

## **The Good Samaritan said, “Not Me First—Me Too”**

Message by DD Adams  
Providence Kemptown UM Church  
Wedding Bell Sunday  
July 10, 2016

Today’s gospel lesson is from Eugene Peterson’s translation, *The Message*. I’ll be reading from Luke, chapter 10, verses 25 through 37. Just then a religion scholar stood up with a question to test Jesus. “Teacher, what do I need to do to get eternal life?” He answered, “What’s written in God’s Law? How do you interpret it?” He said, “That you love the Lord your God with all your passion and prayer and muscle and intelligence—and that you love your neighbor as well as you do yourself.”

“Good answer!” said Jesus. “Do it and you’ll live.” Looking for a loophole, he asked, “And just how would you define ‘neighbor’?” Jesus answered by telling a story. “There was once a man traveling from Jerusalem to Jericho. On the way he was attacked by robbers. They took his clothes, beat him up, and went off leaving him half-dead.

Luckily, a priest was on his way down the same road, but when he saw him he angled across to the other side. Then a Levite religious man showed up; he also avoided the injured man. “A Samaritan traveling the road came on him. When he saw the man’s condition, his heart went out to him. He gave him first aid, disinfecting and bandaging his wounds. Then he lifted him onto his donkey, led him to an inn, and made him comfortable. In the morning he took out two silver coins and gave them to the innkeeper, saying, ‘Take good care of him. If it costs any more, put it on my bill—I’ll pay you on my way back.’

“What do you think? Which of the three became a neighbor to the man attacked by robbers?” “The one who treated him kindly,” the religion scholar

responded. Jesus said, “Go and do the same.” This is God’s word for God’s people. Thanks be to God.

Let’s pray. God of mercy and compassion, we pray for ears to hear what you would say to us today. We pray for understanding and the ability to put ourselves in the shoes of others. Let the words of my mouth and the meditation of our hearts be acceptable in your sight, O Lord, my rock and my redeemer. Amen.

Peace be with you! In this passage we have a religious scholar “testing” Jesus. He wants to know how to inherit eternal life. So he quotes a love passage, “That you love the Lord your God with all your passion and prayer and muscle and intelligence—and that you love your neighbor as well as you do yourself.” Jesus replies, “Good answer! Do it and you’ll live!” The scholar wants to know how Jesus defines neighbor. He’s searching for a loophole, and I suppose he wants all his bases covered. So, Jesus tells him a story about genuine love.

Jesus tells the scholar about a road that connects Jerusalem to Jericho. And by the way, the road was 17 miles long and dropped about 3,000 feet. It had dangerous curves, ups and downs, and the downward descent was filled with highs and lows. It’s was a great place for thieves and robbers to hide. One day an ordinary man, could’ve been anyone, was traveling on the road. He was beat up, stripped naked, and left half-dead. A priest came by, and seeing the man he passed him by because he didn’t want to be unclean if the man was dead.

Next a Levite walked by. He didn’t want to be unclean either, so he passed on by. Then a Samaritan saw the man. He stopped, bandaged him, and took him to an inn. He gave the innkeeper two silver coins to keep the man and provide what he needed. If it cost more, the Samaritan said he would cover what was owed.

Now let’s think about love and marriage and some of the roads we’ve traveled in life. Marriage is a spiritual journey if you and your spouse are Christian, but everyone will tell you, marriage is a two way road. Sometimes you

give, sometimes you take. Sometimes it feels like you're traveling at night. You can't see exactly what's happening in the relationship, but the road meanders and turns regardless at unexpected times.

The curves you take can become detours. You know you're walking by faith in this journey of love and life, because it wasn't you who planned going on this road. It can feel dangerous at times. You're not exactly sure how to navigate as one, but as you mature spiritually and open yourself up to God, things become more clear. God has this way of getting out of us what he wants.

But still, in marriage there's no guarantee that all will go as expected or what's been hoped for. It's the same with your children. You do your best to raise them, but when they reach a certain age, they decide for themselves what they believe and how they'll live their lives.

There's ups and downs and highs and lows in a marriage. If it goes for enough years change is expected and yet it feels unexpected. The change should be a valued part of the transformation of both; it's an opportunity to learn and become more flexible as you continue to love each other. Ruth Graham, wife of Billy Graham said, "I've never considered divorce. Murder, yes, but not divorce." No marriage is exempt from struggles in their love journey.

Overtime, the road of marriage is shaped differently due to the elements that fall on it, and the shape of it will change. How will you adapt? Will you respond to the changes in a way that brings the relationship better health? There may be a point along the road they're traveling that needs to be repaired. The love between two individuals needs care and repair at times. No couple is exempt.

The story of the Good Samaritan was a one-time act of kindness and display of genuine love, but the marriage promise can be a commitment that lasts for years and expresses itself for maybe more than half a century. We can build walls or open doors, but there's countless ways to improve a marriage.

The goal to traveling safely together surely is the personal transformation of both people—and doing all they can to include God’s presence in their lives as they walk together in faith. The Samaritan story is an example of love for neighbors . . . Who is our closest neighbor by proximity? Our spouse.

For Dr. Martin Luther King, the Samaritan neighbor flipped the question asked by the priest and Levite. Instead of asking what will happen to me if I help? The Samaritan asks what will happen if I don’t help? The scholar questioned Jesus as he looked for a loop and said, “Just how far must I go with this neighborly stuff?” The Samaritan pays for the man to stay at the inn, leaves him cared for, and promises to come back.

The Samaritan didn’t see the man as a burden. He saw an opportunity to return what Christ had done for him. We need a new pair of lens at times to see properly along this road of marriage. When we respect one another our love is shown. When we reject or dishonor our spouse we’re saying me first, and the other doesn’t have the feeling of being valued.

The Good Samaritan said “Not Me First—Me Too.” He showed empathy for the man who’d been beaten and robbed and then left to die. Brene Brown, Ph.D., has done research for the past thirteen years studying vulnerability, courage, worthiness, and shame. Brene defines empathy as the communication of the healing message that you’re not alone.

When we respect and honor someone we nurture the love of God that’s been poured into the world through Jesus Christ. When we show empathy we say you first not me first. And empathy lived out between two people never stops giving back to the person who gives it. Let’s have a ministry of presence for those we love and the strangers we meet along our spiritual journey.

Let's pray. God of mercy and compassion, loving our neighbor means loving everyone and expressing it in action. It means putting others before ourselves. Empower us Lord with a heart that loves like you do. Amen.