



Sunday, August 28, 2022

Sunday Sermon: Lloyd Eyre

Scripture: Luke 10:25-37

Sermon: The Good Samaritan?

Good morning, everyone. It's good to be back at Living Hope. I think it's been a year since I was here. I've also had the pleasure of being at Cephas twice this summer. So I'm feeling very Christian reformed these days. With my Methodist roots. I'm retired from the Peterborough Free Methodist Church, unbelievably six years. In that period of time, I have spoken in 40 different churches of eight different denominations. [Clapping from congregation.] I was in Madoc for almost two years, every second Sunday as an interim person. So it's been fun. I've really learned an awful lot. And it's great to be with you today.

Let's pray.

God, Your Word sometimes gets right into the heart of things, in ways that are uncomfortable. We pray that from the uncomfortableness of this story, you would spark us to do Your work in this world in different and exciting ways. We ask it in Jesus' name. Amen.

In the late 1980s, I was part of a team of pastors who were teaching religious education in the public schools of Peterborough and Peterborough County. This was happening before the Ontario Court of Appeals ruled that the teaching of Christian religious education in the public schools was a violation of the Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms in 1989. My placement was with grade seven and eight students at Confederation Public school in the south end of Peterborough. It's now St. John separate school.

On this particular day, I had chosen the parable of the Good Samaritan as the topic for the class. I assumed that this familiar story would be something that the majority of the students would have already heard so we could talk about the meaning of the parable rather than the story itself. Before long, I realized that I was talking to myself, that my class was not with me in any way, shape, or form. They were just not connecting. So I stopped. And I said, "How many of you have heard this story before?" Now remember, this is 1989 or thereabouts.

Only a very few hands of the approximately 30 students in the class went up. Very few had ever heard the story of the Good Samaritan. Now 30 plus years later, if I was to ask that same question in the public schools of Peterborough and Peterborough County, even fewer hands would be raised.

If I was to ask that same question here in the sanctuary this morning, my hunch is that most, if not every hand would be raised. How many of you heard this story before? [Many congregation members put up their hands.] Okay, that's my point.

For those of us who have been born and nurtured in the Christian community, it's a very basic story, and one that we honor. But today, I want to do something a little different. I want to take a different approach in looking at the story of the Good Samaritan. I want to approach this story not from the perspective of the priest or the Levite, or the Samaritan himself. I want to approach the story from the perspective of the Jewish man who was robbed, beaten and left for dead. When he realized that it was a Samaritan who had rescued him from the jaws of death.

Here's the question that I want to pose this morning. What did the Jewish man think when he was informed, perhaps by the innkeeper, that it was a Samaritan who had taken pity on him? To answer that question, one need look no further than the title of the parable as we now call it, "The parable of the Good Samaritan."

To the Jewish people of the first century and before, there was no such thing as a good Samaritan. The hatred for the Samaritan people dated back 700 years. In 722 B.C., Sennacherib, the Assyrian General sacked and burned Samaria, the capital of Israel (the 10 northern tribes). To ensure that the people never rose again, he deported many of them to Assyria, he forced inter marriage - almost, you could call, interbreeding. And he created this new race, this new people group, and they were called Samaritans. The Samaritans were one of the results of this intermarriage.

If we want further proof of the hatred between the Jewish people and the Samaritans, their disdain for each other, go to John 4. The Samaritan woman, we are told in the Gospel according to St. John chapter four, was surprised, perhaps even shocked that a Jewish person would speak to her. John 4:9, "... (For Jews do not associate with Samaritans.)

So when this Jewish man recovered sufficiently from his wounds and discovered that a Samaritan was his savior, he must have said, "Lord, You've got to be kidding. A Samaritan helped me. You wouldn't use a Samaritan to rescue me, a Jew?" "Yes, I would." And that is precisely the point that Jesus is trying to make to his Jewish audience. Luke 10:25, "**25** On one occasion an expert in the law stood up to test Jesus. "Teacher," he asked, "what must I do to inherit eternal life?" **26** "What is written in the Law?" he replied. "How do you read it?"

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.'" **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?"

I have a hunch that he didn't really care for the answer that he got from Jesus... Luke 10:30... **30** In reply Jesus said: "A man was going down from Jerusalem to Jericho, when he was attacked by robbers. They stripped him of his clothes, beat him and went away, leaving him half dead.

31 A priest (a Jewish person) happened to be going down the same road, and when he saw the man, he passed by on the other side. **32** So too, a Levite (a Jewish person), when he came to the place and saw him, passed by on the other side. **33** But a Samaritan, as he traveled, came where the man was; and when he saw him, he took pity on him.

34 He went to him and bandaged his wounds, pouring on oil and wine. Then he put the man on his own donkey, brought him to an inn and took care of him. **35** The next day he took out two denarii (silver coins) and gave them to the innkeeper. 'Look after him,' he said, 'and when I return, I will (this is a Samaritan doing this) reimburse you for any extra expense you may have.' Then Jesus has a question. **36** "Which of these three do you think was a neighbor to the man who fell into the hands of robbers?" **37** The expert in the law replied, "The one who had mercy on him." Jesus told him, "Go and do likewise."

Dr. Ellsworth Kalas, one of my preaching professors at Asbury Seminary, writes these words, "Let me warn you, as soon as you harbor ill feelings against some ethnic, racial or intellectual group, or some particular class of people, you can expect that someday, somehow, God will allow such a person to touch your life in some strange and helpful way. The Good Samaritan is often bad news to our preferences and prejudices."

But I want to take it one more step. Is ethnicity and racial prejudice all that this parable is about? It is about that. Without question. It is about that. It's Jesus addressing the Jewish Samaritan conflict in his day. So, it is about that. But is that all it's about? I don't think it is. I think there's a principle that Jesus is exposing here that has implications for the way God works in his world and in our lives, and I'd like to explore it this morning. Here's my thesis... God will use the most unlikely places and people to further his purposes in our lives.

I'd like to say that again. God will use the most unlikely places and people to further his purposes in our lives. Now the Bible is full of these illustrations that would defend my thesis this morning. I'd like to deal with three. And if you're following along in that outline that was sent by email or the one that is so beautifully done - thank you, Mike, for doing that - good work for the people here in the sanctuary this morning. (Sermon Notes are at the end of the transcript)

The first one I'd like to deal with is the concept of place. And to do that, I want to go to a familiar Old Testament story. The man's name was Naaman. **2 Kings 5:1-14**. It's a fascinating story and it's one of those stories that I kind of wish we had more details. This would be 100 years before the fall of the 10 northern tribes. This is roughly 850 B.C.

There have been raids into Samaria and one of the commanders of the army of the king of Aram, which is a synonym for Damascus, has been part of one of those raids and a little Israelite girl has been brought as a slave back to work in the home of Naaman. So Naaman, the commander of the army of the king of Aram is a valued soldier, we are told in verse one of 2 Kings chapter five, "but he has leprosy."

This little girl who's unnamed - here we are all these centuries later talking about her - I only wish we had her name. But here we are talking about this little girl who goes to the one to whom she is working for - a slave too - and she says to the wife of Naaman, "If only my master would see the prophet who is in Samaria! He would cure him of his leprosy."

So they decided to pursue this avenue. Verse seven tells us that Naaman goes to the king of Israel. The king of Israel says, "I can't help you. But I think I know someone who can." The prophet Elisha appears. "I can help. Yes." And he gives us instruction in verse 10, "Go wash yourself seven times in the Jordan and your flesh will be restored and you will be cleansed."

Well, you remember in the story, Naaman is not very excited about this. He says, "Are not Abana and Pharpar, the rivers of Damascus are so much cleaner than all the waters of Israel. If that's all I had to do, why couldn't I do it there?" Naaman's servants to him, "Look it, if the Prophet asked you to do some great thing, you would have done it. So go dip yourself in the dirty Jordan instead of the clean waters of Damascus and you will be clean." And he did. He dipped in the Jordan seven times.

The scripture reads in verse 14 in 2 Kings chapter five, "... and his flesh was restored and became clean like that of a young boy." Would God use an unlikely place to speak to me and you to cause me to move on down the journey of faith? Would something take place in my life that is just out of left field? Oh absolutely. Absolutely. Which takes me to the second example I'd like to bring to you of this principle.

It comes again from the Old Testament prophet, one of my favorites, the prophet Habakkuk. The fall of 1974. Wow. That's a long time ago. I ended up at Roberts Wesleyan College. My first year of university had a required course of Minor Prophets. And I thought, "Oh, why would anyone want to take a course on Minor Prophets? The 12 minor prophets of the Old Testament?" Well, I'll tell you, there's an awful lot of important stuff in the 12 Minor Prophets, including a lot of Messianic material that gets us ready for the coming of Jesus.

Habakkuk the Prophet was a very short book, only three chapters if I remember correctly. But the problem that Habakkuk deals with in his little book, in the Minor Prophets, is the problem of evil. He wrestles with this issue of a good God versus an evil world and why, why, why. Many of the whys are tied to this issue of, (example) Why Ukraine? Why all the stuff that's going on in the world that is just so evil, as put up against an all powerful, all knowing God? It's an old question. It's not a new question.

Habakkuk deals with that. **Habakkuk 1:2-3**, "How long, LORD, must I call for help, but you do not listen? Or cry out to you, "Violence!" but you do not save? Why do you make me look at injustice? Why do you tolerate wrongdoing?" It could be out of your prayer life this morning. Well, God's answer is fairly immediate in the book of Habakkuk. But it's not the answer that Habakkuk wanted.

God's answer in Habakkuk 1:5-11 goes like this, **5** Look at the nations and watch—and be utterly amazed. For I am going to do something in your days that you would not believe, even if you were told. **6** I am raising up the Babylonians, that ruthless and impetuous people, who sweep across the whole earth to seize dwellings not their own.

7 They are a feared and dreaded people; they are a law to themselves and promote their own honor. **8** Their horses are swifter than leopards, fiercer than wolves at dusk. Their cavalry gallops headlong; their horsemen come from afar. They fly like an eagle swooping to devour; **9** they all come intent on violence."

And Habakkuk goes, "What? You're going to use the Babylonians to deal with the injustice in my society? You're going to bring us to our knees using China and Russia?" Well, that's exactly the same concept here. Habakkuk says, "You've got to be kidding me. You've got to be kidding me." He says, "Lord, are you not from everlasting? My God, my Holy one? You will never die. You, Lord, have appointed them to execute judgment? You, my rock, have ordained them to punish? It can't be possible. There's no way. It won't work." God's answer? "Yeah. Sometimes I will use the very most unlikely persons/nations in order to bring about my purposes in the world."

Now, why this is so important is that this sense that Martin Luther, particularly Paul in Romans chapter one and Galatians chapter three, but then Martin Luther in 1570 seized on this **Habakkuk 2:4** when finally an ultimate Habakkuk says, "Okay, God, I accept that you're going to do it that way." And then we have this one sentence that becomes really the impetus of the Protestant Reformation. "The righteous will live by their faith." So is that what happened? Well, yeah. 586 B.C., Jerusalem was down. How does it come down? It comes down to the Babylonian army, General Nebuchadnezzar.

Would God use an unlikely person to bring a lot of purposes in my life? Even evil people? Yes. Yes, he would. Why can I say that? Well, that's what He did in his own Son's life. The cross is the ultimate symbol of evil. Deuteronomy 21:23, "... anyone who is hung on a pole is under God's curse." The evil men who are part of the process that put him on the cross and yet even in their evil intent, they bring about our salvation. There's a sense in which Jesus is like a Samaritan to those who reject Him. And not a good Samaritan either. Because the Gospel story is just not the way we want it to be. We want to earn our way to heaven. We want to curry favor with God. We want to be liked.

"If I do enough of the good things and not as many of the bad things, then I'm fine." No. And the reason why that can never be true, is that there is no common or universal way to measure goodness anywhere across this globe. Goodness for you is not goodness for me. Goodness for one nation of the world is not goodness for another nation of the world. There is no common way to measure goodness. And so God says, "It's not goodness, it's relationship. It's the work that I have done on the cross. That's the basis of the salvation story."

Again, my esteemed Dr. Kalas writes these words, "We accept Him only when our need is so desperate that we must accept him. Only when we confess that we are powerless to help ourselves and only when we see what love this divine Samaritan has, only then are we willing to be lifted onto the donkey called grace and ride it alongside Christ, the Samaritan, into God's safe and eternal lodging."

So Lord, you'd use horrendous places, you'd use the Jordan River, you use the Babylonians? Yes, you'd even use the cross. People who don't love you, events that cause great sorrow. You fill in the blank in your life this morning, because my hunch is that someone here this morning is going through some pretty deep waters. Is it possible that God is trying to speak to you in the mess that you're in today? It boils down to this. Is Jesus Christ, Lord of my life... is He Lord? We say that He's the Lord of history. We just sang that.

But is He Lord of my history? Is He Lord of my personal story? Does He know what He's doing in my story? Is there a plan? Is there a purpose? Is there meaning, even in the suffering that I'm experiencing now? If he is Lord, then every circumstance is part of the Master's plan.

As I age, my parents are having more and more influence on me. Both deceased. But those of you who are older, as Karen and I are now, you're having an impact that you don't even know. It may not be until after you're gone that there will be the most significant impact in your life. But without any question, my parents, now gone 10 and 8 years respectively, continue to influence me.

My mom was a packrat. My sister just walked into the trailer at Wesley acres just recently with another bag of mom's goodies. Pictures from the Renfrew Mercury newspaper in the 1960s of me in the Kiwanis Music Festival. They're yellow with age. And I said, "Ruth, what am I going to do with these?" She says, "If you can't deal with it, give them back to me and I'll throw them out." [laughing] I haven't been able to deal with it, I confess because I don't want to throw things out that are important to me in terms of my own story, and fill in some of the blanks of childhood. You know what I mean. Some of you know what I mean. Others just say, "Get rid of the stuff." I am married to one who says, "Get rid of the stuff." And someday we'll have to do that.

My mom kept things and she would keep recipe cards on her prayer desk with quotes that she had picked up in passing down the road of time. When it came time to clean off her desk after her death, this recipe card. This one came from Alan Redpath. Alan Redpath was a very famous British speaker. He pastored Moody Church at one time as well in Chicago. Somewhere along the line, mom had picked up this Alan Redpath quote, and she had it on her desk. I have it now on my desk and I read it probably every day. It goes like this.

“There is nothing--no circumstance, no trouble, no testing--that can ever touch me until, first of all, it has gone past God and past Christ right through to me. If it has come that far, it has come with a great purpose, which I may not understand at the moment. But as I refuse to become panicky, as I lift up my eyes to Him and accept it as coming from the throne of God for some great purpose of blessing to my own heart, no sorrow will ever disturb me, no circumstance will cause me to fret, for I shall rest in the joy of what my Lord is--that is the rest of victory!”

Now, have I achieved this? I have not. I would not want you to think that this morning. I have not. There are circumstances and events that have taken place in my life - one that's going on right now - that I cannot say I have that rest of victory that is described in this quote. I'm working through it. It's a struggle.

But this is the goal. This is where we're heading. There's a purpose behind the struggle. There's meaning to the struggle because God is involved in it. And in your life today, a difficult circumstance, a difficult person may be the way God is speaking into your life today. The purpose? So that Jesus Christ becomes not only my savior, but Lord of every aspect of my life.

Let's pray.

Yes, it was a good Samaritan and yes, Lord, you are a Samaritan to your people in so many ways. But that's the meaning of the cross and the power of the cross. For those of us who believe. I want to pray today for a brother or sister who came to this worship service wondering why in the world they were even coming. The situation that they're in is just so dreadful. They don't know which way to turn. Break through Jesus, right now. Show them that you are working and show them that you are the light of the world and the darkness will never, ever snuff it out. We thank you. In Your precious name. Amen.

Transcribed by: *Liza Perry*

Sermon Notes on next page...

Sermon Notes – Rev. Lloyd R. Eyre

“The Good Samaritan?”

Luke 10:25-37

A. The Parable of the Good Samaritan – Lk. 10:25-37

What did the Jewish man think when he learned that it was a Samaritan who had taken pity on him?

B. Thesis: God will use the most unlikely places and people to further His purposes in our lives.

1. Place – The story of Naaman – 2 Kings 5:1-14
2. Person – The Babylonians – Habakkuk 1
3. Jesus – “We accept Him only when our need is so desperate that we must accept Him; only when we confess that we are powerless to help ourselves; and only when we see what love this Divine Samaritan offers.” J. Ellsworth Kalas, “Parables from the Back Side: Bible Stories with a Twist,” pg. 17.

C. Conclusion – Alice Wisner Eyre’s kitchen sink “recipe card” quote

“There is nothing – no circumstance, no trouble, no testing – that can touch me until, first of all it has gone past God and past Christ, right through to me. If it has come that far, it has come with great purpose, which I may not understand at the moment. But as I refuse to become panicky, as I lift up my eyes to Him and accept it as coming from the throne of God for some great purpose of blessing to my own heart, no sorrow will ever disturb me, no trial will ever disarm me, no circumstance will cause me to fret, for I shall rest in the joy of what my Lord is. This is the rest of victory.” Dr. Alan Redpath (1907-1989)