



Prove It

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Luke 10:25-37
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I mentioned during our announcements that there was a death in the family of Larry and Valerie. They are with family in Tulsa, OK. I am sure they covet your prayers.

Before Larry left, he and I talked. What are we going to do about the sermon for today? Larry was to preach today, and he was in the midst of a sermon series – Love God, Love Others, and today: Prove It. Larry asked if I would finish his sermon series for him.

I said I would, but I needed an outline of his thoughts...which he provided. So, I am going to give it a go today, and hope I can relay to you the message in Larry's heart...with a bit of Diane thrown in.

I invite you to open your Bibles to Luke 10. The past two weeks, Larry has been giving the scripture by memory – you will not get that from me today! I am not as brave as he is.

Prayer:

Gracious Lord, how do we see for the first time a story we've read so many times? Give us new perspective. Help us not to assume we know all there is to know, but to open our hearts and minds to your Spirit and the new truth you may be teaching us today. Perhaps the truth will not be new, but a lesson we've heard and simply need to be reminded of again. Wherever it is you are leading, let us be willing to follow. Whatever it is you want to teach, let us be open to listening and obeying. Amen.

Read verses 25 – 29.

Jesus goes on to tell one of the most famous stories in all of scripture. So famous, that many people don't even know where it comes from – but everyone knows what a Good Samaritan is.

Even yesterday, a headline read "Samaritan Donates Headstone to Abused Boy's Grave" – a story of a young boy who was abused and starved to death. The funeral home didn't have the money to buy him a gravestone, so a woman heard the story and donated funds to buy him a headstone. She is now called a Good Samaritan.

So, let's see if we can tell the story together. A man is traveling on the road from Jerusalem to Jericho. We don't know who this man is. We don't know anything about him. We don't know if he is Jewish or Gentile or a Samaritan. I think it is interesting that Jesus does this – because this man could be anyone – even you or me.

What happens to him? He is robbed, beaten, stripped of his clothes and left for dead.

What happens next? Who is the first person who walks by? Not only walks by, but intentionally walks by on the other side of the road. This person is defined - It is a priest. A religious leader.

What happens next? The same thing – this time a Levite passes by. The Levites were chosen by God to work in the temple – to be religious leaders. This Levite does the same thing – crosses over to the other side of the road and walks by.

Such deliberate action this crossing over to the other side of the road. The message so clear – I see you, but I don't want anything to do with you.

Why do you think they did this?

- Too busy
- Injured man is seen as a burden (don't want to get involved)
- Levite worried about maintaining his religious purity.

I don't know about you – but I always feel a little bit convicted by this point. How many times do we walk by? I've walked by quite a few in my lifetime – and, oh, how I wanted to walk on the other side of the road. Or, I drive by thinking someone else will stop. It's so easy to go by, isn't it?

Well, someone does stop. A third person walks by. Who? A Samaritan. A Samaritan is half Jewish, half Gentile. Someone who is not pure – looked down upon, ignored and hated by an Israelite.

And what does he do? He sees the beaten man, takes pity on him and begins to attend to him. Cleans his wounds with oil and wine he is carrying. Puts the man on his own donkey (perhaps he was riding before, but now he walks), takes him to an inn and takes care of him for the night.

➲ Going way beyond the call of duty. This is hard.

But there is more. The next day, he goes to the innkeeper and asks the innkeeper to take care of the man while he is away. He gives the innkeeper two days of wages, promises he will be back and will reimburse the innkeeper for any extra expenses.

Jesus ends his story by asking, "Which of these was a neighbor to the injured man?"

Jesus began his story when a lawyer asked Jesus, "Who is my neighbor?" Perhaps Jesus could have said a lawyer type answer:

"A neighbor (hereinafter referred to as the party of the first part) is to be construed as meaning a person of Jewish descent whose legal residence is within a radius of no more than three miles from one's own legal residence unless there is another person of Jewish descent (hereinafter to be referred to as the party of the second part) living closer to the party of the first part than one is oneself, in which case the party of the second part is to be construed as neighbor to the party of the first part and one is oneself relieved of all responsibility of any sort or kind whatsoever."

Oh, I bet the lawyer longed for an answer like that to his question "Who is my neighbor?"

But Jesus simply told a story and said that a neighbor is anyone who needs you. Go and do likewise.

The reaction of the lawyer is not recorded, but it is hard for most of us to do what the Samaritan did – tend to wounds, share your transportation, pay for hotel expenses, find someone to take over the care, and pay for that, too.

That's hard to live up to. However, there is another person in this story who acted as a neighbor. Not too many people seem interested in this person. As I studied commentaries and other sermons, very few paid attention to this person.

Who was this person? The innkeeper..

Jesus said a neighbor is anyone who needs you. The innkeeper was a neighbor, too. The beaten man needed to rest and heal. And the innkeeper had the resources to do so.

I think many of us are innkeepers. The innkeeper had the resources to care for the injured traveler. We are presented with a world of need. We are blessed by God with resources to meet these needs, whether it's money, care, listening ear, or an open heart.

We pastors can be very protective of our sermon preparation time. At least, I am. Yet from time to time, God gives us a chance to practice the theme of our sermon while we are preparing for it. I got that opportunity yesterday. While I was working on this message, I got a phone call and someone had been taken to the hospital, not sure if this person would make it and would I come.

I could have walked on the other side of the road and said I was too busy – I needed to write a sermon. I could have let someone else do it – called Mary Beth. But at that moment I was called to be the neighbor to someone in need. And so I went.

Even Larry got to practice this message this week. You have no idea how much he wanted to do this sermon. This was *his* sermon series – he's been talking about it for a long time, and he wanted to finish it up. Yet, he was called to be a good neighbor to someone in need – his family..

We are often called to prove it.

This is another little part of this story that can be missed. The very end when the Good Samaritan told the innkeeper he was coming back to settle up everything – to make sure he took care of the injured man and to compensate him properly, God will come back and settle up with us, too. I gave you these resources, God says. Did you use them to be a good neighbor?

Back to Larry. It was not cheap bringing a family of four to Tulsa, Ok. Airplane tickets are expensive for a family of four. To drive, takes 2 days and a hotel room, and they probably had to pay for a place to stay while in Tulsa. Not to mention the cost of having someone take care of the pets while they are gone. Yet, the family was called to use up their resources, to meet someone in need, to be a good neighbor.

Think about what it means to be a steward. A steward is someone who manages properly what they have been given, especially for the benefit of the one who bestowed it upon them in the first place.

The innkeeper is a great example of a steward: given money to take care of the man, told to take the best care possible of him, and then told he'd been compensated properly for his trouble.

Are you being a good innkeeper? A good steward of all that God has given you? Prove it.

One last thought: Let's look at the story as an allegory. The man in the ditch is an outsider, far from home and friends...or it could be one of you. God is the Good Samaritan who comes into the ditch ...helper of the poor, healer of the wounded, defending the defenseless, hospitality to the stranger.

If we continue this allegory, who do you think the innkeeper represents? I think he represents the church. Us. God brings to our doors all kinds of people in all kinds of situations. God has given us resources to be God's light, to welcome the stranger, to heal the wounded. We are stewards of this church to be a neighbor to anyone in need..

Are we being a good innkeeper? A good steward? Prove it.

Amen.

Well, we now get to be practical. We have a time to prove it. I ask the ushers to come forward. We now take a portion of the resources God has left with us and offer them back to be God's light in the world, so we can be good neighbors to those in need.

Let us pray as we receive our gifts and offerings.

Gracious God, we want to be good stewards...just like the innkeeper. Take these gifts and use them for your glory and in ways we can't even imagine to meet the needs all around us. Amen.