

# PARABLES, “THROUGH PEASANTS EYES!”

## Study 17, The Good Samaritan, Part III. Luke 10:25-37

1. Thus the lawyer asked this question in a world where there was a variety of views on just who the neighbor really is. Safari observes; “the oral law was not really uniform,” there was a lively debate on points of interpretation. The literary form is that of a seven-scene p ballad and is as follows;
  - a. A man was going down from Jerusalem to Jericho and he fell among robbers  
And they stripped him and beat him  
And departed, leaving him half dead. COME  
DO  
GO
  - b. Now by coincidence a certain priest was going down that road, COME  
And when he saw him, DO  
He passed by on the other side. GO
  - c. Likewise, also a Levite came to that place. COME  
And when he saw him DO  
he passed by on the other side. GO
  - d. And a certain Samaritan, traveling, came to him, COME  
And when he saw him, DO  
He had compassion on him DO
  - e. He went to him COME  
And bound up his wounds, DO  
Pouring oil and wine, DO
  - f. The he put him on his own riding animal DO  
And led him into the Inn DO  
And he took care of him. DO
  - g. The next day on took out and gave two denarii to the manager DO  
And said, “Take care of him, and whatever more you spend DO  
I, on my return, I will repay you.” DO
2. Jesus immortal reply to the lawyer’s question is seen as part of a continuing dialogue. It is in intro to the 2<sup>nd</sup> question, as in the first round, Jesus wants to solicit from the questioner his own answer. The p is told to make this possible. On a deeper level as Manson astutely observed, ‘the question is

unanswerable and ought not to be asked.’ “For love does not begin by defining its objects; It discovers them.” (Manson). The question that can’t be answered continues unanswered, it is transformed into the response that Jesus makes. We must examine the structure. This is called a p ballad, because of the ballad like stanzas in which the story falls (Bailey). The action shifts dramatically from scene to scene. The first three are dominated by the Robbers, Priests and the Levite. The action is characterized by come, go and do! Each of them comes, does and goes. The pattern is broken by the Samaritan, who beyond all expectation, does not leave. From then on, each line is described as DO-action in service to the wounded man on part of the Samaritan.

3. The list is long as the Samaritan must make up for the actions of everyone else, he compensates for their failures in an inverse order. Hence the inverted parallelism, some which is noted by Crosson. The Levite, (scene 3) could have at least rendered first aid, this is the Samaritan’s first course of action, (scene 5). The priest, (scene 2) was certainly riding and could have taken the man to safety. The Samaritan does this as well in (scene 6). The robbers (scene 1) take his money and have no intention of returning and the Good Samaritan in (scene 7) pays from his own pocket was in necessary, and was willing to return and pay more if it was necessary. The climax occurs in the center with the unexpected compassion of the Samaritan. The three-line form in each scene may be artificial, yet what is clear is that the parable is a drama in seven scenes. Each of these scenes need careful attention.

#### 4. SCENE 1: The Robbers

5. *A man was going down from Jerusalem to Jericho and he fell among robbers* COME  
*And they stripped him and beat him* DO  
*And departed, leaving him half dead.* GO

6. The 17 mile descending road through the desert from Jerusalem to Jericho has been historically dangerous. Pompey had to wipe out strong bands of ‘brigands’ near Jericho (Strabo) as Plumber notes. Ibn al-Tayyib writes that there were many thieves on the Jericho-Jerusalem road. The crusaders built a small fort at the halfway mark to protect the pilgrims, as robbers in the area have been a serious threat. William Thompson has a dramatic description of a group of pilgrims traveling over the same road in 1857 with large armed guard. One traveler fell behind was ‘attacked, robbed and

stripped naked.’ (Thompson) This road always provided a perfect setting for this drama.

7. The story intentionally leaves out the man undescribed. (Marshall 447) Yet, a Jewish audience would naturally assume that the traveler is a Jew. He is beaten, stripped, and half dead meaning he struggled with his attackers. In 1821, a British traveler, J.S. Buckingham, journeyed through Palestine. Near Capernaum, he met a party that had been attacked by robbers. Two of their group resisted and were beaten so badly that they had to be left behind. (Buckingham and Jeremias). The rabbis identified stages for death. The ‘Half dead,’ of the text is equivalent for a rabbinic category of ‘next to death,’ which meant at ‘the point of death.’ The next stage was called, ‘one just expiring,’ (Lighthfoot). Clearly the man is unconscious and thus cannot identify himself. Nor can his identity be ascertained by any on looker.
8. The wounded traveler’s condition is not incidental. He is unconscious and stripped. These skillful details are constructed to create the tension at the heart of the drama. Our ME world was and is made up of various ethno-religious communities. The traveler is able to identify strangers in two ways; (1) He can talk to the unknown man and identify him from his speech, or even before that, (2) he can identify him by his dress. In the 1<sup>st</sup> century various ethnic-religious communities within Palestine used an amazing number of languages and dialects. In Hebrew alone there was classical Hebrew, late Biblical Hebrew and Mishnaic Hebrew. But in addition to Hebrew, one could find Aramaic, Greek, Southwest Ashdonian, Samaritan, Phoenician, Arabic, Nabatean and Latin (Rabin). The country had many settled communities of Pagans. (Flusser).
9. No one traveling a major highway in Palestine could be sure the stranger they met could be a Jew. A few quick questions or briefly listening for language and dialect would identify them. But what if he were unconscious beside the road? In such one would need to take a quick glance at the stranger’s clothes. In Marissa in Palestine wall drawings of distinctive Hellenistic garb have been recently discovered. These appear in early gallery tombs of a Sidonian community living there in Palestine in the 1<sup>st</sup> century. The various ethnic communities of Dura-Europos, with their distinctive styles of clothing are depicted in the frescoes of the 2<sup>nd</sup> to 3<sup>rd</sup> centuries. This pattern remained unchanged and even separate villages of Palestine and Lebanon had their distinctive traditional dress. Lamartine, traveling through Palestine in 1832, records observing a large group of

Arabs at a distance and notes that they were from Nablous, 'whose costume the tribe displayed' (Lamartine). In the 1<sup>st</sup> century, at least Greek and Jew had their distinctive dress. But what if the man besides the road was stripped? He was thereby reduced to a mere human being in need. He belongs to no man's ethnic or religious community! It is such a person that the robbers leave wounded beside the road. Who will turn and render aid?

10. SCENE 2: The Priest.

*Now by coincidence a certain priest was going down that road,*      *COME*  
*And when he saw him,*      *DO*  
*He passed by on the other side.*      *GO*

11. The priest is most certainly riding we deduce this from the fact that the priests were among the upper classes of their society. In this connection (Stern) constituted the prestigious and elite class in Jewish society (Stern). Elsewhere he notes them as them being in the "upper classes." In the ME no one with any status in the community takes a 17 mile hike in the desert. The poor walk! Everyone else in general, and the upper class in particular always ride. This is the natural assumption of the p. The same kind of assumption belongs in America when a farmer says, "He's going to town." If a destination is 17 miles away, you know he is driving! He does not mention his car/pick up. There is no need to do so.
12. Indeed, when the Samaritan appears he too is riding, but this fact is not mentioned. His riding animal happens to function in the story, and so is mentioned, but only after the Samaritan has ridden onto the scene. Furthermore, w/o this assumption the story loses a great deal of its thrust. If the priest had been walking, what could he have done besides offering first aid and sit, hoping that someone would come riding by on an animal and actually help. The p turns on the presupposition that what the Samaritan did, at least the priest could have done. If this is not true then we would be obliged to conclude, 'of course the Samaritan should help the man, he's the only one that can.'
13. The p assumes an equal potential for service, at least on the part of the priest and the Samaritan. Finally, the Samaritan might be a poor man, yet his animal is assumed. How much more the priest. Indeed, the upper class status of the priest assured the image of a well mounted aristocrat. Thus the p in its original setting gives us a picture of a priest riding by, seeing the man (presumably at a distance) and then steering his mount to the far side of the road and continuing on his way.