

088: The Good Samaritan  
Andrew Kneeland, July 10, 2022  
Luke 10:25-37

*Grace to you and peace from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ.*

On any list of the most well-known stories in the Bible, the Parable of the Good Samaritan has to be ranked pretty high.

It's a popular Bible story that even nonbelievers know. Most everyone knows what it means to be a good Samaritan; to care for others, to be a good neighbor. Maybe you've heard of Good Samaritan laws that legally protect people who try to help someone in distress.

Either way, you've probably heard this story before. We usually think of the Parable of the Good Samaritan as *instruction*. As Jesus encouraging—and commanding—us to love one another and to take care of our neighbors even when no one else is.

There's truth to that. God certainly wants us to be good neighbors. But I don't think that's the point that Jesus is trying to get across here in Luke 10. More than telling us what to do, Jesus is telling us *what happened*. This parable is a story that teaches us about God.

In my studies at Concordia I've been able to spend most of my time learning about church history, and in particular *early* church history. From about 100 years after Jesus ascended into heaven, to about the year 400. A long time ago. But what has been so fascinating to me is that the pastors and church leaders from that time were using the same Bible we use today. They read the same stories and the same Bible passages and asked the same questions we ask: "What does this mean? What does this mean, for me?"

One of those church leaders lived in the bustling city of Alexandria, in Egypt. His name was Origen, and he became one of the most popular and important Biblical scholars of all time.

He preached a sermon on this text in Luke 10, on the Good Samaritan, and someone there wrote it down for us so we can see what he said about it.

So we're going to do something a little different today. Instead of me going

through a passage and finding the meaning and importance, and telling you why it matters to us, today... Let's listen to Origen. Let's see what he had to say about this famous parable.

*Dear God, before we begin to look at this parable please sanctify us in your truth. This is your holy Word, God, and these words have supernatural power to accomplish spiritual realities. Convict us of sin, reassure us of your forgiveness, and equip us for the tasks you set before us. In your name we pray, amen.*

v30 — “A man was going down from Jerusalem to Jericho.”

To Origen, this man was Adam. This parable takes place after the fall into sin in the Garden of Eden. Adam ate of the forbidden fruit and was cast out of God's perfect garden of paradise, sentenced to live in the world where sin would surround him, fill him, and affect everything he and his family did.

“Going down from Jerusalem to Jericho” meant going from the paradise of the Garden into the world. On his way he “fell among robbers, who stripped him and beat him and departed, leaving him half dead.”

These robbers are the hostile powers of the world. They are agents of the devil, brandishing the sharp, polished weapons of temptation and sin. Adam isn't in the Garden of Eden anymore. He is on his way to a world that can't have the presence of God; a world that is filled with sin; a world that is filled with robbers.

We live in that same world. A world that is brimming with wickedness, and doesn't our world just seem to grow more and more wicked? Year after year? Origen knew this, and we do too. This world is filled with people who not only ignore God, but actively resist him and build monuments and towers dedicated to their godless evil and wickedness.

And it's been over two thousand years since Jesus told us this parable. The robbers of the world have had centuries to sharpen their weapons and refine their strategy. These agents of Satan have one job: to get you to sin. To get you to take your eyes off Jesus and on yourself. To strip you, to beat you, and to leave you half-dead. That's where Adam was on this road to Jericho: beaten, and half-dead. He was afflicted with the wounds of temptation and sin, and if he were to be left by himself he would surely die a painful, lonely death.

v31 — *“Now by chance a priest was going down that road, and when he saw him he passed by on the other side.”*

This priest, to Origen, represents the Law of God. The rules and requirements that God put forth to show us how to be saved.

The priest wasn't a bad man. He had probably done plenty of good things in his life, and had helped plenty of people. There's nothing inherently wrong with priests, or the old Hebrew religious system of sacrifices and offerings. After all, God designed it; the elaborate system of sacrifices was the only way a holy God could be close to his loved, sinful people. The blood of the sacrifices was a temporary, advance payment that paid the price for the people's sins.

But for Adam, beaten down and lying half-dead on this road to Jericho, the priest couldn't help him. The law couldn't bring a half-dead man back to life. That's not what it was designed to do. So Origen says the Law—the holy and perfect law of God—passed by the half-dead Adam, unable to help him.

v32 — *“So likewise a Levite, when he came to the place and saw him, passed by on the other side.”*

Someone else came upon Adam as he lay there in the road, bleeding from the wounds of sin and destined for a painful and lonely death unless someone was able to rescue him. This time it was a Levite who found Adam, which Origen interpreted to mean the Prophets. The priest represented the Law; the Levite represented the Prophets.

Those godly men and women from the Old Testament who were sent by God to speak truth to God's people. The prophets were oracles of God; they were God's mouthpieces for hundreds of years. God used the voice of prophets like Isaiah and Jeremiah and Amos and Jonah and Ezekiel to convict his people of sin when they were wandering from him, but also to encourage them and promise them that help was on the way.

The system of sacrifices and offerings was never meant to be a permanent solution to the people's sin problem. God sent prophets to prepare the way for something bigger... something better... something permanent.

But the prophets themselves weren't the answer to Adam's sin problem. So when

the Levite came upon Adam on the side of the road to Jericho... beaten and bruised, tormented by every temptation and sin, on his way to a guaranteed death... the Levite could only pass by on the other side. The prophets couldn't do anything else.

But there *was* somebody who had the ability to save Adam. Somebody who *could* heal Adam from his injuries, rescue him from his imminent death, and give him true safety and hope. But it wasn't who anyone was expecting.

v33 — *“But a Samaritan, as he journeyed, came to where he was, and when he saw him, he had compassion.”*

The Samaritan people were former Jews who had intermarried and intermingled with pagan Assyrians, and they didn't get along very well with the Jews. When Jesus told this parable to his Jewish audience, he knew that a Samaritan was the last person they would expect to be the hero of a story.

But an unexpected hero was exactly who Adam needed to be his rescuer.

Here's what Origen said: “So, when he had come to the half-dead man and seen him rolling about in his own blood, he had pity on him. He drew near to him, in order to become his neighbor... The Samaritan is that man whose care and help we all badly need. The man who was going down from Jerusalem and fell among thieves, who was wounded and left by them half-alive, he needed the help of this Samaritan most of all.”

Jesus is the Good Samaritan. He's the one who perfectly fulfilled all the rules and regulations in God's Law and He's the one the prophets were talking about when they prophesied a future rescuer. Jesus was that rescuer—not who the Jews expected, but Jesus was the Good Samaritan who had compassion on Adam as Adam lay in his blood and sin.

Matthew 9 says: “When he saw the crowds, he had compassion for them, because they were harassed and helpless, like sheep without a shepherd.”

Now here, Origen noticed something interesting. He knew his Bible cover to cover and was always looking for connections and links. Origen remembered that time in John 8 when some of the Jewish leaders were trying to trap Jesus so they could arrest him and stop him from teaching and preaching. They accused him in

John 8:48 of “Being a Samaritan and having a demon.” Jesus responded, “I do not have a demon,” but he never said he’s *not* a Samaritan. Ethnically, of course Jesus wasn’t a Samaritan. He was a Jew. But Origen thought Jesus didn’t deny being a *Samaritan* because Jesus knew He *was* the Good Samaritan.

The Good Samaritan who had compassion on Adam.

v34 — *“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.”*

Origen had a lot to say about this verse. He saw a lot happening here. Jesus—the Good Samaritan—had compassion on Adam and went to him. He left his heavenly throne and came to a sinful, messed-up world filled with sinful and messed-up people.

The prophet Isaiah said, “He took our illnesses and bore our diseases.” Just like this Good Samaritan.

In the parable, the Good Samaritan put Adam on his own animal. Jesus put each and every one of us on his own body, which he offered as a sacrifice to pay the price of our sins. Coming into the world and offering his own body as a sacrifice for Adam’s sins.

And Christ brings Adam to the inn, which is the Church. The hospital for souls, the school to grow in God’s love, and the barracks and armory for spiritual warfare. This inn is the place where broken and hurting people come to heal. It’s where we all come to hear God’s Word to us—this powerful, life-giving Word that is more and does more than any other book. This inn—the Church—is where we recover from our wounds, grown in our faith, and are trained to be strong and vigilant.

This inn is also the place where Adam waits for the Good Samaritan to return.

v35 — *“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 you when I come back.’”*

The Good Samaritan had compassion on Adam, he went to him and bound his

injuries and carried him—on his own animal—to a place of safety and healing.

But that's not all the Good Samaritan does. He promised to come back. He promised to return to pay all the debts, to make all the accounts clean, and to fully ensure the man was taken care of.

Until Christ returns, though, he left something behind. Two coins, in the parable, which Origen interpreted to mean that Christ left us with the “knowledge of Him.” Everything we need right now, these two coins provide. We don't need anything other than what Christ has given us in this Word, and when he comes back He'll give us much more.

To Origen, the Parable of the Good Samaritan wasn't just a made-up story thrown into the Gospel of Luke to teach us how to be better neighbors to each other. We *should* be good neighbors. We *should* love people sacrificially and whole-heartedly, even when nobody else does. We *should* be like the Good Samaritan.

But Origen believed there was a bigger reason Jesus told this story and there was a bigger reason it's been passed down to us through the years here in the book of Luke. And that reason is not just to teach us a lesson and send us on our way... it was to tell us about Jesus.

To tell us how Jesus had compassion on Adam; on the entire human race. How Jesus found us half-dead on the side of the road and how he healed our scrapes and cuts and hurts and aches and brokenness and sin.

He carried us on his own body to the Church, a place where we can heal and where we can wait for him to come back for us.

It's good to be reminded of this story. Being reminded of God's love and promises gives us confidence and strength as we face the challenges of our lives. The nitty-gritty, messy things we have to deal with every day. We're reminded that ultimately, we aren't responsible for our own salvation: We didn't pay the price of sin, Jesus did. Jesus draws us to Himself. Jesus forgives our sin and gives us hope to face the future.

Praise God for Jesus, our Good Samaritan. Amen.