

TELL ME THE STORIES OF JESUS

Practice

July 17, 2022

Overarching Theme: 2022 – The Year of the Lord’s Favor (Luke 4:19)

Instructions:

When using this material as teacher, feel free to pick and choose the point you want to emphasize in the lesson. The format of the curriculum is designed to have an abundance of information in which to refer as desired.

Core Point:

As the world awakens from 2 years of pandemic stupor, the words of Jesus proclaiming “the year of the Lord’s favor” is a message whose time has come. This passage from Luke 4 harkens back to the ‘year of jubilee’ of Leviticus 25 and Isaiah 61, a year of a fresh start, a clean slate and reset for everyone who can envision new possibilities with God this Lenten season and always.

Reflect on this Scripture:

Luke 10:25-37 NRSV

²⁵ Just then a lawyer stood up to test Jesus. ‘Teacher,’ he said, ‘what must I do to inherit eternal life?’ ²⁶He said to him, ‘What is written in the law? What do you read there?’ ²⁷He answered, ‘You shall 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 your neighbor as yourself.’ ²⁸And he said to him, ‘You have given the right answer; do this, and you will live.’

²⁹ But wanting to justify himself, he asked Jesus, ‘And who is my neighbor?’ ³⁰Jesus 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. ³¹Now by chance a priest was going down that road; and when he saw him, he passed by on the other side. ³²So likewise a Levite, when he came to the place and saw him, passed by on the other side. ³³But a Samaritan while travelling came near him; and when he saw him, he was moved with pity. ³⁴He 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. ³⁵The next day he took out two denarii, gave them to the innkeeper, and said, “Take care of him; and when I come back, I will repay you whatever more you spend.” ³⁶Which of these three, do you think, was a neighbor to the man who fell into the hands of the robbers?’ ³⁷He said, ‘The one who showed him mercy.’ Jesus said to him, ‘Go and do likewise.’

Commentary:

Although there are other scenes in which Jesus is approached by a lawyer, scribe, or one of the rulers and is asked a question about the commandments or what is required to inherit eternal life, only Luke uses this story as the introduction to the parable of the Good Samaritan.

The lawyer's original motive was to test Jesus, but Jesus gained the upper hand by forcing the lawyer to answer his own question and then challenging the lawyer to put his answer into practice. Attempting a rally, therefore, the lawyer posed a question that never failed to generate controversy. Like most societies, first-century Judaism was ordered by boundaries with specific rules regarding how Jews should treat Gentiles or Samaritans, how priests should relate to Israelites, how men should treat women, and so on. Because the boundaries allowed for certain groups to establish their positions, power, and privilege, maintaining the boundaries was vital to social order. It was a religious duty.

Jesus' parable shatters the stereotypes of social boundaries and class division and renders void any system of religious *quid pro quo*. Neighbors do not recognize social class. Neither is mercy the conduct of a calculating heart, nor eternal life the reward for doing prescribed duties. Eternal life – the life in the age to come – is that quality of life characterized by showing mercy for those in need, regardless of their race, religion, or region – and with no thought of reward. Mercy sees only need and responds with compassion.

- Adapted from The New Interpreter's Bible Commentary, Vol IX, pp. 227-230

Questions to Ponder for Accountability in the Group:

1. Retell the story from your 21st century perspective – who would represent the victim? the priest? the Levite? the Samaritan?
2. Does a different perspective help or hinder your understanding of neighbor?
3. What stereotypes do we still carry that negatively impact how we respond?
4. Who is your neighbor?

Activity for the Life of a Disciple:

1. Remember to find encouragement for the day by reading the daily devotional from FUMCC.
2. Ponder and pray on this scripture this week: Luke 10:36-37 NRSV

³⁶*Which of these three, do you think, was a neighbor to the man who fell into the hands of the robbers?* ³⁷*He said, 'The one who showed him mercy.'* Jesus said to him, 'Go and do likewise.'