

# THE DANGEROUS ACT OF WORSHIP

Sermon-Based Study Guide  
Good Shepherd Presbyterian Church

Luke 10.25-37

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## I. Introduction to this Study

Throughout the past few weeks we've been discussing "Dangerous Worship." We've seen that worship wakes us up, clarifies what's really dangerous, prepares us to live our faith in the *real* world, and that it realigns power. This week, as we conclude our series, we see that worship alters our understanding of our neighbor.

Throughout the Gospel, Jesus engaged with all kinds of people. Most of his interaction was with common, everyday Jews trying to eek out an existence under Roman occupation. Somewhere I read that the New Testament's frequent designation "sinner" references just such folks - about 90% of the population - who were called as such because they weren't aligned with a particular political group (such as the Pharisees, Sadducees, Essenes, or Zealots). I can't recall where I read that, so I can't go back to validate it's truth. And yet, it seems plausible. Whether it's true or not, I like it (which means very little, of course).

From time to time, though, Jesus found himself in a discussion with elite members of society. Sometimes such persons had different questions than the "sinners." This week's study engages just such a conversation with a "lawyer" who knew the Scripture very well, and circles around that perennial question, "Who is my neighbor?"

A dangerous question, indeed! Perhaps our neighbors are even the (other) "sinners."

## II. Connecting with One Another

Who are your neighbors (that is, who lives on either side of you)? What is your relationship with them like?

## III. Study the Text

### a. Read Luke 10.25-28.

While it probably goes without saying, the term used for "lawyer" here is quite different from our current day image. First century Galilee did not have separation of church and state, and as such, the Greek word for "lawyer" here refers to an expert in the Hebrew Scriptures. So, think less of Perry Mason and more of a seminary professor or denominational official.

Reread Jesus' response in verse 26 aloud. How does that alter your understanding of what's going on in this passage?

### b. The lawyer, of course, answers correctly. It was his job to know the Scriptures! So, Jesus rightly commends him. Perhaps it's no surprise that, in answering, the lawyer quotes from the Old Testament. Read Deuteronomy 6 then Leviticus 19 to read these quotes in context.

Does reading these verses in context affect your understanding of the lawyer's statement? If so, how?

Considering the context of these passages, how do you think the lawyer understood who his "neighbors" were?

### c. If you're interested, check out the "parallels" of this passage in Matthew 22.34-40 and Mark 12.28-31. What is different in these passages? What's similar? (Note the driving question in each instance, as well as who is quoting the Scriptures)

- d. Read Luke 10.28-37, preferably in a different translation than you're used to (you know what they say about familiarity!). How does hearing this story in a different version help you hear it again, like the first time? Does anything jump out at you that you've missed before? (Interestingly, only Luke records the telling of this parable, though - as we saw above - both Matthew and Mark include very similar conversations)
- e. Jesus is in conversation with what Eugene Peterson's *The Message* translates "a religion scholar." And the parable is known as the Good Samaritan (an oxymoron, no doubt, for it's original hearers). But, notice: Jesus tells the story from the perspective of the wounded man. Why do you think he told the story this way?
- f. Though this story seems to have been made up on the spot, it was not altogether improbable that such an event occurred. The road from Jerusalem to Jericho descends over 3,500 feet in just 17 miles, and Josephus, a first century Jewish author, described it as so "desolate and rocky" that when people traveled it, they carried weapons to protect themselves from thieves. Can you think of a place in our community where someone might have to do the same?
- g. Some have wondered whether the priest and Levite (think Head Pastor and Associate Pastor) stayed away from the wounded man because of restrictions in the Bible. For instance, see Leviticus 21.1-2 and Ezekiel 44.25-27. What do you think? Is this why they ignored the wounded man?
- h. The third person on the scene is a Samaritan. At which point Jesus' initial hearers would have fallen out of their chairs in amazement. The three traditional divisions in Jewish culture was priest, Levite, Israel(ite). But Jesus includes a Samaritan as the hero of the story!

This surprising hero uses oil and wine to care for the wounded man, both of which were commonly used in sacrifices at the Temple (meaning the priest and Levite could have very well had the same materials on hand). Notice, at the conclusion of the parable, the "religion scholar" is unable to speak the words "the Samaritan."

- i. Reread the parable. Why do you think Luke includes that all three travelers "saw" the wounded man? What wounded people do you see? What wounded people do you shield your eyes from seeing?
- j. Notice verse 36. Does Jesus speak about *who* is one's neighbor or *how* to be a neighbor? What's the difference? Arland J. Hultgren notes,

The parable teaches that one cannot justify oneself by drawing distinctions between persons, deciding who is, and who is not, one's neighbor, and using the law to do that. The question for a disciple of Jesus is not, 'Who is my neighbor?' but rather, 'Am I neighbor to the person in need?' The demand of the commandment to love one's neighbor as oneself knows no limit.

What do you think? How could you be more "neighborly" to those living next to you? To those worshipping next to you? To those living on the other side of the world?

- k. Who had more dangerous worship: The "religion scholar" or the Samaritan?

#### IV. Pray

- a. Ask God to lead Good Shepherd into dangerous worship that wakes up to injustice and does justly, loves mercy, and walks humbly,
- b. Pray for Good Shepherd's Pastors, Elders, Deacons, and Staff as they seek to lead our congregation in this difficult time of transition,
- c. Lift up our children, students, and adults, asking that the Risen Jesus would lead each age group in Connecting with God, Growing in Faith and Serving in Love.