

(T) Welcome to **Discipleship training On The Air**. In this teaching series, you will have the opportunity to learn how to understand and teach the parables of Jesus Christ. By using *the guidelines for interpreting parables*, two teachers will study **the parable of the Good Samaritan** in Luke 10:25-37. This is a parable concerning **OUTGOING LOVE IN GOD'S KINGDOM**. As you listen to this programme, make notes in a notebook or record the programme.

(S) Let me read Luke 10:25-37. "A man was going down from Jerusalem to Jericho, when he fell into the hands of robbers. They stripped him of his clothes, beat him and went away, leaving him half dead. A priest happened to be going down the same road, and when he saw the man, he passed by on the other side. So too, a Levite when he came to the place and saw him, passed by on the other side. But a Samaritan, as he travelled, came where the man was; and when he saw him, he took pity on him. He went to him and bandaged his wounds, pouring on oil and wine. Then he put the man on his own donkey, took him to an inn and took care of him. The next day he took out two silver coins and gave them to the innkeeper. 'Look after him,' he said, 'and when I return, I will reimburse you for any extra expense you may have'."

(T) **POINT 1. UNDERSTAND THE NATURAL STORY OF THE PARABLE.**

Let us take turns to explain the true-to-life elements of the story of this parable.

Jerusalem lies on the top of mountains, while Jericho lies in a deep valley at a distance of about 27 kilometres from and about 1 200 meters below Jerusalem. The road between these two cities was rough and very lonely. Moreover robbers and criminals hid in the caves in that mountainous region. It was known as a dangerous road.

(S) The man travelling from Jerusalem to Jericho was a Jew; otherwise Jesus would have said so. He was attacked by robbers, who surrounded him, stripped him of his possessions, beat him half-dead and left him lying on the road.

(T) Many priestly families lived in Jericho and therefore often travelled the road between Jerusalem and Jericho. This priest was walking downward, thus probably going home after he had finished his priestly duties in Jerusalem. He saw the man lying on the road, but passed by. He did not want to get involved. Jesus does not tell us why. He could have made several excuses, like, "He is not one of us!" or "I may get contaminated by contact with such a man!" Nevertheless, he had no excuse for not getting involved, because the Old Testament law clearly commands people to show mercy to strangers and even to enemies (Lev 19:34)! The Levite, whose duty was to help the priests in their functions at the temple, also passed by on the other side. Also he had no excuse for neglecting his real duty, which was to show mercy to this helpless man.

(S) The Samaritans and Jews were enemies and hated one another (John 4:9). One would not expect a Samaritan to show mercy to a Jew. But that is exactly what happened! When the Samaritan saw the man lying on the road, he took pity on him. He washed the man's wounds with wine, which functioned as an antiseptic (1 Tim 5:23), and then he poured oil on them as a kind of salve which soothed the pain (Isa 1:6). He put the man on his donkey and probably walked by the side of the donkey, giving support to the tragic figure on the way to the inn. At the inn, he did not regard his duty as finished, but personally took care of the man throughout the night. Also during the next day, he did not regard his duty as finished, but paid the innkeeper money which would take care of the man for a couple of days. He even promised to reimburse all extra expenses made!

(T) **POINT 2. EXAMINE THE IMMEDIATE CONTEXT AND DETERMINE THE ELEMENTS OF THE PARABLE.**

Let us take turns to describe the context of the parable.

The setting of the parable is found in Luke 10:25-29. An expert in the Old Testament law attempted to embarrass Jesus. He tried to show everybody that Jesus could not give good answers to difficult questions! His question is the most serious question any person could ask, "What must I do to inherit eternal life?" The expert in the law himself believed that the answer was "To keep the whole law." Instead of answering him, Jesus asked a counter-question, "What is written in the law? How do you read it?" Thus, Jesus turned the tables on him and forced him to give an answer to his own question. In doing this, Jesus also showed everybody that he was not teaching a new doctrine, but that he strictly adhered to the principles of God's holy law!

(S) The learned man's answer was a correct restatement of Deuteronomy 6:5 and Leviticus 19:18. These passages imply that the very essence of all true religion is outgoing love towards both God and the neighbour! Love towards God must be wholehearted and with all one's faculties. And love towards one's neighbour must not be less in extent than or

inferior in quality to the love for oneself! Jesus then said to him, "Do this and you will live!" Jesus meant, "If you obey this law perfectly, that is, if you love God and the neighbour perfectly, you will inherit eternal life." The trouble is not with the divine principle that perfect obedience results in everlasting life (Lev 18:5), or that perfect love results in inheriting eternal life. The real problem is that, besides Jesus, there is not a single person in history who can obey perfectly or love perfectly! The problem with this expert in the law was that he still thought *that he could merit eternal life by his very imperfect obedience!* He did not realise at all that he was unspiritual and sold as a slave to sin (Rom 7:14)! He did not believe that there is no one righteous, not even one (Rom 3:10)! If only he would have acknowledged his sins and utterly sinful nature and cried out, "God, have mercy on me, a sinner!" (Lk 18:13). Then Jesus could have invited him to believe in the gospel (Mt 11:28). The problem with this learned man was that he highly over-estimated himself and wanted to justify himself before the eyes of all the onlookers.

(T) Concerning the question, "Who is my neighbour?" There was a wide variety of opinion among the Jews. There were people who perverted God's command by saying, "You shall love your neighbour and hate your enemies." Jesus refuted this interpretation in Matthew 5:43-48. A widely accepted view seems to have been, "Love your neighbour, the Israelite." And the Pharisees narrowed this down even more to, "Love your neighbour, the Pharisee." They reasoned, "This mob that knows nothing of the law - there is a curse on them!" (Jn 7:49). The Jewish community at Qumran declared that anyone who did not belong to their little group was "a son of darkness" and should be hated. By his question, "Who is my neighbour?" this expert in the law tried to quiet his own conscience and also to embarrass Jesus in front of all the people.

In answer to this question, Jesus told the parable of the Good Samaritan.

(S) The story of the parable is contained in Luke 10:30-35.
The explanation or application of the parable is contained in Luke 10:36-37.

(T) **POINT 3. IDENTIFY THE RELEVANT AND IRRELEVANT DETAILS OF THE PARABLE.**

Jesus Christ did not intend every detail in the parable to have some spiritual significance. The relevant details are those details in the story of the parable that reinforce the message of the parable. Therefore, we should not ascribe independent spiritual significance to every detail of the parable. Today we want to give a few examples of *the wrong interpretation* of the parable of the Good Samaritan. The following three Christians wrote very good things, but they treated this parable as an allegory, giving specific meanings to the various details, which cannot be deduced from the context or the story. Consequently, we must reject their interpretations of this parable.

First. A church father, called Irenaeus, lived in the second century after Christ. He interpreted the parable as representing the relationship between man and God. *Man* had fallen among thieves, but God had compassion on him and bound up his wounds. The *two royal coins* represent the image and superscription of the Father and the Son through the Holy Spirit on believers, so that they may cause whatever had been entrusted to them to be fruitful. This allegorised interpretation must be rejected.

(S) Second. Another church father, called Augustine, lived in the fourth century after Christ. He interpreted the parable in more details as representing the relationship between man and God. *The man* who went down from Jerusalem to Jericho represents Adam, who symbolises the human race. *Jerusalem* is the heavenly city from which he has fallen. *Jericho* signifies our human mortality. *The robbers* represent the devil and his angels, who deprive man of his immortality. *The wounds* that they inflict represent the sins, which are to be forgiven. The man is left *half-dead*, which implies that while his spirit or soul is alive, the part of man corrupted by sin is dead. *The priest and the Levite* stand for the Old Testament, whose people could not reach salvation. *The Samaritan* symbolises Jesus Christ. His *binding up* of the man's wounds means that he is doing away with sin. *The oil* is the consolation of good hope, while *the wine* is the exhortation to action of a fervent spirit. *The donkey* on which the man is carried to the inn represents the human nature of Jesus Christ in which he came to us. *To be seated on the donkey* means to believe in the incarnation of Jesus Christ. *The inn* represents the Church, where travellers rest on their pilgrimage as they return to their homeland, the heavenly Jerusalem. Man is still in the process of being brought to the inn, because he is still in the process of being healed. *The initial application of wine and oil*, which was poured in along the road, represents baptism, and intends to strengthen the victim. *The next day*, when the Samaritan gave the innkeeper two silver coins stands for the time after Jesus' resurrection from the dead. *The two silver coins* may be understood as either the two commands to love God and the neighbour, or as the promise of life in the present and in the future. The Samaritan's *promise to return* relates to Jesus' promise in Matthew 19:29 to give a hundred times more to those who have left everything and followed Jesus. *The innkeeper* is believed to be the apostle Paul. This allegorised interpretation must be rejected.

(T) Third. The great church reformer, Martin Luther, lived in the sixteenth century. He interpreted this parable as follows: *The man* represents Adam, who fell into sin and implanted sin in all of us. *The Samaritan* represents Jesus Christ, who saves us, carries us into *the inn*, which represents the Church, and is now healing us. However, in another place, Luther applies this parable correctly when he says, "When one sees his neighbour in need and in dire danger, he

should not pass by like the priest and the Levite did and let him lie there to perish. Under the pretence of keeping the Sabbath pure, one can become a murderer of his brother.”

(S) The following details in this parable are really essential or relevant. Jesus Christ himself applies the parable as representing what kind of Saviour he himself is and what kind of people he wants us to be. He does not give to any of the details in this parable any particular meaning. Therefore we should not treat this parable as an allegory and give every detail a specific meaning. The parable does not tell God’s salvation history, that is, the relationship of God with man throughout the centuries. Rather, it teaches us God’s will with regard to the needy people, which he places on our way. Jesus used the story to show the expert in the law and us, who is really a neighbour to the man in need. The expert in the law correctly answered that it was “the one who had mercy on the man”.

A Christian should not look around and ask himself, “Who is my neighbour?” And then speculate if so-and-so is his neighbour or not. Instead, every person, whom God sovereignly places on his way, could be his neighbour, to whom he has a responsibility. He should therefore ask himself, “To whom am I a neighbour?” “Am I being a neighbour to the needy people, whom God has placed on my way or not?”

(T) **POINT 4. IDENTIFY THE MAIN MESSAGE OF THE PARABLE.**

The parable of the Good Samaritan teaches about *outgoing love in God’s kingdom*.

The main message of the parable is the following. “I am a neighbour when I show mercy and take care of a needy person whom the Lord places in my path.” The central point is Jesus’ answer to the question, “Who is my neighbour?” In his answer, Jesus turns the question around. He does not ask, “Who is my neighbour?” but “To whom am I a neighbour?” or “When am I a neighbour to others?” When you show mercy to a person God places on your way, then you are a neighbour to that person!

Jesus is not anti-clerical. His intention was not to speak against the offices of priest and Levite, but to show that the lack of love and mercy touches everyone, even if he is a priest or Levite. And he teaches that everyone, even if he is a despised Samaritan, must show outgoing love or mercy to every other needy person whom God places in his path! Jesus protests against the notion that a neighbour is limited to one’s countrymen or even only to one’s friends (Leviticus 19:34; Matthew 5:43-47).

Outgoing love, for example expressed in showing mercy to needy people, is a foundational characteristic of God’s kingdom! The people of God’s kingdom, who have received eternal life as a free gift, express their gratefulness to God by living a life of love towards God and the neighbour. The people of God’s kingdom live to the glory of God. Because Christians are not perfect on earth, they do not love their neighbour perfectly. Nevertheless, they can love and grow in love as they walk with Jesus Christ. The commandment to love God and to love one’s neighbour has never been abrogated (Romans 13:8-10).

(S) **POINT 5. COMPARE THE PARABLE WITH PARALLEL AND CONTRASTING PASSAGES.**

Some parables are similar to one another and can be compared. The truth in all the parables also has parallel or contrasting truth taught in other passages of the Bible. Try to find the most important cross-references that help us to interpret the parable. Always check the interpretation of a parable with the direct and clear teaching of the Bible. The expert of the law had asked Jesus “What must I do to inherit eternal life?” The letter to the Galatians gives a clear answer to this question.

Galatians 3:12 says that the man who does the commandments of the law, will live by them. If a person could and would be a good neighbour and do this to perfection, and if he could and would love God with a perfect love, then he could and would inherit everlasting life.

However, Galatians 2:16 says, “By observing the law no one will be justified.” No one in the world, except Jesus, was a perfect neighbour or loved God perfectly! Such perfection of love for God and the neighbour is completely impossible on this sinful earth!

Galatians 3:13 says, “Christ redeemed us from the curse of the law by becoming a curse for us.” Although not a single person in the history of this world could fulfil the demands of God’s law, Jesus Christ did. He was perfectly obedient and thus upheld the demands of God’s law. By his life of perfect obedience and by his substitutionary sacrifice of himself on the cross, he has done for us what we ourselves would never have been able to do.

Galatians 3:6-9 teaches that therefore, everyone who believes in Jesus Christ is regarded and treated by God as completely righteous. That is why we Christians always sincerely acknowledge that we cannot fulfil God’s law by our own action. Jesus Christ has fulfilled the law in our place and through the Spirit of Christ living in us we love God and we love our neighbour.

(T) **POINT 6. SUMMARISE THE MAIN TEACHINGS OF THE PARABLE.**

Let me summarise the main teaching of the parable of the Good Samaritan. This parable teaches us what the God of the Bible wants us to be and to do. Love expresses our gratefulness towards God for the salvation we received by his grace. Instead of *passive harmlessness*, we should show active love to others. Instead of *cold indifference* towards Jesus Christ, we should pour out our love towards him. Instead of *negative law-keeping and self-righteousness*, we should show wholehearted love to God and mercy towards everyone whom God places on our way. We can do this, because he saved us. And we do this because we are thankful for the salvation he has given us by grace when we believed.

(S) **ASSIGNMENT FOR NEXT WEEK**

First. Preach, teach or study this parable together with another person or group of people. Next week we will study the parable of the reserved seats. As preparation, please read Luke 14:7-14.

Second. See the workbooks "Go and preach God's Kingdom and www.dota.net

Third. Listen every SATURDAY to WEDNESDAY on the radio to "Discipleship training on the air".