's who come into

this country and put their lives on the line are good neighbors, persons to be looked at as role models and examples...

As the parable of the Good Samaritan is recounted in Luke, it ends with Jesus offering four words to the young man who had initiated the telling of the story. Jesus says to this young man, "Go and do likewise..." On the one hand, he is saying, go and do good deeds, practice random acts of kindness, take care of others. At the same time he is also saying, go and be like the man from Samaria.

As Christians we're supposed to love one another, yes. As good citizen's and neighbors we are called to do nice things for one another like using our Onstar to help others or taking risks like Ryan Cooper did this week saving people from that fire. But, as Christians the story of the Good Samaritan calls us to move beyond our stereotypes and judgments of others who we might look down upon and to realize that in many ways persons like Arnaldo Calderon are the true neighbors as they show mercy and make sacrifices that they don't have to make. Just as Jesus was calling the young lawyer to set aside judgment of Samaritans, so too might he be calling us to set aside our judgments of others who we look down upon? Go, and do likewise.