

### *Empathy vs Sympathy*

#### LUKE

Luke 10:25-37

#### EXPLORING THE SERMON

- What did you hear?
- What did you think or feel about what you heard?
- What is one thing you can take away from the sermon this week?

#### KEY VERSES

<sup>29</sup> But wanting to justify himself, he asked Jesus, "And who is my neighbor?" <sup>30</sup> Jesus replied, "A man was going down from Jerusalem to Jericho, and fell into the hands of robbers, who stripped him, beat him, and went away, leaving him half dead. <sup>31</sup> Now by chance a priest was going down that road; and when he saw him, he passed by on the other side. <sup>32</sup> So likewise a Levite, when he came to the place and saw him, passed by on the other side. <sup>33</sup> But a Samaritan while traveling came near him; and when he saw him, he was moved with pity. <sup>34</sup> He went to him and bandaged his wounds, having poured oil and wine on them. Then he put him on his own animal, brought him to an inn, and took care of him. <sup>35</sup> The next day he took out two denarii, <sup>[b]</sup> gave them to the innkeeper, and said, 'Take care of him; and when I come back, I will repay you whatever more you spend.' <sup>36</sup> Which of these three, do you think, was a neighbor to the man who fell into the hands of the robbers?" <sup>37</sup> He said, "The one who showed him mercy." Jesus said to him, "Go and do likewise." **Luke 10:29-37**

#### DISCUSSION AND REFLECTION

Though the story of the Good Samaritan has been told for thousands of years, we are no closer to living it out today as we were then. Seemingly so simple and understandable, the term Good Samaritan is even recognized by non-Christians alike as the name of a national law protecting helpful bystanders.

It seems appalling that the priest and the Levite – two of the highest positions in Jewish society and temple life – would pass by the injured man. That the Samaritan, born of a group detested by Jews, would stop and help the man is astonishing. It seems simple to take the message from the story and "be more like the Samaritan." As Thomas points out, knowledge is not the problem here. Consider the differences between sympathy and empathy:

**Sympathy** – a natural response when we see someone hurting. It makes us sad, but we do not actively do something about the situation. This type of response does not unite us; rather it keeps us apart.

**Empathy** – the ability to stop and place yourself in the shoes of others, to see life from their perspective.

**How do you see the traits of sympathy and empathy in the characters in the story? Could the Samaritan have responded with empathy because he knows what it feels like to be left out and passed by?**

Studies show that when leaders such as teachers and doctors respond with empathy rather than sympathy, the success of their students and patients greatly increases. Historically, the poor in our society tithe proportionally more than the more affluent. **How does empathy play into this very real fact?**

The good news is that we can learn to develop empathy. **Instead of trying to be like the Samaritan, what if instead we remember when we were the traveler? Think about when you have felt beaten up, in pain, or left out. Who has "bound up your wounds?"** Allowing ourselves to remember these moments helps form and shape us to develop empathy, so we in turn can show God's grace to others.

**Dear Lord,** thank you for the Samaritans you have placed in our lives. Help us to be mindful of these memories and how they have formed and shaped us. May we reach out in empathy to those whom we encounter this week in need of your love. **Amen.**