

Parable of the Good Samaritan

Quote:30 Jesus replied with a story: "A Jewish man was traveling on a trip from Jerusalem to Jericho, and he was attacked by bandits. They stripped him of his clothes, beat him up, and left him half dead beside the road.

31 "By chance a priest came along. But when he saw the man lying there, he crossed to the other side of the road and passed him by. 32 A Temple assistant walked over and looked at him lying there, but he also passed by on the other side.

33 "Then a despised Samaritan came along, and when he saw the man, he felt compassion for him. 34 Going over to him, the Samaritan soothed his wounds with olive oil and wine and bandaged them. Then he put the man on his own donkey and took him to an inn, where he took care of him. 35 The next day he handed the innkeeper two silver coins, telling him, "Take care of this man. If his bill runs higher than this, I'll pay you the next time I'm here."

36 "Now which of these three would you say was a neighbor to the man who was attacked by bandits?" Jesus asked.

37 The man replied, "The one who showed him mercy."

Then Jesus said, "Yes, now go and do the same." Luke 10:30-37 (NLT)

I guess that if there is any passage from the gospels that is familiar to most people, it is this one. Perhaps, like me, you have heard this story from your early childhood. And we are very familiar with it --

--The Jewish man traveling, attacked (Greek: surrounded), stripped, very badly beaten and left beside the road

--The priest, who crosses by on the other side of the road

--The Temple assistant (Levite) who comes over to take a look, but also passes by

--The Samaritan who, feeling compassion, chooses to help the man

--Jesus' question: who was this man's neighbor? And the reply of the questioner: the one who was merciful

--Jesus' final comment: "Yes, now go and do the same."

If you were trying to summarize this account for children (and my wife and I do this all the time, as we teach kids at our church), what would you say? Perhaps something like this: "There once was

a man. Then there was a third man, a Samaritan. Only he had compassion on this injured man, and helped him. And Jesus our Savior said we should do the same."

One of the things I find very striking - astonishing, really - is the fact that the Samaritan gave the injured man medical treatment! From our perspective it might seem more like "first aid", but at that time, it really amounted to significant medical care. Let's list out what he did --

--The Samaritan "smoothed" (epicheirō - to pour on) wine and oil into the man's wounds. Why? Because they had medicinal value.

*Oil was used to moisturize wounds, to keep them from hardening and cracking (which would have permitted germs to enter, causing infections). We see a reference to this in Isaiah: "From the sole of the foot even to the head/There is nothing sound in it,/Only bruises, welts and raw wounds,/Not pressed out or bandaged,/nor softened with oil." (Isa. 1.6 NASB)

*Wine has often been used as an antibiotic/antiseptic treatment, possessing alcohol. In other words, it kills germs.

--Then the Samaritan bandaged those wounds, to keep out dirt and to help the wound heal (and to prevent additional blood loss). These types of remedies were well known in the ancient world. For example, Hippocrates (the father of medicine) prescribes for ulcers, "Bind with soft wool, and sprinkle with wine and oil." (See Vincent's Word Studies on this)

--Then the Samaritan gives the injured man an "ambulance ride" to a kind of "hospital": he mounts him on his own animal, and while walking along with him, takes him to an inn, where he continues to care for him - perhaps changing his bandages and applying more wine and oil.

--The next day the Samaritan provides for his continued care and healing treatment, leaving a deposit of money with the innkeeper, with a promise that he will meet any additional expense incurred in the treatment of this man.

By the way, Warren Wiersbe, in his famous "BE" commentaries, says this--

Quote:"Jesus did not say that this story was a parable, so it could well be the report of an actual occurrence. For Jesus to tell a story that made the Jews look bad and the Samaritans look good would either be dangerous or self-defeating. "You just made that up!" they could say. "We all know that nothing like that would ever happen!" So it is possible that some of His listeners, including the lawyer, knew that such a thing had really happened. Either way, the account is realistic."

Would you say it is fair and reasonable to understand that the Samaritan used medicines and medical treatment in helping this man who was injured? I think so.

But here is what I find striking -- in this account Jesus does not display any antagonism towards medicine. He does not condemn the actions of the Samaritan in providing medical care. No one is

upbraided for having a "lack of faith". In fact, Jesus commends his actions - He agrees with His questioner that the Samaritan "showed mercy" - that he displayed compassion.

And Jesus commands us, as well as His questioner, to "Go and do the same."

How? In what way are we to "do the same?" To show compassion on our "neighbors"? -- which Jesus is teaching us includes everyone with a need. What actions would be the "same" actions we are told by Christ to do? How can we show that compassion? Can we not show compassion (at least in part) by providing compassionate care - including compassionate medical care - for the sick and injured - just as this Samaritan man did?

"Go and do the same." -- Jesus said so!