

Title: “Go and do likewise”

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Luke 10:25-37

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Overview:

We are dead in our sins and no Law can save us. As we lie dying in the middle of life's road Jesus comes and through is mercy and grace, saves us and delivers us to life everlasting. This is the message of the Good Samaritan parable and we are challenged to respond to God's saving grace and mercy.

Lesson:

We have been saved solely by the work of Jesus Christ and are called to respond by imitating His love to others.

Message:

Praise be to the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who has blessed us in the heavenly realms with every spiritual blessing in Christ.

I am sure you have so don't deny it, but have you ever watched a movie and identified with a character that was just like you? Maybe you have a heart as big as Julie Andrews from Sound of Music. Or, maybe you have the cleverness of Sean Connery in a James Bond movie. I know that my children would surely agree that they find in me the same awesomeness in any one of the super heroes from the Marvel movies. But whoever the character is that you identify with, there is something that defines who they are – and you share in that quality.

Or, maybe, when you watch a movie, you identify with a character that you wish you were more like. Could it be Harrison Ford from Indiana Jones, or Clint Eastwood from, well, any of his movies? Maybe you see in these characters qualities that you lack and wish you had. Or, maybe you see in these characters qualities you lack and know that you should have, like kindness or grace or patience or selflessness.

In today's Gospel reading we watch a story unfold before our eyes. The scene opens with a man traveling from Jerusalem into Jericho and being attacked by a band of robbers who beat him and leave him for dead. We see three characters enter and exit, each with a surprising reaction to what lay before their eyes. The priest and Levite both pass him by but the Samaritan shows compassion and saves this man from certain death.

As you watch this play out in your mind, who do you most identify with? Is it the priest or Levite that sees a need and actively ignores it? I'm guessing that it's not, so maybe it's the kind Samaritan that identifies a need and addresses it. Is that how you see yourself? Someone that would selflessly respond to the needs of others. Maybe you have a heart so large that you even look for opportunities to serve and this character completely describes who you are. It's possible, too that deep down inside you see the Samaritan as the person that you hope you are but are not confident

that you wouldn't turn out to be the Levite – too proud or too busy for such an interruption in your life.

But, what about the man half dead? Do you ever relate to him? Do you desire to be like him? Maybe that has never entered your mind but in telling this story that's exactly what Jesus is proposing to the lawyer who had started the conversation. It may not sound like it in the passage that we read so you have to go back several verses to see the full picture.

Starting in verse 17, the seventy-two disciples that Jesus sent out had returned saying "Lord, even the demons are subject to us in your name!" and Jesus replies, in part, "do not rejoice in this, that the spirits are subject to you, but rejoice that your names are written in heaven."

It is just after this that the lawyer stands and asks "Teacher, what shall I do to inherit eternal life?" Because of these previous verses, we already know the answer to this question, and it is a simple one: nothing. He can do nothing to inherit eternal life for it is by the grace and will of God alone that his, and our names are written in heaven.

Jesus places this lawyer directly in the middle of the story as the one who is robbed, beaten, and left for dead. We don't know anything about the background of this fictitious character – what nationality he was, what wealth he might have had, or anything. All we know is that he will surely die without external intervention and there is nothing that he or his influence or his money can do to change the situation.

The priest that walks by represents the Law and he ignores this man because there is nothing that the Law can do to minister him back to life. Regardless of how well he knows and follows the Law, it won't save him as he lies dying on the road and so the priest walks on. The Levite also follows this pattern and crosses to the other side of the road, for no amount of tradition, Jewish heritage, or lineage can save this victim, either.

This must have been very difficult for the lawyer to hear because he had pinned his life and his salvation to the scrolls and laws of Moses. There he stood, proud and ready for acceptance into the kingdom of God but in just a single moment learned that eternal life could only be found through the work of Christ. What Jesus was instructing him was to abandon all that he had and all that he believed in. He was to lie in the road and die to the world. And there, at that point, Jesus would come to him and give him a new and eternal life.

We were on this road, too. Some of us were just babies and some of us may have been older – but we all lay dead and in need of Jesus Christ.

And as we lay on this road, unable to save ourselves, unable to call for help, Jesus comes to us. He meets us where we lie and through the waters of our Baptism he cleanses and heals us. He gives us a new life in Him and the promise of an eternal life with God, our Father.

And just as Jesus tells the lawyer to "Go and do likewise" we are instructed to do the same thing. Out of our response for what He has done for us on that dusty road, we are called to travel down it

in search of others who lie dying – who haven't heard the Good News and are in need of Christ's saving power.

We start in our homes, our immediate families. It's not enough to just ensure that they are alive in Christ, that they have all been baptized. We are charged with caring for their spiritual needs as well. Jesus didn't simply bandage up the victim and send him on his way. He carried him to the inn and assured that the man would be cared for, watched over, and nurtured back to health. Are we doing the same for our own? Are we nurturing and feeding the spiritual appetites of our children and spouses to ensure that they are being cared for and watched over or have we determined that a weekly service and a completed confirmation is good enough?

We expand the circle to include our relatives and close friends. We can't pick them up and carry them like we can our immediate families, but we can meet them on the road and care for them selflessly. We can promise to never abandon them and as they reject any offer of assistance and pray for them unceasingly for God to soften their hearts and be open to our spiritual nurturing.

But we are charged with more than are family and friends. Jesus stated:

³⁵But love your enemies, do good to them, and lend to them without expecting to get anything back. Then your reward will be great, and you will be children of the Most High, because he is kind to the ungrateful and wicked. ³⁶Be merciful, just as your Father is merciful.

This is the traveler that I find myself most often ignoring on the road of life and that's a shame because God wants to use me to minister to this person, but I cross to the other side of the road instead. And it's not just him that I ignore in my inactions but also Jesus who is right there, at that very moment, even without me, loving and caring for that person whom I have determined is unworthy of my compassion. And that reality stings.

As we leave church and continue traveling down this road of life today, I renew the challenge that Jesus gave to this lawyer. I challenge you to "Go and do likewise" to your family, your friends, and especially your enemies.

Let's Pray.

Lord,

We know that you have made us in your image, but we turned our back on you and now find ourselves dead on the road. You have come to us and have brought us new life through the waters of Holy Baptism, and we are so grateful for that. Lord, we ask you to continue to soften our hearts so that we can recognize others who are in need of your saving power. Give us the desire to set aside our own wants and needs so that we can minister to them in your name. Make plain your desires for how we are to help those who we pass by every day at work, in school, and in our own families. And finally, grant us the strength and courage to love and minister to those that we would rather see neglected and abandoned.

In your name we pray. Amen.