

TFTD L9 It's just a parable!

ALDERLEY EDGE LENT STUDIES, 2022

HOLYHABITS

Holy Habits: Exploring the Adventure of Discipleship

Today's TFTD comes from Rod Hill.

Luke 10:25-37 (New International Version)

The Parable of the Good Samaritan

²⁵ On one occasion an expert in the law stood up to test Jesus. “Teacher,” he asked, “what must I do to inherit eternal life?”

²⁶ “What is written in the Law?” he replied. “How do you read it?”

²⁷ He answered, “‘Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your strength and with all your mind’^[a]; and, ‘Love your neighbour as yourself.’^[b]”

²⁸ “You have answered correctly,” Jesus replied. “Do this and you will live.”

²⁹ But he wanted to justify himself, so he asked Jesus, “And who is my neighbour?”

³⁰ In reply Jesus said: “A man was going down from Jerusalem to Jericho, when he was attacked by robbers. They stripped him of his clothes, beat him and went away, leaving him half dead. ³¹ A priest happened to be going down the same road, and when he saw the man, he passed by on the other side. ³² So too, a Levite, when he came to the place and saw him, passed by on the other side. ³³ But a Samaritan, as he travelled, came where the man was; and when he saw him, he took pity on him. ³⁴ He went to him and bandaged his wounds, pouring on oil and wine. Then he put the man on his own donkey, brought him to an inn and took care of him. ³⁵ The next day he took out two denarii^[c] and gave them to the innkeeper. ‘Look after him,’ he said, ‘and when I return, I will reimburse you for any extra expense you may have.’

³⁶ “Which of these three do you think was a neighbour to the man who fell into the hands of robbers?”

³⁷ The expert in the law replied, “The one who had mercy on him.”

Jesus told him, “Go and do likewise.”

On one of my pilgrimages to ‘the Land we like to call Holy’ (to use the phrase of the former dean of Jerusalem, John Tidy) we were on the coach on the way to Jericho and

the Jordan Valley. Suddenly the coach pulled in to the side of the road and the guide pointed to a dilapidated building by the side of the road. “There,” he said “is the inn of the good Samaritan”. I didn’t have the heart to explain to him that this is a parable, a story that Jesus told to make a point, and the inn didn’t really exist. Hadn’t he missed the whole point?



This parable is one that I have often seen re-enacted in Church worship. It’s fairly easy to bring it ‘up to date,’ to work out who are today’s equivalent of the Priest, the Levite and the Samaritan and to tell the story in modern terms so that we can grasp the vivid nature of the story and its drama. It’s great to see the underdog become the hero of the story isn’t it? We all love a good, happy ending and that’s the case here. The Samaritan is incredibly generous, he doesn’t ask for invoices or receipts, he just gives what’s needed. It’s a wonderful story, but it didn’t actually happen, it’s just a parable. Or is it *just* a parable?

Methodists are known for a number of things, but one of them is that we have a Bible and a hymn book by our bedside – we love to sing our theology. But I can’t find many hymns that are based on the parable of the Good Samaritan. Maybe this one is, or at the very least it captures the sentiment of the parable.

Jesu, Jesu, fill us with your love,
show us how to serve the neighbours
we have from you.
Kneels at the feet of his friends,
silently washes their feet,
Master who acts as a slave to them.
Jesu, Jesu, fill us with your love,
show us how to serve the neighbours
we have from you.
Neighbours are rich folk and poor,
neighbours are black, brown, and white,
neighbours are nearby and far away.
Jesu, Jesu, fill us with your love,

show us how to serve the neighbours
we have from you.

These are the ones we should serve,
these are the ones we should love;
all these are neighbours to us and you.

Jesu, Jesu, fill us with your love,
show us how to serve the neighbours
we have from you.

Loving puts us on our knees,
serving as though we are slaves:
this is the way we should live with you.

Jesu, Jesu, fill us with your love,
show us how to serve the neighbours
we have from you.

You see, for me, the punchline is right at the end of the parable, when Jesus, having spun a good yarn, turns back to the expert in the law and, looking him right between the eyes, says “Go and do likewise!” Now what does that mean for me, today, in relation to Ukraine, Saudi Arabia, Yemen and all sorts of other people and places? There may be no actual Inn of the Good Samaritan – it’s just a parable, but golly it packs a punch!

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