

# PARABLES, “THROUGH PEASANTS EYES!”

Study 23, The Good Samaritan, Part IX. 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 Jer. to Jericho, he fell among robbers COME  
And they stripped him and beat him DO  
And departed, leaving him half dead. 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. We have already observed functional Christianity in 7:36-50. In this passage the reference to Christianity is in the p itself, not in the narrative framework provided by the words of the Evangelist. Is it not possibly here to touch something of Jesus’ own understanding of his own ministry as God’s unique agent who comes as a suffering servant to save? How then

does this p function in the dialogue between Jesus and the lawyers? The full text of this second round in the dialogue is as follows;

### 3. ROUND TWO:

*He desiring to justify himself, asked,*

*(5) Lawyer, (Question 3) "Who is my neighbor?"*

*(6) Jesus: (after telling the p asked question 4)*

*"Which of these 3 do you think became a neighbor to the man that fell among the robbers?"*

*(7) Lawyer: (Answer to 4) He answered,*

*"The one who showed mercy to him."*

*(8) Jesus, (Answer to 3) And Jesus said to him,*

*"Go and you, you do likewise."*

4. In the center of these 4 speeches, Jesus reshapes the lawyer's question. He will not give the lawyer a list. He refuses to tell the lawyer, who is and who is not your neighbor. Rather the real question becomes, "To whom must you become a neighbor?" The question is answered, the last statement isn't a push to do good works, but rather an answer to the lawyer's self-justification. The first round of questions and answers ended with a command to DO something. This round ends the same. The lawyer in the 1<sup>st</sup> round wants to know how many people does he have to love to achieve righteousness by his own efforts. The word, "You," is emphatic in the last statement, Jesus is saying, "Here is the standard that YOU must meet?" Derrett understands from the p that "Unless we show love to all humanity....we can not claim....to have obtained entrance to the Messianic age." Hunter explains the same phrase meaning, "This is what neighbor love means my friend, if you want eternal life. This is what action God requires of you."
5. Both authors are correct, the difficulty is—who is able to do these things? Who can meet this standard? We can almost hear the crowds say as they do in 18:26, "Who then can be saved?" Here each half of the dialogue moves in this direction. Thus each round ends with the same conclusion. "What can I do to inherit eternal life?" What can I do to justify myself? The only conclusion he can come to is, "These things are beyond me. Clearly, I cannot justify myself, but all things are possible with God." Luke 18:27.
6. Finally then seeing this p in its dialogue setting, what the lawyer to conclude and the theological motifs comprise the theological cluster of the

passage? We would suggest the following: The lawyer is pressed to understand:

“I must become a neighbor to anyone in need. To fulfill the law means that I must reach out in costly compassion to all people, even to my enemies. The standard remains even though I can never fully achieve it. I cannot justify myself and earn eternal life.”

7. The following theological motifs are contained in the overall scene:
  - a. The p makes clear that any attempt at self-justification is doomed to failure. The stand is too high, eternal life can NOT be achieved.
  - b. Yet the p holds up an ethical standard to strive for, even though it can NOT be achieved. Like the command to “Be perfect,” it remains a standard even though in its fullest expression it is ‘impossibly high.’
  - c. A code book approach to ethics is inadequate. Derrett, “When the Pharisaic system can have such defects it needs serious re-examination.”
  - d. The Samaritan “a Hate outsider,” demonstrates compassionate love. Thus the p is a sharp attack on communal and racist prejudices.
  - e. For Jesus, love is something you feel and DO!
  - f. The p gives a dynamic concept of the neighbor. The question, “Who is my neighbor?” Is reshaped into, “To whom must I become a neighbor?” The answer then is—everyone in need, even an enemy!”
  - g. God’s justice and limits are not bound by the official leadership of the community of the faithful. When that leadership fails, God is still free to choose new agents, as He did with Amos, for the expression of His salvation.
  - h. Two types of sin and two types of sinners appear in the parable. The robbers hurt the man by violence. The priest and Levite hurt the man by neglect. (Sins of omission and Commission) The failed opportunity to do good becomes and evil.
  - i. The passage makes a statement about salvation. Salvation comes to the wounded man in the form of a costly demonstration of unexpected love. In the process it seems to make a statement about the Savior. We cautiously suggest that Jesus, the rejected outsider, has cast himself in the role of the Samaritan who appears dramatically on the scene to bind up the wounds of the suffering as the unique agent of God’s costly demonstration of unexpected love.

May the theology and ethical demands of this time-honored passage inform and motivate and empower us afresh today.