

Luke Chapters 10-11: The Good Samaritan at Work

From the Theology of Work Bible Commentary on Luke

The Parable of the Good Samaritan may be the best-known of all Jesus' parables, though it occurs only in the Gospel of Luke. It follows immediately after Luke's account of the Great Commandment. In the Gospels of Matthew and Mark, Jesus says that greatest commandment in all of scripture is to "love God" and "love your neighbor." In Luke 10:25-37 the discussion of the greatest commandment continues directly into the Parable of the Good Samaritan.

In Luke's account, the lawyer begins by asking Jesus what he must do to inherit eternal life. Jesus asks the lawyer to summarize himself what is written in the law, and the lawyer returns with the Great Commandment "Love the Lord your God... and your neighbor as yourself." Jesus replies that this is indeed the key to life.

The lawyer then asks Jesus a follow-up question, "Who is my neighbor?" Jesus responds by telling a story which has been called "The Parable of the Good Samaritan." This story is so compelling that it has permeated into popular knowledge far beyond Christian circles. People who have never picked up a Bible will still recognize the meaning of the term "Good Samaritan" as someone who takes care of a stranger in need.

The Samaritan was successful enough to be able to afford oil and wine for medicinal purposes and lodging at an inn for a complete stranger. He is willing to spend his money on a stranger, and his time too. The Samaritan puts his other business on hold to see to the needs of the injured stranger.

The Parable of the Good Samaritan can thus be interpreted as a story about using our material success to benefit others. The hero of the parable spends his money on a stranger without any direct obligation to do so. They are not related by kinship or even by faith. Indeed, the Samaritans

and the Jews were often antagonistic toward one another. And yet in Jesus' mind, to love God is to make anyone who needs our help into our "neighbor."

At work we have many chances to be neighbors with co-workers, customers and others across ethnic or cultural divides. Being a Good Samaritan in the workplace means cultivating a specific awareness of the needs of the other. A conscientious Christian is the one who puts time and resources towards these neighbors.