



## Parable of The Good Samaritan (Luke 10:25-37)

- *Jesus replied with a story: "A Jewish man was traveling from Jerusalem down 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." – Lk 10:30 (NLT)*



In the parable, a Jewish man was left seriously injured on the side of a road after being robbed. Note what happened then:

- A priest and a Levite passed by. They belonged to 2 eminent classes of religious personnel.

One would most expect them to help their fellow man. Instead, they crossed to the other side of the road to avoid the man.

- A Samaritan passed by. The Samaritan was a member of a despised group in the Jewish society.

One might least expect him to help the injured man (by contemporary sentiment). However, he did stop to take pity on the man – not just doing the minimal of bandaging his wounds, but going the extra mile to accommodate the man in an inn at the Samaritan's own expense.

I believe it resonates with us that even in today's society, we do encounter situations where offers of help come from individuals least expected because of their negative stereotype while individuals who are well-regarded by their outer appearances avert their eyes.

Here is an interesting “The Good Samaritan Experiment”  
(abridged from an email):

*The Good Samaritan Experiment*

*Malcom Gladwell, in his book The Tipping Point, describes a social experiment that two psychologists from Princeton University conducted.*

*In their experiment, seminary students were asked to give extemporaneous talks on a Bible story. The group giving the talk on the Good Samaritan was instructed to walk across campus to a nearby building where they would speak to a group of undergraduates.*

*While walking to the building each student encountered an actor who was bent over coughing and groaning. The assumption would be that those speaking on the Good Samaritan would be the ones most likely to stop and help. The researchers found, however, that it made no significant impact on whether they stopped.*

*Instead, it appeared that the one thing that mattered was whether the student was in a rush. They found that only 10% of those who felt rushed to get to deliver the talk on time stopped to help the man. Of those who were told they had a few extra minutes, 63% stopped!*

*Here is what the researchers, John Darley and Daniel Batson, said, “It’s hard to think of a context in which norms concerning helping those in distress are more salient than for a person thinking about the Good Samaritan, and yet it did not significantly increase helping behavior.*

*Indeed, on several occasions, a seminary student going to give his talk on the parable of the Good Samaritan literally stepped over the victim as he hurried on his way.”*

I note the failed assumption in the experiment, that those speaking and thinking about The Good Samaritan would be most

likely to demonstrate helpful behaviour. Instead of displaying spontaneous charity due to a consciousness of The Good Samaritan message, they were more occupied with their own business. In brief, the speakers of the moral story about The Good Samaritan neglected to walk the talk, reminiscent of the hollow attitude of the priest and Levite in the story.

Jesus used the parable to make the point that the measure of a man is in his heart, not in his personal or social identity.

Perhaps most of us could identify with this point with some discomfiture when we ourselves were caught out to be not walking our talk and struggled in search of explanations.

On one hand, it is right to encourage charity. On the other hand, it is not unheard of that good Samaritans fell victims to tricksters, criminals or false accusations. Examples:

- On a mission trip, you give alms to poor children begging on the streets. Unfortunately, the alms are misappropriated by managers of the beggars.
- You stop by the side of a quiet road to help someone in distress. You realise too late that it is a set-up when you are waylaid by villains.
- There was this infamous incident in China in 2006 when a good Samaritan going to the aid of an injured woman accident victim was sued by the woman for causing her injury. Sadly, the court ruled in favour of the false accusation.

Well, if you had on an occasion “wisely” decided not to help someone apparently in need, but then it turned out differently from what your “prudential consideration” cautioned, you would have missed an opportunity to be a Good Samaritan!

Here is a test for you:

*You are walking on the streets and approached by a Dubai tourist who asks you to lend him a few hundred dollars because he has lost his wallet and phone. He promises that he will transfer the amount to your account once he returns to his country.*

*Will you believe him, giving him the benefit of the doubt and be happy that you are doing a great (not foolish) act of charity?*

*Will you turn your back on him, thinking that only a fool would believe his plea?*

Something like this happened in in 2017. A person lent the Dubai tourist the requested sum of money. On return to Dubai 7 days later, the tourist transferred a reward a few 100 times ( $\approx$  \$1 million) to the Good Samaritan's bank account.

Were you the person who chose to ignore the tourist and now dwell in envy at the Good Samaritan who was the next person after you approached by the tourist?

Oh, the Dubai Tourist incident happened in South Korea, not in Singapore. You can read the report here:

<https://mothership.sg/2020/01/south-korea-dubai-tourist-1-million/> .

**The Bible says, “Do not forget to entertain strangers, for by so doing some have unwittingly entertained angels.” – Heb 13:2**

Next time, when you encounter a stranger appearing to be in need, would you be missing out helping an angel?

It is a sad state of human conditions that being a Good Samaritan is fraught with reservations.

*John Lee*