

My Neighbor (part 2)

Ryan Goodwin

“So Jesus replied and said, ‘A certain man was going down from Jerusalem to Jericho; and he fell among robbers, and they stripped him and beat him, and went off leaving him half dead’” (Luke 10:30).

The road from Jerusalem to Jericho was notoriously dangerous. Its reputation was so bad that it was commonly referred to as either “The Red, or Bloody Way.” The criminals which populated its slopes were not just common thieves, either. They were violent, dangerous men who preyed on all types, rich and poor, men and women.

“And by chance a certain priest was going down on that road, and when he saw him, he passed by on the other side” (10:31).

“And by chance...” The opportunity to serve others is often a happenstance one. We do not always *plan* on helping those in need, nor do we always write it into our schedules. The fact remains that most of our opportunities to “love our neighbors as ourselves” will be spontaneous.

“And likewise a Levite also, when he came to the place and saw him, passed by on the other side” (10:32).

Similar response, similar obligation. The Levite was a helper in the Temple, an assistant of sorts. He may have come a little closer to the dying man (“*He came to the place*”), but he still thought better of it. It is easy to neglect our service to others:

- When there is risk involved, especially physical dangers;
- When there is inconvenience, as these two individuals were likely on their way home from a long week of service;
- When there is a cost;
- When we are not personally acquainted with the person suffering;
- When we have a quick, easy escape route;
- When we are not the ones who must face the consequences of our inaction;
- When they appear to be getting what they deserve;
- When we reason that they are too far gone to help.

“But a certain Samaritan, who was on a journey, came upon him; and when he saw him, he felt compassion, and came to him, and bandaged up his wounds, pouring oil and wine on them; and he put him on his own beast, and brought him to an inn, and took care of him” (10:33-34).

Oddly enough, the Samaritans were the mortal enemies of the Jews, considered ethnically impure from generations of inbreeding between Jews and Gentiles. The act of kindness is even more astonishing when we remember that it wasn’t easy for the Samaritan to stop and help:

- He was on a journey, so he had to cut into his valuable time to accommodate the dying fellow;
- He felt compassion for an individual who, if Jewish, might have never done the same for him;
- He practiced medical procedures under immensely difficult conditions, especially with the pressures of knowing that bandits were nearby;
- He sacrificed his own comfort and convenience by laying the injured man on his own beast.

“Which of these three do you think proved to be a neighbor to the man who fell into the robbers’ hands?’ And he said, ‘The one who showed mercy to him.’ And Jesus said to him, ‘Go and do the same’” (10:36-37).

We all have an obligation to live in the light of this story, taking full advantage of our own daily opportunities to help those in need. We can help somebody change a tire. We can assist with a hefty medical bill. We can take a few minutes to pick up a lost dog and call the number on its collar. We can pick somebody up from the ground when they trip. We can pull somebody out of the mud. There are a thousand of these daily deeds that we can do, and you do not believe me, you are just not looking at the other side of the road hard enough.