

Kirkwall Presbyterian Church
‘The Good Samaritan Story’
Luke 10:25-37
August 2, 2026
By Keith Marcy

The children’s story covered the Parable of the Good Samaritan. It was a story Jesus told to illustrate a truth, that our *‘neighbour’* is any other person – any colour, religion, race – who in some way may need our help.

Why did Jesus tell this story?

Who was it intended to make think?

Verse 25 tells us: *“An expert in the law...”*

How do we define the *‘expert in the law’* in Jesus’ day?

He would have been a scholar in Jewish Law – all 613 of them! To earn the title *‘expert’* he would have memorized long sections of the Old Testament as well as many volumes written by rabbis. Some refer to him as a lawyer. On this occasion he had been sitting listening to Jesus teach. He stood up to draw attention to himself. His question was not asked out of pure motives. No! The text tells us his motive was to *‘test’* Jesus – an attempt to uncover some conflict in what Jesus was teaching. He asks, *“What must I do to inherit eternal life?”*

Jesus replies with a question, *“What does your Jewish law say?”*

Verse 27: *“Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind, and love your neighbour as yourself.”*

Jesus responds, *“Very good. Live according to these principles and you will live.”* The context implies, *‘you will have eternal life.’*

The expert’s next question reveals that, despite his much study and social standing, he really has no peace about life after death. The know-it-all smirk is gone from his face. He blinks rapidly. He looks at the ground. His lips quiver. His voice has lost its accusing boldness as he softly asks, *“And who is my neighbour?”*

The Jews generally believed that a *‘neighbour’* was someone who you knew and who you liked. The rest of the world could go down below.

True to Jesus’ style, He does not answer directly, but uses a story to promote thought, inner seeking. Jesus is bold. He interjects two religious

characters, a Levite and a priest, both workers in the temple – both held positions of respect in the Jewish Community. The expert in the law would be able to relate to them!

Both saw this beaten, naked, bleeding man lying in the hot sun on the dirt path, moaning, barely alive. And both walked on by on the other side. What is the expert thinking? To justify their actions, perhaps he is rationalizing it like this, *‘Well, they do not even know him, why should they help? He is going to die anyway, why prolong his agony? They have schedules to keep. I would not waste my time either. After all, he should have known not to travel this path alone.’*

Then Jesus introduces a dog into the story. A dog who stops; goes to the beaten man and begins licking the lacerations all over his body. And then stands blocking the sun from extracting the last bit of life from the victim’s body.

A DOG! ? ?

A Samaritan to a Jew was a dog. That is what they were taught as children. Do not kill a Samaritan, but if you see one in danger, do not go to their assistance.

When Jesus introduced a Samaritan into the story and made him the focal point – the hero as it were – the expert in the law would be fighting the urge to interrupt Jesus – to yell at Him, *‘No. No. Not one of them!’*

But Jesus continued until the semi-conscious man was safe in a hostel with clean clothes, some good food and someone assigned to care for him. Then His piercing eyes met those of the expert in the law, *“Now, which was a neighbour to the injured one?”*

The expert looked away. This conversation was not ending as he had expected. Why did Jesus have to choose one of *them*? He looked back. Jesus was still waiting for his answer; His eyes were like glowing embers. The expert could not say, *‘the Samaritan!’* Instead, he answered, *“the one who showed mercy.”*

Jesus departing words were as burning as his stare, *“Go and do likewise!”*

We are not told of the expert's reaction. He may have strode away embarrassed, humiliated. Jesus had verbally knocked the wind out of him! I hope he stood there, head bowed, deep in thought. According to the Teacher, a '*neighbour*' can be anyone in need.

For me to love everyone as myself is utterly impossible. That is exactly the response Jesus wanted. This expert could not perfectly obey the commandments.

He could not inherit eternal life based on his own merits. Neither can we! He needed a Saviour. So do we!

There is only one who perfectly kept the commandments. There is only one who can transfer his righteousness to you.

When I stand before the Judge of the whole world, I will be able to say, '*I have a room reserved for me in Heaven because of Jesus.*' For Jesus, my Saviour, took care of my demerits by replacing them with His merits the hour I first believed in Him.

And I am here because of Him.