

# **Dr. Daniel K. Darko, Gospel of Luke, Session 16, Parable of the Good Samaritan, Luke 10:25-42**

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This is Dr. Dan Darko and his teaching on the Gospel of Luke. This is session 16, Parable of the Good Samaritan, Luke 10:25-42.

Welcome back to our Biblical e-learning lecture series on the Gospel of Luke.

As you may recall from the previous lectures on Luke chapter 10, we saw that Jesus and the disciples came to Samaria, and when they came to Samaria, some Samaritans rejected them, and the disciples immediately prompted into this quick reaction, trying to almost curse them or trying to exercise their power to be able to hurt the Samaritans for rejecting them. Jesus warns them and keeps them on focus. Subsequently, we come to see Jesus sending out the 70 or 72, as I explained in the previous lecture, to go out.

And when he sent them out, he gave them a mandate. But as disciples, as they are, as we are getting to know about this bunch of followers of Jesus, when he sent them out and they saw miracles happening, they came, and they were so excited about these miracles, and that became the talking point of which Jesus cautioned them to be very, very careful about how they emphasize or the misplaced emphasis they have on what the kingdom of God is about. Here, put this in mind because we are going to talk about the parable of the Good Samaritan.

I want you to be able to think about what is going on here in this discourse. In the very beginning, they were in Samaria, they were rejected, problems ensued, and then they went out, and when they went out, they saw a dramatic response with miraculous deeds. They come back to Jesus.

Jesus cautioned that they should rejoice rather than that their names are written in the Book of Life. And then now we are going to have a situation where a lawyer will come to Jesus and try to test Jesus. This is still while Jesus was on his way towards Jerusalem.

Now, Jesus is heading from Galilee towards Jerusalem, and the lawyer will come in trying to test Jesus with his expertise in law, assuming that Jesus knows how to answer these questions correctly. Or, in an honor and shame society, when you test a public figure in the public arena, and the public figure is not able to answer your questions, what ends up happening is you put that figure to shame, and that becomes very embarrassing. Let's see what we have called the parable of the Good Samaritan and the context of which, which is pretty much an encounter between

Jesus and a lawyer in the real sight of the disciples and others who may be watching what is unfolding.

And I read from Luke chapter 10 from verse 25. Behold and behold, a lawyer stood up to put him to the test, saying, Teacher, what shall I do to inherit eternal life? He asked him what is written in the law. How do you read it? And he answered, 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 your neighbor as yourself. And he said to him, You answered correctly.

Do this, and you will live. But he, desiring to justify himself, said to Jesus, And who is my neighbor? Jesus replied A man was going down from Jerusalem to Jericho, and he fell among robbers, who stripped him, and beat him, and departed, leaving him half dead. Now, by chance, a priest was going down the road, that very 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, as he journeyed, came to where he was, and when he saw him, he had compassion. He went to him and bound up his wounds, pouring on oil and wine.

Then he set him on his own animal and brought him to an inn and took care of him. And the next day, he took out two denarii and gave them to the innkeeper, saying, Take care of him, and whatever more you spend, I will repay when I come back. Which of these three do you think proved to be a neighbor of the man who fell among the robbers? He said The one who showed him mercy.

And Jesus said to him, You go and do likewise. You see, in the parable of the good Samaritan, Jesus knows that, at the very least, his disciples are still having the background, in the immediate background, the encounter with Samaritans behind. This is a group of people they don't like, and they always want to curse and leave behind.

And now they have also had something wrong already. Then, this lawyer comes, and Jesus tries to answer the lawyer about matters of eternal life, and we will see how Mark handles that particular test. Jesus is going to bring a Samaritan back into the picture to try to elevate the status of an outcast from a Jewish point of view to show what true discipleship should entail in the kingdom of God.

Before we go on, let me make some parallel observations between Luke and Mark. The same account, the very beginning before the parable, is brought up in Mark. And we see that in Mark, Jesus is the one who summarizes the law.

In Luke, the lawyer summarizes the law. This is recorded in Mark chapter 12, verses 28 to 34. We also see the question that is posed, and I'll bring back some of this as soon as I try to unpack what is going on in this parable.

The question that was thrown by this lawyer in Mark was about what is the most important commandment. In fact, if I could read that from Mark, perhaps it would help. In Mark chapter 12, verse 28, once one of the teachers of the law came and heard them debating, noticing that Jesus had given them a good answer, he asked him of all the commandments, which one is the most important? Verse 29, Jesus answered, the most important one? The most important one is this: Hear O Israel, the Lord is God, the Lord is one.

Love the Lord your God with all your heart, with all your soul, with all your mind, and with all your strength. The second is this: Love your neighbor as you love yourself. There is no commandment greater than this.

So, in Mark, the question was not about eternal life, it was about what is the most important of the commandments. In Luke, the lawyer's question was about eternal life, the kind of question we found in John chapter 3, when a Pharisee encountered Jesus by the name Nicodemus and asked similar questions about eternal life. Here, though, we are told about the motive.

The motive was to test Jesus, to see his competency, and potentially embarrass him in the public arena. Mark does not have the parable, and Luke goes on to tell us that this parable will become one of Jesus' most memorable parables. This parable, before even I go on to expand more or explain further on this particular parable, let me draw attention to the fact that too many times, we have highlighted different things in this parable as and when we want, sometimes in a misleading fashion.

Early Christians are not exempt from such erroneous or misleading reading of this particular parable. There are some who have used the Good Samaritan as a figure of something representing other things that will serve their personal interest in the quest to try to lure the marginalized to work to their advantage. There are others who have spiritualized the whole parable and sent them into a kind of arena that is almost inconceivable.

But I want to draw attention to one church leader, and I like to say that Africans are guilty of often trying to spiritualize everything, and one of the African church fathers by the name of Origen actually did just that. One of my forebears is from Africa, and he looks at how he interprets this parable. I mean, he's supposed to make it so profound.

According to Origen, in his homily, he writes in one of his homilies as I found in his text, he said the man who was going down from Jerusalem to Jericho was Adam.

Jerusalem is paradise, and Jericho is the world. The robbers are hostile powers. The priest is the law.

The Levite is the prophet, and the Samaritan is Christ. The wounds are disobedience. The beast is the lost body.

The inn, which accepts all who wish to enter, is the church. The manager of the inn is the head of the church to whom its care has been entrusted, and the fact that the Samaritan promises he will return represents the savior's second coming. And if this is read aloud, even in today's Africa, I can imagine somebody saying amen.

That is a weird reading of this particular parable. What does that have to do with the lawyer's question? The question of eternal life. So let me revisit some things for you and highlight a few things here. Just show one of the mark combinations or mark comparisons to go on to make the point.

The first thing we find here is as it regards the lawyer, the motive is essential. The motive here is he aims to test or entrap Jesus. As I mentioned earlier, in an honor and shame society, this will also go on to embarrass Jesus.

On the question of who in this account, we find here that in Mark, Jesus summarizes the law, but in Luke, it is the lawyer who is going to be gotten to summarize the law. Jesus gets him to summarize the law to show his legal competencies. The central issue is important here, unlike Mark, when the question is on what is the most important commandment.

Please let us not use Mark to interpret Luke. Luke, the question in Luke, is about eternal life. The summation of the law then in Luke will not put the shema, Hear, O Israel, the Lord our God, the Lord is one.

The kind of emphasis that Mark wants to bring to bear in his narrative in Luke, the question of eternal life, is going to push Jesus to get the lawyer to think about both vertical and horizontal dimensions of the kingdom of God. You see, in the kingdom of God, it is not always about your relationship with God and how much you love God with all your mind, your strength, your heart, and you name it. We talk about loving our neighbor, but that is where we often lose sight, whether it is by the Pharisees or, the lawyers, or people who claim to be true followers of Yahweh.

When it comes to dealing with our neighbors and dealing with the other, it becomes difficult to be a true follower or a covenant-faithful follower of Yahweh. The lawyer's question is going to lead to that narrow issue here. If you can summarize it, Jesus will say check in terms of summation a plus, but follow-up question, let's talk about the subject of neighbor in the second line, and that will introduce a whole dimension into

this conversation in a way that would be very, very unfriendly or unwelcome for this man.

When you make a good observation of this text, you see a few things developing here, and I find it intriguing as how Mark and Luke are trying to work with the text in Deuteronomy 6:5, which talks about loving the Lord your God with your mind with your strength and with your heart but both in Mark and Luke they emphasize all the whole mind. You should know that I am one of those people who believe that one of the weaknesses of modern Pentecostal and charismatic experiences is worshipping the Lord with all things except the mind, and so I try when I was pastoring a Pentecostal church, I tried to remind my church members the last thing I want them to do is to check their brain out of the door before they get into the sanctuary. Worshipping the Lord your God with your mind is important, but note how Mark and Luke emphasize it here: with all your mind to the exclusion of none to the narrow focus of all your mental faculties, let that be geared towards loving the Lord.

The second thing we find in this text is the issue of neighbor, and here in the neighbor, as you follow on the screen, I quote the Jewish law that this lawyer knows very well, and both he and Jesus will be working from this platform, and the narrow scope of how neighbor is defined. In Leviticus 19:17, the text reads you shall not hate your brother in your heart, but you shall reason frankly with your neighbor lest you incur sin because of him. Verse 18 is where the law is clearly stipulated: you shall not take vengeance or bear a grudge against the sons of your own people, but you shall love your neighbor as yourself. I am the Lord.

So, you find here in Leviticus the narrow scope of who a neighbor is: a Jew, a covenant community member, or a person who is referred to in verse 17 as a brother. So, the lawyer is very comfortable about that. Oh yes, that is what the Kingdom of God is about.

As we go through and think about how Jesus is expanding what the Kingdom entails and how Luke, in his interest in the outcast, is going to actually bring this to bear, bear in mind what Jesus will do here. Jesus will take you from the known to the unknown and stretch you. Yes, your neighbor is a fellow Jew, but wait a minute. Let's look at that law and the actual realization or implementation of that law in the Kingdom of God very well.

The neighbor may be more than your fellow Jew. You also find in Luke something that he does. Luke is the only one, even though these two laws are quoted by nearly all the gospel writers in the New Testament, and Luke is the only one that combined the two without saying what the first part of the law says and the second says Luke is the only one who makes them only one in the way he presents them.

Luke does well in the way he actually nails down the nature of the law as loving God and loving your neighbor and emphasizing the object of God and the object of your neighbor and, in this particular incident, dwelling on the neighbor and pushing the boundaries of neighbor to be able to spell out to Theophilus, an elite reader of his, about how Jesus understands who a neighbor is in the Kingdom of God. To bring in the vivid picture of this parable, I like to, and as it's my tradition, highlight the characters of the parable to be able to help you understand how Jesus is going to use these characters in telling the story. As an African, you should know that one of the things I grew up doing is listening to stories.

We like stories, parables, I mean special scenes, my grandmother when she was alive would like to tell me stories and parables and one thing, I mean she knows how to, she knew how to use a story or a parable to teach me a lesson that sometimes I needed 20 minutes to be able to comprehend. She just says one or two things, use metaphor, and it kicks in, and one of the things I realized learning from that is what has also come to impact my interpretation of the parables of Jesus, that you need to understand the characters well, you need to understand the symbols that are used in a story very well to capture the essence of it. So, let's look at the characters here.

Jesus is going to engage a lawyer in this parable. Luke tells us that the lawyer has one aim, to test Jesus, and he subsequently enumerates that the lawyer's goal is to justify himself, perhaps knowing that he's a very smart and intelligent guy. So, have at the back of your mind an aspect of the law that is put at the forefront of interpreting one law in Deuteronomy and the other in Leviticus and trying to shed light on what those laws mean.

To the Messiah who grew up in Nazareth in the home of a carpenter. And we are going to see how this is going to play out. We are also going to see that a victim in the parable is not going to be named.

Don't lose sight of the fact that the victim is not going to be named because it is an important part of the plot. Because the victim is not going to be named, the person who should be our neighbor could be anybody. And Jesus is going to spell this out clearly.

The other person to note in the parable is the priest. It is not unusual, as we know from reading Jewish literature, that some priests may live in Jericho and go twice a year to perform their duty in Jerusalem, which is just 17 miles away. But Jesus is going to bring in the persons who serve in the highest echelon of religious purity in Jewish tradition.

If you like, the religious elite is included in the story. And then he will also bring in a Levite. A Levite being someone who helps the priest in priestly duties in the temple.

So, these are people who know what purity is, who know how to conduct themselves, who know how to structure and enforce what is right that needs to be done. And then he brings up a Samaritan. If you are the lawyer, you go, oh no.

Why? Because Samaritans are not ideal characters that the Jews would like to hear and know about. Here, a Samaritan is featured in the parable. But Luke has already told you that even the disciples of Jesus hated them.

They wanted to curse them for rejecting them in the very early verses of this particular chapter. As we see this parable unfolding, one may ask, what is wrong with the priest and the Levites? Jesus wanted to use the highest form of religious purity to show a contrast in this parable and make his message loud and clear. Well, you should know that issues of security and piety are paramount in one's mind as we follow this parable carefully.

Because this guy was attacked by a robber, chances are that one may think that if you get closer to this person lying on the floor, you may also be subject to attack by the same bandits that may have come in to hurt this person. But the other thing is an issue of purity. If you are a priest, you are not supposed to touch a dead body, depending on your theological construct.

The Pharisees will have a different view. The Sadducees will have a different view. But we know in Second Temple Judaism that most of the priests in the temple rather come from the Sadducees' side of things.

So, imagine what is going on here as I show you that if you are a Pharisee, you will say, if you are a priest, you may touch a dead body if there is a location in which nobody in your family is available to bury your dead. Because burying the dead is such an honorable thing and such an important thing in Jewish society, the Pharisees will say it may be good if you are a priest to have an exemption for that. But the Sadducees will say no.

The Sadducees will say under no circumstance should a priest touch a corpse. And I have already told you that most priests will be Sadducees. So, assuming that the lawyer is thinking about a priest who is a Sadducee, then the issue here is the priest not being stubborn and saying, oh, I am so heartless that I don't want to help somebody who is hurting.

No, it's more of I am so pious that I don't want to contaminate myself. You see, sometimes, when I hear this parable being talked about, I hear more to the effect of the following. The priest is a religious person who is supposed to know better but is so heartless, has no compassion whatsoever, sees somebody hurting, and doesn't want to touch the person.

There might be some element of truth in that, but that is not what is going on in this parable at the main level. The main level is this. The priest feels so pious that for the sake of religious purity, they will not go on to touch someone who could potentially defile them.

It is their sense of religiosity that is keeping them away, not being heartless human beings. It is in the same way that the Levites will also pass because they govern their mode of living and conduct along that same pattern of behavior. So, if they saw a robber lying there, they would wish that somebody else come and touch the person, even if they have compassion because if they do, they will be contaminated.

Do you hear Jesus telling the lawyer somewhere behind the scenes, in the sounds of the echo, that you are so busy trying to be pious that you can't decide who your neighbor is. You are so busy trying to be religiously holy. That is the most crucial time that someone will need your help you can't even find.

You see, it is very easy when people begin to think about their religious duties in terms of love for God. When we are so obsessed with love for God, it is so easy to understand and comprehend what it means to love the other. Jesus will spell out that in the kingdom of God, the actual living out of this love must take a radical form.

People will have to be stretched beyond their social comfort zones to reach out to the other. A lawyer, a priest, a Levite, one will have to think about this. And by the way, the victim is unnamed, but the geography tells us something.

The victim fell victim to robbers between Jerusalem and Jericho. The geography suggests that the victim may be a Jew. According to Leviticus, the Jew is supposed to be a neighbor to the priest and a neighbor to the Levite.

But for religious purity, they will not do anything about it. I see too much of this in today's world, but I am still thinking about applying for this position. Howard Marshall writes in his commentary on the Gospel of Luke.

In the New Testament times, the Levites were an order of cultic officials inferior to the priest but nevertheless a privileged group in Jewish society. They were responsible for the liturgy in the temple and policing it. So, think about everything else that will apply to the priest applying to the Levites.

They would not like to contaminate themselves. But now here comes I tell you more about the terrain of what is going on here. You see, the man, Jesus said, was traveling from Jerusalem to Jericho.

Jesus himself was traveling from Galilee to Jerusalem. So, he reverses the course of the journey on what is playing out in this parable. We know that in terms of the



topography, you have to descend from Jerusalem. You have 3,300 feet of descent towards Jericho in a terrain that may have some desert-like and rocky situations that will make it easily, easily a contest for real-life situations of this kind.

Notice that Jesus said, by chance, a priest came. We know that that path will sometimes be lonely unless people are traveling in caravans for a particular feast in Jerusalem. We are told that it is not a place where people move very often.

So, it even seems to suggest to us that it is a spot where people could easily fall prey to robbery. If that is so, then Jesus is talking about something that could have happened in that very contest that the lawyer could be very familiar with. If you think about all this and you think about a Samaritan in this story, I don't know what is going through your mind.

I'd like to urge you and remind you that Luke, a scholar and a Christ follower, is writing to Theophilus, an elite Gentile. He had it all, and he was still trying to remind himself. Jesus and his kingdom extend to the outcast.

The Samaritans Cradlock put it so well: the Samaritans were descendants of a mixed population occupying the land following the contest of Assyria in 722 BCE. They opposed the rebuilding of the temple in Jerusalem, if you remember the time of Ezra and Nehemiah, and constructed their own place of worship in the Mount of Mount Gerizim. Ceremonially, they were deemed unclean; socially, they were outcasts; religiously, they were deemed heretics.

The Samaritan is the very opposite of the lawyer as well as the priest and the Levites. But let me walk you through the steps of what Jesus is saying in this parable. You see, someone had fallen prey to robbers bleeding and dying, and a Samaritan comes, and this is what the Samaritan would do.

Unlike the priest who walks on the other side, unlike the Levite who walks on the other side, we are told in the text the Samaritan went to him proactive. He did something about his wounds, and he bound them. He took his first aid stuff and the alcohol stuff he had with him; he treated the wounds with oil and wine as healing agents.

He did something about the situation, and as if that was not enough, he shared his only transportation. He put the wounded person in his own vehicle. Now, when you travel on that kind of donkey or horse or animal of that kind, that is equivalent to a limousine.

If you don't think about limousine, think about the latest Mercedes, a Cadillac. The guy says the wounded person who is on the roadside at the point of need is eligible to be parked or take over his transportation. And we know something: those of us

who are village guys know that for the guy to offer his animal to the wounded person means he is likely to walk while the other person is on the animal.

Unless the way the seat on the animal is set up in a way that he can actually have somebody manage to carry. So, imagine these pictures going through the lawyer's mind. The Samaritan was ready to share his transportation with the wounded one, and we were told he cared.

When you look through the story, you think that is not enough when he says he cares. Two lines later, Luke tells you he said he would take care of him. Again, he emphasized the word care. Prior to that he said he had compassion on him.

Who is my neighbor? Notice what is absent in this parable. There is no dispute between Jesus and the lawyer. We need to love God with all our heart, mind, soul, and strength.

That's not a question. So, the silence is obvious. But what is not obvious is the neighbor, and here, the Samaritan has gone all this way.

He gives two denarii to the innkeeper. I said take care of him, and by the way, it is on the next day that he gave the two denarii. So, Luke wants to remind you that the guy cared enough to stay over for a day.

That is what care is about. That is what caring for a neighbor is about. It's not giving my neighbor the change I don't want.

It's not giving my neighbor the nickels that are creating holes in my pocket and but giving my neighbor my time and giving my neighbor the precious things to me.

Giving my neighbor all I have. Taking risks for the sake of my neighbor. And if even the priest were afraid that somebody else would attack them for the person who attacked this particular victim.

Jesus is trying to tell them that the Samaritan is ready to take that risk anyway. And then look at what Jesus does. Oh, Jesus, is that smart?

Now, after saying this parable, Jesus goes on to ask the lawyer. Please don't forget we are dealing with a lawyer here who's supposed to know better. So now Jesus says now you are the lawyer.

I am the guy from Nazareth. Now that I have told you this parable, which of these three do you think was a neighbor to the man who fell into the hands of the robbers? Notice the answer. The lawyer said the one who showed him mercy.

Before I go on notice, I will tell you what was not said. The lawyer could not get himself to say the Samaritan. This is a cultural thing that, as we go through the series of Luke, I try to bring you into. I try to help you to catch up with some of this Middle Eastern culture that is still playing today.

Sometimes, when we are following a conversation, what is not said is the key thing that we were supposed to catch. The lawyer cannot get himself to say the Samaritan. He hates Samaritans.

He doesn't like them. Who dare you say the Samaritan knows who a neighbor is. The Samaritan knows the law more than me.

The Samaritan will practice the law more than I do. Oh yes. Jesus got him to admit that he was the one who showed him mercy.

Oh, then Jesus stabbed him if you like figuratively. If that is so, go and do the same. That is another way of saying, Mr. Lawyer, go and make the Samaritan your model.

And then you understand what the Kingdom of God is about. But friends, as you follow these lectures and we are going through this more and more, I don't want you to miss the fact that the victim is unnamed. The victim could be the person in your neighborhood.

The victim could be the person you met that you didn't care about. The victim could be the one that you drove past. The victim could be the one who only needed a small helping hand from you, and you looked the other way.

The victim could be anybody. And we are all walking around playing like priests and Levites. We have a good explanation as to why we should not look for our neighbor, find our neighbor, help our neighbor, or give any of our time to our neighbors.

We are recording this at a time when the United States and the rest of the world are battling a major health situation. I saw a very moving situation on television recently where two teenagers picked up their musical instruments and went to their neighbor, an elderly person whom they announced was in her 80s. These two teenagers sat a distance away from her and played music, and they announced to her that they knew that it was so hard to stay indoors all this while.

So, they have just come to play some music for her. They played, and as I followed this film on the news screen, I saw this older woman smiling, cheering them up, and giggling. You can see how grateful she is that two teenagers in the neighborhood have identified who a neighbor is and they have found value in the time they give to their neighbor.

They found the neighbor worthy of being a recipient of their generosity, care, and love. Who is my neighbor? Oh, your neighbor is like the one next to you who is screaming for help while we are all busy claiming we love God. Jesus calls us into a greater sense of discipleship.

The discipleship that Luke follows with the account that we can be so distracted thinking that we are doing what we're supposed to be doing and miss the main point. So, in the next account, we begin to see a scene where Jesus goes. After dealing with this lawyer, he goes and meets two of his friends, Martha and Mary, at Martha's home.

There, we begin to see a situation playing out where Martha is going to be ready to be busy cooking, and Mary is going to choose to sit at the feet of Jesus to try to listen to whatever instruction Jesus gives. Martha will be doing the right thing because Martha will be doing what custom requires of hospitality. Mary, who did not have that obligation for hospitality, will also take the posture of a student to learn as much as she could learn from their guest.

Jesus, in effect, is going to say without condemning Martha that Mary had chosen the right thing. To be a disciple, to learn, and to prioritize learning from Jesus first and foremost. Learning not in terms of cognitive learning alone but learning cognitively and also living out that which is learned.

That is part of what the lawyer was missing in the previous account. Jesus spells out clearly to us what the kingdom of God is about and encourages us to be faithful disciples. In the words of Luke Timothy Johnson commenting on the test of Martha and Mary, Johnson writes Jesus's response to Martha makes clear that the one thing necessary for hospitality is attention to the guest rather than a domestic performance.

If the guest is a prophet, the appropriate reception is to listen to God's word. The lesson was intense by implication, of course, to every guest received. Jesus nicely turned the point from one of providing a service to receiving a gift. The other who comes into our space is a messenger of grace, and perhaps we should be generous or, I should say, grateful recipients of God's grace.

In the parable of the good Samaritan God, Jesus talks to a lawyer and challenges the lawyer about who a neighbor is. Capturing who a neighbor is typifies the essence of discipleship in God's world. Where it is not all about me but also about other people around me.

Following that theme, the incident in the home of Martha and Mary goes to speak to the fact that a true disciple listens to the prophetic voice of Jesus, seeks to learn from him, and seeks to live by those teachings. May God bless you as you continue this

path with us, learning together with this gospel of Luke. I pray and trust that you would open your heart for God to speak to you personally about what to do as you learn how to live as you learn.

And I pray that together you may join us in our striving to be faithful followers, should I say faithful disciples of the Lord Jesus Christ. God bless you and thank you for following our lecture series. God bless you.

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