

Who Is Our Samaritan?

Scripture Reading — Luke 10:25-37

“And who is my neighbor?”

—Luke 10:29—

To the Jews in Jesus’ day, the idea of a “good Samaritan” was an oxymoron. The two words just didn’t go together. Some oxymorons today might be descriptions like “noble terrorist” or “righteous pimp.”

In Jesus’ parable, two religious leaders pass by and pay no attention to the man who lies beaten on the road. The audience would then expect the third person in the story to be the hero and resolve the conflict. Surely this would be a highly respected Pharisee, who worked twice as hard as any others to serve God. But to the surprise of his listeners, Jesus brings in a Samaritan, who becomes the neighbor.

The prominent neighbor text from the Old Testament said, “Do not seek revenge or bear a grudge against anyone among your people, but love your neighbor as yourself” (Leviticus 19:18). When Jews talked about neighbors, they meant fellow Israelites. The Samaritans were descended from foreigners who came to live in northern Israel and mixed their religions with the worship of God after Israel was exiled (2 Kings 17:24-41). They despised the Jews, and the Jews despised them as unclean. A Jew would rather be left for dead than helped by such a person.

Are there any people you have decided not to associate with? Love does not allow limits to be placed on being a neighbor. I am called to be a neighbor to everyone, and to honor anyone as my neighbor.

Prayer

Lord, your love knows no bounds. Guide my attitudes so that I can show love as you do. Amen.

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Printed on August 14, 2020

