

LUKE 10: 25 - 37



Connect:

Is the whole world really our neighbour? How can we bear such a burden? Where do we start? How can we avoid 'compassion fatigue' — so that we don't just walk past on the other side of the road also?

[Consider the idea of '*Networks of agape/love*', suggested by Charles Taylor — starting with those we encounter, and following the links outwards across the community and the world.]



Context:

Note the wider context surrounding Luke's 'travel narrative' (9:51 onwards to 19:44)

The earlier mission of the 12 (9:1–11) and some 72 'others' (10:1–24)

[72 'nations' of the world in the Greek OT; and see 'others' in 9:49–50]

True greatness — the child in the midst (9:46–48; 10:21; 18:15–17)

[Why do 'grown-ups' so often get it wrong?]

The Samaritan connection (Nain; 9:51–56; 10:25–37; 17:11–19)

[Border protection problems between Galilee and Samaria!]

Questions about 'eternal life' (10:25; 18:18), with different answers

[Is Jesus' focus on 'the next life' or this one?]

Note the many parables on the way, and how Luke frames and re-frames the stories of Jesus. If we only knew the story behind the movie houses and producers that put their names and logos at the beginning of films (sometimes up to half a dozen names), it would help us to understand who were the creative geniuses behind the films, who put up the money, who insisted the ending should be changed, and so on. In these parables (some of them only found in Luke), we can sometimes see the earliest form of Jesus' parables (often provocative and mysterious), and how they have then been 'framed' by the earliest followers of Jesus and by Luke (and now also by us as we seek to interpret them).



Content:

Read the passage out aloud, and interactively, by assigning these parts:

[N] = narrator; [J] = Jesus; [L] = the Lawyer; [S] = the Samaritan

Luke 10: 25 - 37

[N] ²⁵ *And see!, a certain lawyer stood up to test Jesus, saying:*

[L] *“Teacher, what must I do to inherit eternal life?”*

[N] ²⁶ *He said to him,*

[J] *“In the law what has been written? In what way are you reading?”*

[N] ²⁷ *He answered and said,*

[L] *“You shall love the Lord your God with your whole heart, and with your whole soul, and with your whole strength, and with your whole mind; and your neighbour as yourself.”*

[N] ²⁸ *And he said to him,*

[J] *“Right answer; do this and you will live.”*

[N] ²⁹ *But wishing to justify himself, he said to Jesus,*

[L] *“And who is my neighbour?”*

[N] ³⁰ *Replying, Jesus said,*

[J] *“A certain man was going down from Jerusalem to Jericho, and thieves fell on him, stripped him, beat him, and went away leaving him half dead. ³¹ By chance a certain priest was going down that road; and seeing him, passed by on the other side. ³² Like wise also a Levite, coming to the place and seeing him, passed by on the other side. ³³ But a certain travelling Samaritan came near to him, and when he saw him, was deeply compassionate. ³⁴ He came and bandaged his wounds, pouring on oil and wine. Putting him on his own animal, he brought him to an inn, and cared for him. ³⁵ And the next day he took out two denarii, gave them to the innkeeper, and said,*

[S] *‘Take care of him; and if you should spend more, when I come back I will repay you.’*

[J] ³⁶ *Which of these three, do you suppose, has become a neighbour of the one who fell among thieves?”*

[N] ³⁷ *He said,*

[L] *“The one expressing mercy for him.”*

[N] *Jesus said to him,*

[J] *“Go and you do likewise.”*



Consider:

Choose some questions to discuss that interest you — and ask some of your own.

- 1**. The quest for 'eternal life' (literally 'life aeonic' or 'life into the aeons') is not very prominent in the Jewish Scriptures (though see Dan 12:2), but it is a strong theme in the Johannine literature. Note that the answers Jesus gives to this question in Luke (10:25 and 18:18) focus strongly on *this* life as the starting point (it is not a deferred reality).
- 2**. 'Loving your neighbour *as you love yourself*' — what does this tell us about the importance of self-care as an integral part of ministry?
- 3**. OK, so the Samaritan is Jesus, we are the one saved, the inn is the church, and the two coins are the ordinances/sacraments (baptism and Lord's Supper), as Saint Augustine suggested. Are there any limits to our imagination when we interpret the parables? How do we know we have the 'right' interpretation?
- 4**. Did Jesus answer the question: 'Who is my neighbour?' If so, how? If not, why not?

Words & Phrases

v. 25 – 28: This story has clear connections with Mt 22:35–40 and Mk 12:28–31, except there, Jesus is the one who quotes Dt 6:5 and Lev 19:18, not the lawyer.

v. 27: The first part of this (the *Shema*, 'Hear Oh Israel, the Lord your God is one....', recited twice daily by Jews) has been omitted by Luke (cf Mk) and 'mind' has been added to 'heart, soul and strength', as also in Mk).

v. 28: Literally: 'Orthodox answer' — but how about the orthopraxis? 'Do this and you will live' (the focus seems to be on life now, in Jesus' answer).

v. 30: 'A certain man' (Greek: *tis*) is, in fact, a very uncertain man — anybody, somebody — 'there was this guy . . .' (and he remains an 'unknown unknown' throughout the story — he is stripped naked, but no-one except the Samaritan gets close enough to see if he's circumcised or not).

v. 30: The oasis of Jericho, about 25 km east of Jerusalem, lies in the Jordan Valley about 390 m. below sea level, and has warm and pleasant winters. It was the site for the winter palaces of the kings of the Hasmonean dynasty, and of King Herod.

v. 35: A 'certain' Priest . . . Samaritan . . . (these are 'known unknowns'). By keeping their distance, the Priest and the Levite avoid finding out if the man is alive or dead, Jewish or Gentile.

v. 35: Two *denarii* — Roman silver coins, about a day's wage each one.

v. 36: 'Who has become a neighbour?' is the literal rendering of the Greek here.

v. 37: Literally: 'the one expressing/doing/working mercy with him'. Why doesn't the lawyer actually identify 'the Samaritan'?



Consequence:

This is where together we wrestle with what the Living Word of God is saying to us today out of our reading and discussions. The questions that follow here may not help — so it would be good to be ready to share some of our own.

1. Who is my neighbour? The one I'm not even prepared to name?
2. How would you describe your '*networks of agape*'? How do you attend to them and nurture them?
3. Hear again the wonderful 'Socratic' questions of Jesus: "What do you think? How do you read? What do you do?"
4. Is the question "Who is my neighbour?" or "How can I become a neighbour?"