

A SAMARITAN STORY

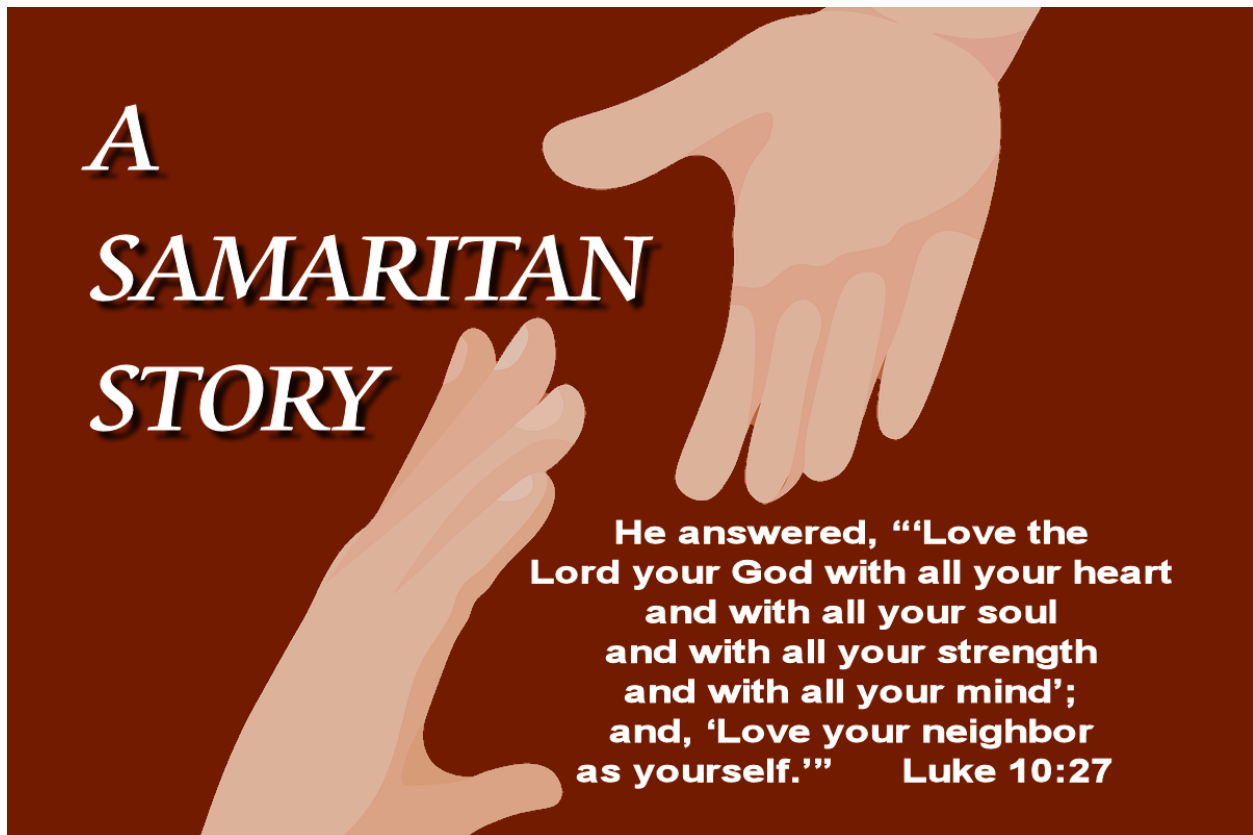
Luke 10:26-29

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Special Music: “The Good Samaritan”

Kids Bible Music

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=jmD5fZq7Aqc>

A SAMARITAN STORY

It was a warm, sunny day and Bukki found himself on the road to Jericho, donkey in tow. So far, the journey had been unremarkable, which meant he was making good time. The road was dusty, and his feet were tired, but he pressed on. His donkey was laden with wares and supplies that he had picked up in Jerusalem. At least he had good weather and a sturdy staff. Bukki made the trip often and was familiar with everything along the way. He knew there was an inn not far away and that he would be able to stop there, rest his weary feet, maybe get something to eat, and get hay and water for his donkey. The innkeeper, Ben-Zion, knew him well and was always good to Bukki when he was traveling the road between Jerusalem and Jericho.

Bukki met a priest on the path and assumed he was headed for Jerusalem. The priest's clothes were dusty red from the dirt, and he had his hood pulled up, even though the day was warmer than usual. Bukki raised his arm in a gesture of welcome, but the priest ignored him and continued on his way without even a wave. He knew that he probably shouldn't expect any better treatment. After all, Bukki was a Samaritan, and the priest was obviously a Jew. Some people couldn't see past their discrimination, even to make an effort to partake in common courtesy.

Bukki was ready to reach the inn. He was looking forward to a good meal and perhaps some wine. About that time, a Levite approached him on the road but also refused to look his way. Bukki found it annoying that people made no

effort to get along, especially people of a religious persuasion. He could trace his roots to the tribe of Reuben, but it didn't seem to matter that they were all children descended from Jacob. They worshipped the same God, all made pilgrimages to Jerusalem to worship at the temple. All spoke Aramaic, Hebrew, and many spoke Greek as well. Why couldn't they all get along?

With his head in the clouds thinking these lofty thoughts, he almost tripped over the man lying by the side of the road. Bukki stopped dead in his tracks. The man had been beaten to within an inch of his life. He was bleeding from multiple cuts and bruises and was just barely alive. Bukki knelt next to the man. There was nothing to suggest the man's identity or even his nationality. He lifted the man's head and poured a little water through his parched lips. The man started to choke, so Bukki stopped trying to get him to drink. Instead, Bukki ripped up his own outer cloak and began tending to the man's wounds the best he could, wiping the cuts with wine. But he knew the man needed more help than he could provide. Bukki wasn't a large man, but the injured man was even smaller. He shifted the load on his donkey and made room to drape the injured man on the horse blanket. The man groaned as Bukki lifted him and settled him on the donkey. He knew the best place to take him was to the inn, so Bukki leaned into his staff and led the donkey on down the road.

Bukki and his donkey were exhausted by the time he arrived at the inn. Still, he lifted the man from the donkey and carried him through the door of the inn. Ben-Zion was nowhere to be seen., so he laid the man on some pillows at a nearby table. Again, the man groaned but didn't wake up. Bukki glanced about

the room to see if there was anyone who could help, but only saw two Roman soldiers at a table in the far corner, enjoying a meal. Although they saw him, they showed no interest in helping him and Bukki knew that it was of no use to press the matter. Ben-Zion suddenly appeared from around a corner and seeing his friend Bukki, he gave him a hearty hug.

“Welcome, my friend. So good to see you again. Are you headed back to Jericho?” asked Ben-Zion.

“Indeed, I am, my friend,” replied Bukki.

Only then did Ben-Zion see the injured man lying on the pillows nearby.

“And who might this be?”

“Truly, I do not know,” said Bukki. “I found him robbed and beaten by the side of the road. I bandaged him the best I could and gave him water. But he was near death and all I could think of doing was to bring him here.”

“He can’t be here, Bukki. You are going to have to take him somewhere else,” said Ben-Zion

“But he really needs to rest and heal. If it is a matter of money, I will pay for everything and if what I give you isn’t enough, I will make you whole on my next trip. You know that I am good for it.”

“That’s not it, Bukki. You have brought serious trouble to my inn, my friend.”

“What? Do you know who he is? Is he some kind of criminal?” asked Bukki.

“I have no idea who he is, but he can’t be here. You need to take him away. Quickly. Before we both get in trouble.”

There came a sound from the corner of the room as the soldiers got up from their table and approached the two friends. They drew their swords before coming closer.”

“Am I to understand you don’t know this injured man? That he is a stranger to you?” said one of the soldiers.

“That’s right,” replied Bukki. “He was robbed and beaten and needed help, so I brought him here to heal.”

“You are under arrest,” said the soldier. “Grab your things. We will be heading back to Jerusalem.”

“But what have I done?” cried Bukki.

“You have ignored the emperor’s decree. No stranger may enter Israel or Samaria, nor shall they be given aid. You have violated this edict and will be held for trial in Jerusalem.”

“But I was only trying to help,” said Bukki.

“Which is now punishable under the law. Since this man has nothing to identify him and cannot speak for himself, we must treat him as a foreigner.” The

second soldier took some shackles from his pack with which he then bound Bukki. Together the soldiers led him toward the door.

The first soldier spoke to Ben-Zion, “That man cannot remain in this inn, or you, too, will be held accountable. You are to take him back and leave him by the side of the road.”

“But he will die,” cried Bukki.

“Can’t be helped. Not our problem. He shouldn’t have allowed himself to get beaten and robbed. He probably did something to deserve it. Now get on with you. It’s a long walk back to Jerusalem,” said the soldier. He looked over his shoulder as he led Bukki away. “Get to it, innkeeper. That man had better not be here when I get back.”

“But what about the donkey?” said Ben-Zion.

“As far as we are concerned, the donkey is yours,” said the soldier as the door closed behind him.

And that is how Bukki, the good Samaritan, found himself in prison in Jerusalem, and how a stranger was once again left for dead on the side of the road. Ben-Zion did not speak of the matter, but because he could no longer welcome strangers to his inn, he turned his inn into a tannery. Travelers on the road would no longer be able to find respite from their dusty travels between Jerusalem and Jericho. In only a brief moment, the world was turned inside out, and compassion had become obsolete.

Luke 10:26-29

26 “What is written in the Law?” he replied. “How do you read it?”

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28 “You have answered correctly,” Jesus replied. “Do this and you will live.”

29 But he wanted to justify himself, so he asked Jesus, “And who is my neighbor?”

The story of The Good Samaritan is only found in the book of Luke, but it is probably the parable most often preached on. It is a simple story with deep and profound meaning. It is a story of compassion, mercy, and grace without the coils and shackles of discrimination and bias. It is a story defined and demonstrated over and over again in the ministry of our Lord Jesus Christ. Before even stepping into the story, Jesus defined the core values found in Deuteronomy 6:5,

“Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your strength.

And Leviticus 19:18

“Do not seek revenge or bear a grudge against anyone among your people, but love your neighbor as yourself. I am the Lord.”

This is not something new! It dates back to the time of Moses and the law. In

Mark 12:30-31, we hear these same words:

“‘You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, and with all your soul, and with all your mind, and with all your strength.’ The second is this, ‘You shall love your neighbor as yourself.’ There is no other commandment greater than these.”

And in Matthew 22:37-40 we hear the words again:

37 Jesus replied: “‘Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind.’

38 This is the first and greatest commandment.

39 And the second is like it: ‘Love your neighbor as yourself.’

But in Matthew 22:40 he adds this extremely important message:

40 All the Law and the Prophets hang on these two commandments.”

This is the message of Jesus Christ as he defines what it means to be a Christ follower.

- 1. Love God with all your heart, soul, and mind**
- 2. Love your neighbor as yourself**

And if you do these two basic things, then all of the rest of the law falls into place. If you do these two things, then you will never have to worry about any of the other laws, because they are built on these two primary laws.

And by whose authority do you do these two things? It is God's authority that speaks into us and defines our relationship with him, our neighbor, and the entirety of Creation itself. There is no authority on this earth; human vegetable, animal, or mineral, that can overwrite these two laws. Believing that these laws can be set aside when convenient is to undermine the very authority of our Creator. It is an attempt by humans to diminish his voice. No human being has the authority to undermine or redefine the nature and being of our ultimate authority and Creator.

In our passage today, the man speaking with Jesus wants to justify his desire to discriminate by asking Jesus, "And, who is my neighbor?" Jesus knows that the man is trying to create a loophole that will allow him to choose whom he loves, whom he helps, whom he lifts, whom he feeds, and whom he cares for. The man wants a definition of 'neighbor' that fits into his own tiny shoebox of understanding about who his neighbor is. He wants to be the one to set the parameters for his shoebox. He wants the authority to determine who he will include and who he will exclude from the definition of 'neighbor'. The man wants Jesus to say his neighbor is Jewish, has brown skin, is dressed well, has wealth, is religious, and can be found in all the right circles. In other words, his relationship with his neighbor is one that will also benefit him and not someone who will diminish his presence in society. He wants to be able to exclude and

discourage certain types of people from being his neighbors. He wants to put up fences and walls and close the doors and windows of his own life to anyone he doesn't approve of. After all, isn't that his right?

And so, Jesus tells him a story. A story with an ending that was different from the one that I told you today. A story with an ending that shows us the way things are supposed to work, where compassion is key, where righteousness prevails, and where mercy is paramount. A story where a bad situation becomes good because of the compassion exhibited by the Samaritan on the road.

"So, why did you tell us the other version of the story, preacher? That version has a very ugly side to it and I don't like hearing it."

I will tell you; I like Jesus' version better. It has been a defining guidepost for my life. Love God, love your neighbor. Does that mean that everything is going to turn out okay? Not really. There are always things that we can't control. Some people are unpredictable, mean, crude, and greedy for both money and power. Something we have no control over. Some days we can walk miles on a road and never run into anyone who could use our help. Some days, we are going to help people, and it will upset other people when we do. And, some days, we are going to help people, and they are going to be ungrateful. These are things we have no control over. There are many people in the world who believe compassion is a shortcoming, mercy is a weakness, and love is discretionary.

"So, what's the point, preacher?"

In the end, the point is not about helping others. That isn't the goal for either of these two commandments. To believe that it is the goal assumes that we are working towards our salvation. That we get into heaven by being good. We have been told over and over that salvation is free, but we don't believe it, and we still try to earn it, often by helping others. We know that no matter how hard we try, we will fall short. **"For all have sinned and all fall short of the glory of God."** Romans 3:23. But James 1:17 says this: **"Every good and perfect gift is from above, coming down from the Father of the heavenly lights, who does not change like shifting shadows."** Have we ever considered that the good things God asks us to do for others are actually perfect gifts from God? Aren't we supposed to serve as his hands and feet in this world, regardless of the people we serve? Isn't it by his authority we can accomplish his perfect will?

"That's well and good, preacher, but you still haven't answered the question. If we give God the glory and credit for the good things we do for others, then what do we get out of it?"

When we are in these situations of service, we have a tendency to forget that we have already received our reward. We have already stepped into the free gift of salvation and it now becomes our purpose to serve Christ, who bled and died to save all of us.

I want you to think about this, "What did the Good Samaritan get out of helping the beaten man on the road in both the story where the man was saved and in the story where the Samaritan went to jail and the stranger was left on the road?"

My dear friends, it's not about the stranger on the road. It's not about feeding the hungry. It's not about healing the sick. It's not about caring for the widows and orphans. It's not about taking care of those who find themselves in dark places. Those are all good and important things that Jesus expects of us. Things that we are privileged to do by serving as Jesus' hands and feet. But what we need to understand is that those deeds are the vehicle that God uses to move us into a tighter orbit around him

He tells us that we should do these things so that we, as his hands and feet in the world, can draw closer to him. This is how we grow in the spirit. And as we draw closer, the more he can use us to meet the needs of his children who are suffering. The ultimate goal is our own relationship with Jesus Christ. We can't draw closer if we don't give him the credit. We can't draw closer if do good deeds to promote our own agenda. We can't draw closer if we continue to try and claw our way into heaven when Jesus is holding the door for us to just walk in. We can only draw closer to our Creator by dying to self. John the Baptist told us in John 3:30: **"He must become greater; I must become less."**

And Paul tells us:

- 1 If I speak in the tongues of men or of angels, but do not have love, I am only a resounding gong or a clanging cymbal.**
- 2 If I have the gift of prophecy and can fathom all mysteries and all knowledge, and if I have a faith that can move mountains, but do not have love, I am nothing.**

3 If I give all I possess to the poor and give over my body to hardship that I may boast, but do not have love, I gain nothing.

1 Corinthians 13:1-3

27 He answered, “ ‘Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your strength and with all your mind’; and, ‘Love your neighbor as yourself.’”

The only benefit we gain from loving God and our neighbor, is the relationship that we grow into with our Creator. And the more we love, the more love we have to give, and the more we grow. And yes, things may not go well for us when we step into this dynamic. But that really doesn't matter. Peter and Paul were both able to sing in prison. Stephen was able to see a great vision of heaven while being stoned. Philip had the courage to step into the moment with the Ethiopian Prince. All because of their love for their Savior, who was the authority and example for the way they were to live their lives. That hasn't changed. God expects the same of us.

I do not claim to be a prophet, nor am I a prognosticator. But God grants each of us the ability to see the world as it is, and how it is changing. He has given us all the ability to discern the value of doing the right thing in a world that is constantly encouraging us to do the wrong thing. The world wants us to turn our backs on our compassion, our mercy, and our grace. We get stamps of approval, stars on our charts, smiley faces on our papers when we do the things that the world wants from us. But I, for one, would rather have “Servant of the

Almighty God” tattooed on my heart and soul, than the approval of what humankind has to offer.

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No exceptions. No exclusions. No loopholes. No fences. No intolerance. No indifference. No validations and verifications.

Keep it simple. Keep it focused. And let us always keep our eyes on the Master.

God bless you all!

AMEN

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