



REACHING JUDEA AND SAMARIA: LOCAL MISSION AND COMMUNITY SERVICE

Read Luke 10:25-37

So far, we have talked about God's mission and how we can be a part of that with the unique gifts and talents He has given us as we go about our daily lives. Sometimes though, God calls us to step out of our daily routine to serve others who we might not normally encounter. We all know we are supposed to serve our neighbor, but sometimes we need a reminder of who that is.

Jesus was a Jew and Scripture tells us that he preached to the Jewish people and served them in many other ways. But numerous times, we read about Samaritans and the interactions Jesus had with the people of Samaria. Samaritans were considered outsiders, and while many of their beliefs and traditions branched out from Jewish beliefs, they were not accepted by the Pharisees and other Jewish leaders because the Pharisees did not believe they were worshipping correctly. The Jews and Samaritans had a long and contentious history and the two groups hated each other.

It is in that context that Jesus tells the parable of the "Good Samaritan." This parable is one of the most well known in the Bible and has laws and hospitals that draw their name from it. Jesus points out that the Samaritan who helped the beaten man was a neighbor to him instead of the religious leaders who were so caught up in ceremonial cleanliness that they would not help a brother in need.

The priest and the Levite were set apart to do God's work in the temple. They fulfilled a special role that was given to the descendants of the tribe of Levi to work in the temple, the place where God promised to dwell. Over the centuries, more and more ceremonial laws were put in place to ensure that God and the temple were treated properly with respect. Many of these laws were put in place to ensure that people did not approach the temple in an unclean state.

However, in this parable, the priest and the Levite were so concerned with their "cleanliness" that they did not want to be bothered to help the beaten man, likely because it would have been so much time and effort to cleanse themselves after contact with him. But the Samaritan - the person who should have no business helping a Jew because they hated each other so much - was the person who was a neighbor to the man.

And notice how the Samaritan serves him! Does he just stop and pray for the man? Does he just throw him some coins and tell him that he hopes he feels better? No. He got down in the trench with him and pulled him out, bandaged his wounds, and made sure he was taken care of. Just like Jesus. When Jesus saw our dire situation of sin, he didn't just sit up in heaven and send miracles to us. He came down to this messy world and got his hands dirty - healing the sick, caring for the poor, and ultimately dying a painful, humiliating death - all so we could have life with him in heaven.

Discussion/ Journal Question:

1. How do you define being a neighbor?
2. Who is your neighbor?

Prayer:

God, we thank you for sending your Son to save us when we were down in the trenches of sin. Help us to step outside of our comfort zone to serve those in our communities that you have called us to serve. Amen.