

Summary Handout

“Who Is My Neighbour”

Lesson

14

Summary

Matthew 18; Luke 10

Scripture Summary:

How we are to treat our offending brethren—The Son of Man came to save that which was lost—All of the Twelve receive the keys of the kingdom—Why we should forgive. Jesus calls, empowers, and instructs the seventy—They preach and heal—Those who receive His disciples receive Christ—The Father is revealed by the Son—Jesus gives the parable of the good Samaritan.

Supplemental Holy Land and Jewish insights:

Children Greet the One-time Enemy Now as a Neighbor: In 1994, an expected festivity occurred in Israel as a new bridge, named the Hussein Bridge, connecting Israel and Jordan was opened across the Jordan River. The king of Jordan was coming to visit Israel, this time officially and publicly. The media waited for the two previous enemies to meet half way across the bridge. They were surprised however, that the Israeli officials did not arrive on schedule. Instead, Israeli children with bunches of flowers ran

toward the Jordanian king. Unarmed, unaccompanied, they surrounded the king and gave him the flowers. The king wept. The media didn't understand. Even in a land and among a people that don't know their King of Kings, they know how to greet a king. They sent their little ones.

Child Becomes King: That was the year 1994. In 1951, this king was a child standing next his grandfather, King Abdullah, as he was shot to death while in prayer at the Al Aksa Mosque in Jerusalem. The underlying reason for the assassination was that Grandfather Abdullah envisioned a peaceful coexistence with the Jews of Israel. Moslem fanatics apparently thought that killing the king would eliminate peace. Among the shots was a bullet that glanced off a medal on young Hussein's chest. His life was spared. Somewhere tucked in the environmental code of his royal blood, Hussein was destined to become the king who would see the peace his grandfather yearned for. Although not the first peace treaty a Moslem nation would have with Israel, it is by far the warmest peace agreement Israel has with any Arab neighbor. With matching borders and a common Dead Sea, Israel and Jordan are once again peaceful neighbors.

Up to Jerusalem: From the Dead Sea an ancient highway goes up to Jerusalem. In just a dozen miles or so, there is a climb of about four thousand feet in elevation from thirteen hundred feet below sea level to about twenty-seven hundred feet above. The term “up to Jerusalem” has a physical as well as a spiritual implication. The ancient road out of Jericho leading to Jerusalem was rather desolate. Most of it is below sea level and below the rainfall line. It was, however, the road traveled by temple priests living in the Levite city of Jericho and serving in Jerusalem's temple. The travel was about a day's journey.

Caravan Travel: Travelers in ancient times included animals in their caravans. The animals were used for transportation and food, as well as for barter. Travelers had to carry money for accommodations, so it was not wise to travel alone. As a support group and defense against highway robbers, caravans were organized and regularly scheduled.

Rules of Cleanliness Also Apply to Traveling: Special travel rules of cleanliness applied to the priests who had to remain “unblemished” to serve in the holy temple. They stayed away from any decay or waste matter. They kept at least a specific distance away from anything dead (unless it was killed as a sacrifice in the temple). “And whosoever toucheth one that is slain with a sword in the open fields, or a dead body, or a bone of a man, or a grave, shall be unclean.”

(Numbers 19:16) It is still a custom among some of those considering themselves to be Levites to circumvent graveyards or any place where there is death.

Where Did the “Good” Come from in the Good Samaritan Inn? On the road from Jericho to Jerusalem, an old inn has been restored to represent the inn of a New Testament story Jesus told. Modern Christians refer to the inn as the “Good Samaritan Inn.” The truth is that Jesus never used the term *good Samaritan*. The setting, however, reminds us of the parable Jesus chose as he answered a lawyer, who challenged Him, the Lawgiver: “What shall I do to inherit eternal life?” **(Luke 10:25)**

Carpenter or Craftsman: Background will be helpful in understanding why Jesus answered as He did. It is sometimes surprising to consider Jesus, known as Rabbi, to be a “Master of the law” (*rabbi* in Hebrew), instead of a carpenter. You’ll remember, that the New Testament Greek word was not *carpenter* but *craftsman*. The craft in Nazareth was a huge stone quarry. It may be more than mere coincidence that Jesus was referred to as the “Rock of Salvation” and the “Chief Corner Stone.” Was He sent to earth to be educated only as a craftsman or carpenter? Or is it more likely that Jesus studied the law that He was to restore? After all, He is the lawgiver, our advocate with the Father. He was recognized as a rabbi, a lawyer, one schooled in the law; he was authorized to read in the synagogues. “And he came to Nazareth, where he had been brought up: and, as his custom was, he went into the synagogue on the Sabbath day, and stood up for to read.” (*Luke 4:16*)

Legal Definition: So, responding to the lawyer who challenged Jesus and having been trained in the law himself, the new rabbi from Nazareth answered with a question, “What is written in the law? how readest Thou?” (*Luke 10:26*) Showing his own legal acumen, the lawyer recited the first law of loving God and neighbor, but challenged Jesus to a legal definition. “Who is my neighbor?” (*Luke 10:29*)

The Parable: The Savior then related this story: “A certain man went down from Jerusalem to Jericho and fell among thieves, which stripped him of his raiment, and wounded him, and departed, leaving him half dead. And by chance there came down a certain priest that way: and when he saw him, he passed by the other side. And likewise a Levite, when he was at the place, came and looked on him, and passed by the other side. But a certain Samaritan [a non-Jew] . . . came where he was: . . . and bound up his wounds, pouring in oil and wine and set him on his own beast and brought him to an inn and took care of him.” (*Luke 10:30-34*)

Anti-Semitic Implications: Today local Jews don’t use the term “good” Samaritan; to some, it has anti-Semitic implications to bad Jews. I remember that an instructor of the Ministry of Tourism Guide Course even suggested that Jesus was an anti-Semite. She said, “Even when Jesus made up a story he portrayed the Jews as ‘bad guys’ and the non-Jew as the ‘good guy.’”

Real Intent of Parable: Of course, Jesus had no intention of portraying Jews as uncompassionate. In His story He’s making a legal point responding to the lawyer’s question, “Legally, who is my neighbor?” The Hebrew inference was that the priest and the Levite were within their legal rights - not to be defiled by being too close to the dead - and rather than take a chance, they walked on the other side. Their lack of action was strictly legal, but it missed the higher law of compassion, governed by the spirit not the letter of the law. Talmudic commentary written some hundreds of years later indicates an additional guideline. Now Levites, or Cohens, are required to bury the dead if they chance upon a cadaver.

Do We Judge Them as Good or Bad? In developing true forgiveness, understanding and childlike faith, and to truly be a neighbor, we should consider removing the “good” from the “good Samaritan,” thereby removing the inferred “bad” from the Jews in the story. All three were good in their own perceptions. The Levite and the priest just missed the point of a higher law – governed by the spirit. That doesn’t mean the lesser law – governed by the letter of the law – is bad and those who ardently attempt to keep it are thereby bad as well. As an example for us, the Savior’s compassion for all of God’s children rises much higher than the question, “Who is my neighbor?”

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