

Who is The Good Samaritan?

INTRODUCTION:

Good Morning Airstreamers. I would like to start this morning's sermon by asking a question. By a show of hands, how many of you belong to the Good Sam Club, or received a Good Sam discount at an RV park or bought something at a Camping World store? Here is my Life Member card, my Roadside Assistance card and my Travel Assist card.

When Art Rouse founded the Good Sam Club in 1966, he named it based on a parable from the Bible. It is told by Jesus in the gospel of Luke. The name "The Good Samaritan" was shortened to Good Sam and a smiling character was created as a mascot for the business. A halo was placed over his head that has a pleasant, smiling face.

This parable has inspired paintings, sculpture, satire, poetry, photography and film. The phrase "Good Samaritan" has come to mean someone who helps a stranger in need. Many hospitals and charitable organizations include "Good Samaritan" in their name. For instance, you may be familiar with the "Samaritan's purse." This is a charity that was started by Billy Graham's son, Franklin Graham.

THE SETTING:

So what prompted Jesus to tell this story? Would you believe a lawyer? Jesus was speaking to a group and a lawyer stood up and tested him, saying, "Teacher, what shall I do to inherit eternal life?" Jesus, realizing the man was trying to test him, answered with a question. "What is written in the law? How do you read it? He answered, "You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, with all your soul, with all your strength, and with all your mind and love your neighbor as yourself."

Jesus said, "You have answered correctly, do this and you will live. "But the lawyer, trying to justify himself and continue the discussion, asked another question. "Who is my neighbor?" Here is where Jesus chose to begin his Parable.

THE PARABLE:

Jesus answered, "A certain man, was going down from Jerusalem to Jericho and he fell among robbers, who both stripped him and beat him, and departed, leaving him half dead." In the time of Jesus, the road from Jerusalem to Jericho was known as the "Way of Blood" because of the blood which was shed there by robbers.

On the day before his assassination, Martin Luther King described the road. "I remember when Mrs. King and I were first in Jerusalem. We rented a car and drove from Jerusalem down to Jericho. And as soon as we got on that road, I said to my wife, I can see why Jesus used this as the setting for his parable. It's a winding, meandering road. It's really conducive for

ambushing. You start out in Jerusalem, which is about 2600 feet above sea level. And by the time you get down to Jericho, fifteen or twenty minutes later, you're about 900 feet below sea level. That's a dangerous road."

"By chance a certain priest was going down that way. When he saw him, he passed by on the other side. In the same way a Levite also, when he came to the place and saw him, passed by on the other side."

Perhaps the Priest and the Levite didn't know whether the man was alive or dead. In Jewish culture, contact with a dead body was thought to be defiling or unclean. That may have been a reason to avoid the injured man. But on the other hand, they may not have cared what had happened to him. Jesus leaves these questions for us to ponder.

The next event was the shocking part to his Jewish audience. "But a certain Samaritan, as he traveled, came where he was. When he saw him, he was moved with compassion, came to him and bound up his wounds, pouring on oil and wine. He set him on his own animal and brought him to an inn, and took care of him."

Jesus's audience (the Jews) hated Samaritans. They hated them so much that they destroyed their temple on Mount Gerizim. The Samaritans felt the same about the Jews. They desecrated the Temple at Passover with human bones. To the Jews, the word Samaritan meant, hated outsider who worships falsely and desecrates our religion.

Jesus does not stop the narrative but goes on. "On the next day, when he departed, he took out two denarii, gave them to the host and said to him, 'take care of him. Whatever you spend beyond that, I will repay you when I return.'"

Not only did the Samaritan use his own cloth, oil and wine, he used his own animal to transport the injured man to the inn. All of this was a big loss of time for him. Next he uses his money to pay for future accommodations at the inn. He also promises to pay, on his return, for any additional expenses the injured man incurs. This man gets totally involved in helping the victim of the robbers. He is admirable for the effort he makes to take care of the injured man.

Samaritans appear in the Gospels and other books of the Bible. In the Gospel of Luke, Jesus heals ten Lepers. Among them is a Samaritan who is the only person that thanks him. In John, Jesus has an extended talk with a Samaritan woman at a well. However, in Matthew, Jesus sends out his disciples to investigate the attitudes of people he will encounter on his travel to Jerusalem. He instructs them to not preach to Gentiles or in Samaritan cities. Jesus never spoke badly about them and held a benign view of Samaritans.

Over the centuries, this parable has put the Samaritans in a more favorable light. Christians have used the parable as a means to explain the way followers should behave. Those

who espouse Jesus's teachings can use this model as a proper way to behave toward their neighbors and anyone in need of help.

Finally Jesus turns to the Lawyer and asks, "Now which of these three do you think seemed to be a neighbor to him who fell among the robbers?" Jesus said. The lawyer replied, "He who showed mercy on Him." Then Jesus said to him, "Go and do likewise."

How clever for Jesus to get the lawyer to answer his own question. Cleverness was employed when he used the Samaritan as the example of what it means to follow the law. Jesus emphasizes the wrong way to respond to your neighbor. He describes how two Jewish religious leaders avoid the injured traveler.

In John Newton's hymn "How kind the Good Samaritan" it begins with these words:

How kind the Good Samaritan
To him who fell among the thieves!
Thus Jesus pities fallen man,
And heals the wounds the soul receives.

John Calvin's response to the parable was to point out that people are not born merely for themselves. "Mankind is knit together with a Holy Knot ...we must not live for ourselves, but for our neighbors."

Once again, Martin Luther King used the parable. "On the one hand we are called to play the Good Samaritan on life's roadside; but that will be only an initial act. One day we must come to see that the whole Jericho road must be transformed so that men and women will not be beaten and robbed as they make their journey on life's highway."

So why did I pick this parable to preach on today? We are truly journeying on life's highway.. Cecelia and I typically travel 9 to 10,000 miles a year in our Airstream. We have often encountered people in the U.S. and Canada that acted like the Good Samaritan. Many times we have met strangers that have helped us change tires, given directions, and helped us with mechanical repairs.

The Canadian "Good Samaritan" I met was in the Western province of British Columbia. Before I was married, my friend Bill and I took a road trip to Jasper, Banff and Lake Louise. As we were driving through a town the weather was great so we had our windows down. The biggest bumble bee we had ever seen flew in the car. I pulled the vehicle over to the curb and Bill and I jumped out of the car as fast as we could. A local man was walking down the sidewalk and started laughing. He asked us what the problem was and I told him about the flying attacker. caught the bee. He released it outside and went on his way still laughing.

I know that many of you can remember when you received or gave help to others. As Airstreamers, I think we are obliged to graciously accept help from people who are operating like

the Good Samaritan. Conversely, it would be great to offer aid to others, either known to you or not. Wally Byam's creed was created to encourage this behavior. He wanted to foster good relations among all people that we meet on our travels. This behavior will go a long way to meet his other goal which is to, "Leave a place better than you found it."

When I read this sermon to my pastor in Carson City Nevada, he asked me what is the message from the Gospel here? I said, "that is what I am trying to find to use in my summation of this sermon." He said to think of it this way. View Jesus as the Samaritan. In this parable he is showing how much he loves us and cares for us.

This kind of love has been easy to find in my life. Of course you love your children and I hope you have told them this many times. But I knew that there would come a time when they would fully understand it. I waited to ask them a simple question? When they were a few months into being parents themselves, I asked, "How much do you love that new baby?" They exclaimed with grandiose comments about the overwhelming power of the love they had for their child. Then I told them, "That's how much your Mother and I love you."

Friends, that same love is what Jesus and God have for us. We are told and are shown it many times. So what I am saying is we now have the opportunity to be the Samaritan in our lives and travels. Use your intelligence and your knowledge to discern when and when not to step into a situation and help your neighbor. You see it all over the grounds here in Fryeberg. The many volunteers that are working right now and have been for many months prior.

This is our sixteenth International Rally. We have seen the caring for each other every time we have attended. It gives us a little glimpse of what it could be like when everyone cooperates in a positive way. We experience this feeling at every caravan and rally we attend as well. It started with some aluminum and some wheels and it turned into deep relationships and long lasting friendships. It is so cool to have friends that are spread all over North America.

Let's end this with prayer. Thank you Lord for the opportunities we receive to help our neighbors. The chances to be the good Samaritan. Remind us of the words you spoke in your parable. "Go and do Likewise. AMEN