

LIKE A GOOD NEIGHBOR...

By Todd Core

SCRIPTURE

Luke 10: 25-37

Which of these three, do you think, proved to be a neighbor to the man who fell among the robbers? He said, "The one who showed mercy." And Jesus said to him, "You go, and do likewise." (Luke 10:36-37)

OBSERVATION

Interacting with other cultures can be a fascinating, frustrating, and fulfilling experience. I just returned from the Dominican Republic with a team of HS students just as the terms Self-isolation and Social Distancing were becoming realities in Angelina County. As we were waiting in the airport to make the final leg of our trip home, we spent some time reflecting on what we had learned about God and His global mission. One of the lessons shared by our group was that though we saw material poverty in the DR, the Lord exposed a poverty of community in us. Simply put, the believers in the DR had a vibrant community of faith where they shared resources and welcomed us with literal hugs and kisses. They loved us and welcomed us into their homes even though we spoke different languages, our skin tones were different, our economic status was different, and our ability to drink the tap water was different because of our "delicate stomachs." They were perfect examples of the Good Samaritan from our text. Here are a few thoughts on how these verses relate to us today:

- In case you are new to this story, the Jews and Samaritans were enemies and a heavy prejudice existed between them. This makes the story all the more fascinating because Jesus made the hero of the story told to a Jewish audience the hated Samaritan. Jesus was showing that kingdom love breaks down racial barriers and prejudices.
- Jesus asked the lawyer, "Who do you think proved to be a neighbor?" I find his answer compelling. You would think he would say "the Samaritan," but in fact he answered, "the one who showed him mercy." It is almost as if the lawyer couldn't bear to even say the word "Samaritan."
- Jesus concludes this interaction by admonishing the lawyer to "go and do likewise." By extension of the Holy Spirit's inspiration for Luke to record this narrative, we too are to "go and do likewise." We are to show mercy and compassion through sacrificial service to others regardless of how similar or different they are to us.

OBEDIENCE

Now that we have wrestled with the text, here are some practical ways to be obedient to the message. These are simply suggestions and thought starters, but we pray the Lord will use them to help you be obedient to Him.

- Ask God to reveal to you any latent or blatant prejudices within you. These could be related to ethnicity, lifestyle choices, economic status, geographic location, profession, religious affiliation, generational category, etc. Ask Him to show you how to be obedient to removing these sinful attitudes.
- Ask God to reveal who your “neighbor” is that you need to show mercy and compassion on this week.
- Find at least one way to engage in a positive way with someone who shares more differences than similarities with you this week.
- Delight and praise God for creating such diversity in our world and yet unifying believers in Christ.

PRAYER

Father, thank You for creating us and loving us! Thank You for reminding us that You are at work around the globe bringing every tongue and tribe into Your kingdom. Forgive our brokenness in creating prejudices that are harmful to the gospel of Hope. Cleanse us of this type of thinking. Help us to show love and mercy to all people. Give us a clear sense of what it means to be a good neighbor to those around us. May you receive the glory as our church is mobilized during these days.