

The Parable of the Good Samaritan



Parable of the Good Samaritan by Balthasar van Cortbemde (1647) | Royal Museum of Fine Art, Antwerp | PD-US

²⁵ There was a scholar of the law who stood up to test him and said, “Teacher, what must I do to inherit eternal life?” ²⁶ Jesus said to him, “What is written in the law? How do you read it?” ²⁷ He said in reply, “You shall love the Lord, your God, with all your heart, with all your being, with all your strength, and with all your mind, and your neighbor as yourself.” ²⁸ He replied to him, “You have answered correctly; do this and you will live.” ²⁹ But because he wished to justify himself, he said to Jesus, “And who is my neighbor?” ³⁰ Jesus replied, “A man fell victim to robbers as he went down from Jerusalem to Jericho. They stripped and beat him and went off leaving him half-dead. ³¹ A priest happened to be going down that road, but when he saw him, he passed by on the opposite side. ³² Likewise a Levite came to the place, and when he saw him, he passed by on the opposite side. ³³ But a Samaritan traveler who came upon him was moved with compassion at the sight. ³⁴ He approached the victim, poured oil and wine over his wounds and bandaged them. Then he lifted him up on his own animal, took him to an inn and cared for him. ³⁵ The next day he took out two silver coins and gave them to the innkeeper with the instruction, ‘Take care of him. If you spend more than what I have given you, I shall repay you on my way back.’ ³⁶ Which of these three, in your opinion, was neighbor to the robbers’ victim?” ³⁷ He answered, “The one who treated him with mercy.” Jesus said to him, “Go and do likewise.” (Luke 15:25-37)

Context

Just before the telling of the Parable of the Good Shepherd, Jesus had commissioned 72 disciples and sent them out of mission. In Luke 10:17 the disciples return with reports of great things being accomplished in the name and power of God. Jesus responds to their reports

²¹ At that very moment he rejoiced (in) the holy Spirit and said, “I give you praise, Father, Lord of heaven and earth, for although you have hidden these things from the wise and the learned you have revealed them to the childlike. Yes, Father, such has been your gracious

will.²² *All things have been handed over to me by my Father. No one knows who the Son is except the Father, and who the Father is except the Son and anyone to whom the Son wishes to reveal him.*²³ *Turning to the disciples in private he said, "Blessed are the eyes that see what you see."*²⁴ *For I say to you, many prophets and kings desired to see what you see, but did not see it, and to hear what you hear, but did not hear it."*

Jesus has thanked the Father for hiding “*these things*” from “*the wise and the learned*” (v.:21), and now, in our account, a “*scholar of the law*,” whom we would think is wise and learned, comes to test Jesus. In the end Jesus tells a parable in which other wise and learned men, religious leaders of Israel, and a Samaritan (not considered wise or learned by Jews) “see” the man in the ditch (vv. 31-32). Will they “see” what Jesus desires to reveal to them or will it be hidden from them?

The biblical concept of mercy (*hesed* in Hebrew and *eleos* in Greek) is rich and wide; it is always strongly connected to love, specifically love in action. St. Paul writes about such mercy as does the early Church. In the 1st century church document, the *Didache*, the action flowing from mercy is demanded of the Christian (5.6, 15.4); those who have no mercy on the poor are condemned (5.2). The history of writings in the church repeats these themes, always connecting mercy as flowing from the love of God for humanity. Thomas Aquinas includes mercy as a special quality of charity (*Summa Theologiae* I, qu. 21, a. 3). Tradition has listed fourteen specific manifestations of mercy, seven corporal works (feed the hungry, give drink to the thirsty, clothe the naked, shelter the stranger, visit the sick, minister to prisoners, bury the dead) and seven spiritual works (convert the sinner, instruct the ignorant, counsel the doubtful, comfort the sorrowful, bear wrongs patiently, forgive injuries, pray for the living and the dead). Some commentaries, in an effort to offer a catch phrase, simply state that mercy is love in action. It is in this vein that we consider the verses which follow our parable.

This parable is connected to the verses that follow — the story of Mary and Martha (vv. 38-42) — our gospel for the Sunday following the reading of the Parable of the Good Samaritan. An interesting contrast is presented with these two texts. The lawyer asks, “What must I **do**?” (v. 25) and he is told twice to “do this” (*poieo* v.28, v.37; the present tense in Greek would mean “continuously do”). This emphasis on “doing” could easily become the busyness of Martha. This busyness is in contrast to the continual listening of Mary (v.39) — a companion of the “seeing” asked for in the Good Samaritan parable. In both stories there are unexpected actions — a Samaritan who cares and helps a Jewish man; and a woman who sits as a disciple and listens and learns. The Samaritan is praised because he “went and did”; the scholar of the law is advised to “*go and do likewise*,” while Mary is praised for not going and not doing. The Samaritan demonstrates love for our neighbor. Mary shows us about loving our Lord. Both are vital in living our lives Christianly and together give a complete picture of Christian discipleship in terms of love of neighbor (active service) and love of Jesus (prayer).

Commentary

A Question About Inheriting. *There was a scholar of the law who stood up to test him and said, “Teacher, what must I do to inherit eternal life?”* The setting is not entirely clear. Jesus spoke to the disciples privately in v. 23, but now he is addressed by a lawyer. The lawyer’s question is readily understandable following Jesus’ blessing of the disciples in vv. 23–24 for what they have seen and heard. What if one has not seen and has not heard what the disciples were privileged to see and hear? Is there any hope for them? The scholar asks a good question, even is there some sense of opposition in the asking of the question (*ekpeirazō* – put to the test). It is perhaps notable that in Mark and Matthew, the question asks what is the greatest of the commandments and Jesus is the one who provides the answer. Jumping ahead just a bit, Jesus does not answer the scholar’s question, instead asking his own question, receives an answer (“*You shall love the Lord, your God, with all your heart, with all your being, with all your strength, and with all your mind, and your neighbor as yourself.*”) and accepts the

scholar's answer: *"You have answered correctly; do this and you will live."*

The scholar's question *"What must I do to inherit eternal life?"* is one that raises questions in the simple phrasing of the question itself – especially given that Jesus accepts his answer.

At first blush one wonders about "doing" and "inheritance." Stoffregen offers, "I would like to think that there is something I could do to inherit some of Bill Gates' fortune... An inheritance is usually determined by the giver, not the receiver." Some commentaries, operating out of their theology of salvation, claim the scholar was thinking of some form of salvation by works and had no understanding of divine grace. They do not see Jesus as accepting the question, but only the answer to Jesus' own question. I would suggest they have pre-interpreted the text – clearly Jesus commands "doing" love not simply being in a state of love. Catholic understanding is not the "either-or", i.e., do this and not that, but rather "both-and." From the 4th century onwards Catholic theology and teaching have declared "works salvation" as outside orthodoxy, i.e., a person can do things and thus earn salvation. The Church teaches that salvation is from grace alone – the grace which enables us to respond in faith and in action to the gift of God. Yes, orthodox Catholics are about "doing," but never in the sense that we have "earned" something that then places a claim upon God, but rather compelled by the love of God, how could we but do otherwise?

Jesus' Response. *What is written in the law? How do you read it?"*

Jesus responds to the lawyer's question with these two questions of his own. It is generally easy to agree on *"What is written;"* the problem is usually in the second part, *"How do you read it?"* or "how do you interpret it?" This is not only personally important to the scholar but also to his place in Jewish society. The particular Greek word for read (*anaginosko*) suggests that reading was always done aloud and generally publicly. Jesus does this in the synagogue at Nazareth (4:16). Jesus' second question may go further and imply, "How do you interpret the law to others?"

"You shall love the Lord, your God, with all your heart, with all your being, with all your strength, and with all your mind, and your neighbor as yourself." The scholar answers with the twice-daily repeated *shema* from Dt 6:5 — except that he adds "mind" to the Hebrew text — and he includes a command from Lv 19:18 about loving one's neighbor as one's self. They combine to illustrate the way to everlasting life given in the scholar's answer (v. 27). This combination was evidently original with Jesus (Mark 12:29–31) and perhaps known to the lawyer - or perhaps the scholar was very well read in the Scriptures. In any case, Jesus accepts the answer: *"You have answered correctly; do this and you will live."*

The lawyer has read well, but reading is not enough. The Pharisaic elevation of the importance of study of the Torah reached its zenith in the pronouncement of Akiba: "Study of the Law is of higher rank than practicing it." In stark contrast, Jesus responds: *"do this, and you will live."* Eternal life is found not just in knowing the commandments but in doing them.

Who is my neighbor? *But because he wished to justify himself... And who is my neighbor?"* One wonders why the scholar did not "quit while he was ahead?" It is almost as though the scholar's first question was entrée to the real question about who is (or is not) neighbor. In Leviticus 19 the word root neighbor (-ger) include fellow Israelites, but also stranger and travelers. While that Semitic custom remained present in Jesus' time, the Pharisees also professed extensive limitations on interactions with non-Jews. (*m. Abodah Zarah* 1:1, 2:1-2, 4:9-10) To "justify himself" the scholar raises the disputed question about the identity of the neighbor. When the scholar added the Leviticus text, one may well speculate that the scholar's understanding was that "neighbor" included only one's fellow Israelite.

Jesus' response is the parable of the Good Samaritan. As a parable, the story of the Good Samaritan is intended to challenge a wrong but accepted pattern of thought so that values of the kingdom can break

into a closed system of living.

“With Jesus, the device of parabolic utterance is used not to explain things to people’s satisfaction but to call attention to the unsatisfactoriness of all their previous explanations and understandings.” (Robert Farrar Capon, *The Parables of the Kingdom*, 6)

The unsatisfactoriness of the parable lies with those one would expect to fulfill the two great commandments. To appreciate the power of this parable, the listing of priest, Levite, and Samaritan may be significant. Scholar have shown that forms of the trilogy “priests, Levites, and people” are common in postexilic texts (1 Chron. 28:21; 2 Chron. 34:30; 35:2–3, 8, 18; Ezra 2:70; 7:7, 13; 8:15; 9:1; 10:5, 18–22, 25–43; Neh. 7:73; 8:13; 9:38; 10:28; 11:3, 20; cf. 1QS II, 11, 19–21), and this is what first-century Jews would have expected. The appearance of the Samaritan instead of a lay Judean is therefore striking, and this directly challenges the Jewish interpretation of the “neighbor.”

The Parable. Culpepper [229] identified the central character as being noticeably undefined. He is not characterized by race, religion, region, or trade. He is merely “a certain man” who by implication could be any one of Jesus’ hearers. The phrase “a certain man” (*anthrōpos tis*), however, will become a common feature of the Lukan parables (12:16; 14:2, 16; 15:11; 16:1, 19; 19:12; 20:9). Jesus’ audience no doubt imagined the man to be Jewish, but Luke’s audience may have assumed he was a Gentile. The point is that he is identified only by what happened to him.

This “certain man” was traveling a road that was difficult (3300 feet elevation change in 17 miles) with narrow passes and many places for ambush. The man fell prey to bandits who *stripped and beat him and went off leaving him half-dead*. Since the man was ‘half-dead’ the priest would probably not have been able to be certain whether he was dead without touching him. But if he touched him and the man was in fact dead, then he would have incurred the ceremonial defilement that the Law forbade (Lev. 21:1ff.) and been unable to fulfill his ceremonial duties. But *m. Nazir 7.1* offers the opinion that a priest who, while traveling, comes upon a dead body, has the duty to bury the person.

Ceremonial purity won the day. Not only did he not help, he went to the other side of the road. He deliberately avoided any possibility of contact. Other factors may have weighed with him, such as the possibility that the robbers might return, the nature of his business, and so on. We do not know. We do know that the priest left the man where he was in his suffering and his need. Much the same happened when a *Levite* came by. He also was a religious personage and might be expected to be interested in helping a man in need. But perhaps, he also was a man interested in ceremonial purity. He also thought it better not to get involved. And he also passed by on the other side.

The two operated out of the paradigm current in the scholars mind. It is probably best captured by William Danker’s expansion on the question: “I am willing to love my neighbor as myself, but don’t get me involved with the wrong neighbor.” It is another way of saying “who do I have to help (and who can I ignore)?”

Green (*The Gospel of Luke*, 426) interprets the question this way:

Whereas Jesus’ teaching in the Sermon on the Plain had eliminated the lines that might be drawn between one’s “friends” and one’s “enemies,” this legal expert hopes to reintroduce this distinction. He does so by inquiring “Who is my neighbor?” – not so much to determine to whom he must show love, but so as to calculate the identity of those to whom he need not show love. By the end of the story, Jesus has transformed the focus of the original question: in fact, Jesus’ apparent attempt to answer the lawyer’s question turns out to be a negation of that question’s premise. Neighbor love knows no boundaries.

Joachim Jeremias takes a similar approach in his presentation of this dialogue:

Lawyer: “What is the limit of my responsibility?”

Jesus’ answer: “Think of the sufferer, put yourself in his place, consider, who needs help from me? Then you will see that love’s demand knows no limit.”

Jesus shockingly moves directly to the one limitation that would have been clear and deeply ingrained in the psyche of an observant Jew. This it does by showing a Samaritan, a member of the people despised and ridiculed by Jews, performing a loving service avoided by Jewish religious leaders. This would have been shocking and, for many Jews, unbelievable and unacceptable.

A failing of the scholar is that he is only concerned about himself. This is in contrast to the Samaritan in the parable who expresses his concern for the other person, even crossing established borders and limits to “acceptable behavior.”

The Samaritan. A Samaritan was the last person who might have been expected to help – actions which reveal more than simple help, but a great deal of compassion. He attended to the beaten man. Wine would have been used for cleaning the wounds (the alcohol in it would have had an antiseptic effect). Oil, i.e. olive oil, would have eased the pain. The two appear to have been widely used by both Jews and Greeks. Perhaps a touch of irony is included as oil and wine were commonly used in Temple sacrifice. The wounded man was too weak to walk, so the Samaritan set him on his own beast (which meant that he himself had to walk), and so brought him to an inn. There he took care of him. The Samaritan did not regard his duty as done when he had brought the man to shelter. He continued to look after him.

He gave the innkeeper two *denarii* on account, and instructed him to look after the man. Jeremias reports that such an amount would have covered room and board for two weeks. Moreover, whatever additional costs the innkeeper might incur, the Samaritan undertook to refund on his way back. The Samaritan did more than the minimum. He saw a man in need and did all he could as compassion commanded.

This story gives a vivid example of the fulfillment of the love commandment. The lawyer’s question implies that someone is not my neighbor. Jesus’ story replies that there is no one who is not my neighbor. “Neighbor” is not a matter of blood bonds or nationality or religious communion; it is determined by the attitude a person has toward others. The priest and the Levite were well-versed in the demands of God’s law and, like the scholar, would surely have been able to interpret it for others. But they missed its deepest purpose, while the Samaritan, by practicing love, showed that he understood the law.

“*Go and do likewise.*” Probably the most common understanding of this text is that we are to act like the Samaritan in the text, rather than the priest or the Levite. He “sees” and “has compassion” (*spagchnizomai*) on the needy man in the ditch. He “cares” (*epimelo* - v. 34) for the man in the ditch. He also asks the innkeeper to “care” (*epimelo* - v. 35). The Samaritan doesn’t provide all of the direct aid to the needy man. He is also described by the lawyer as the one “doing mercy” (*poieo to eleos*).

The verbs used with the Samaritan are worth emulating: to have compassion others; to come (near) to others; to care for others; to do mercy to others. It is not enough just to know what the Law says, one must also do it. To put it another way, it is not enough just to talk about “what one believes,” but “what difference does it make in my life that I believe.”

In addition, the description of the robbers’ work on the dead man indicate that there would be no identifying marks about his status, his occupation, his race. How would the scholar (or the Samaritan) know if this half-dead man was a neighbor or not? He is a person who needs a neighbor. Who will respond? Who will come near? (The basic meaning of “neighbor” is Greek is “to be near”)

But why a Samaritan? Brian Stofferregen has interesting insights into this answer: If Jesus were just trying to communicate that we should do acts of mercy to the needy, he could have talked about the first man and the second man who passed by and the third one who stopped and cared for the half-dead man in the ditch. Knowing that they were a priest, Levite, and Samaritan is not necessary. If Jesus were also making a gibe against clerics, we would expect the third man to be a layman -- an ordinary Jew -- in contrast to the professional clergy. It is likely that Jewish hearers would have anticipated the hero to be an ordinary Jew. (see note on Luke 10:29)

If Jesus were illustrating the need to love our enemies, then the man in the ditch would have been a Samaritan who is cared for by a loving Israelite.

One answer to the question: "Why a Samaritan?" is that we Christians might be able to learn about showing mercy from people who don't profess Christ. Stofferregen comments, "I know that I saw much more love expressed towards each by the clients at an inpatient alcoholic/drug rehab hospital than I usually find in churches. Can we learn about 'acting Christianly' from AA or the Hell's Angels?"

Green (*The Gospel of Luke*, 431) comments:

"The parable of the compassionate Samaritan thus undermines the determination of status in the community of God's people on the basis of ascription [Green had noted earlier that priests and Levites are born into those positions], substituting in its place a concern with performance, the granting of status on the basis of one's actions."

This approach highlights some of the Luke's themes: Since the man in the ditch had been stripped of anything that might identify him by social class, or perhaps even nationality; he is helped simply because he is a person in need. There should be no distinctions about whom we are to help. In addition, the help involved the use of one's resources. For Luke, wealth is not necessarily evil, it depends upon how it is used.

The Man in the Ditch. Scott (*Jesus, Symbol-Maker for the Kingdom*, 29) summarizes the parable as follows: "The parable can be summarized as follows: to enter the kingdom one must get into the ditch and be served by one's mortal enemy." He expands a little later: "Grace comes to those who cannot resist, who have no other alternative than to accept it. To enter the parable's World, to get into the ditch, is to be so low that grace is the only alternative. The point may be so simple as this: only he who needs grace can receive grace" (31).

Funk (*Parables and Presence*, 33) adds to this image.

A Jew who was excessively proud of his blood line and a chauvinist about his tradition would not permit a Samaritan to touch him, much less minister to him. In going from Galilee to Judea, he would cross and recross the Jordan to avoid going through Samaria. The parable therefore forces upon its hearers the question: who among you will permit himself or herself to be served by a Samaritan? In a general way it can be replied that that only those who have nothing to lose by so doing can afford to do so. But note that the victim in the ditch is given only a passive role in the story. Permission to be served by the Samaritan is thus inability to resist. Put differently, all who are truly victims, truly disinherited, have no choice but to give themselves up to mercy. The despised half-breed has become the instrument of grace: as listeners, the Jews choke on the irony.

He concludes his comments on this parable quite succinctly (34) :

... the parable of the Good Samaritan may be reduced to two propositions:

1. In the Kingdom of God mercy comes only to those who have no right to expect it and who cannot resist it when it comes.

2. Mercy always comes from the quarter from which one does not and cannot expect it.

An enterprising theologian might attempt to reduce these two sentences to one: In the kingdom mercy is always a surprise.

Notes

Luke 10:25 scholar of the law: an expert in the Mosaic law, and probably a member of the group elsewhere identified as the scribes (Luke 5:21). Luke uses a more technical term for “lawyer” (*nomikos*, related to the word for “law” = *nomos*) rather than “scribe,” who were also considered experts in the Law (Torah). Six of the nine times this word *nomikos* is used in the NT they are in Luke. The only time it is used previous to our text, we are told: “*but the Pharisees and scholars of the law, who were not baptized by him, rejected the plan of God for themselves.*” (7:30). The image of “scholars of law” (NAB preferred translation) or “lawyers” does not improve through the gospel (11:45, 46, 52; 14:3). The reader should already be a bit suspect when a scholar of the law approaches.

Luke 10:25 test: *ekpeirazō*, literally, “put to the test.” This is not a neutral expression but rather connotes at least some degree of opposition. Some scholars do not assign the lawyer an adversarial role, suggesting that the text indicates otherwise. The scholars calls Jesus “teacher,” respectfully. Jesus engages him as an equal as indicated by responding to the lawyer’s first question with a question. Jesus agrees with the answer. Jesus responds to the second question with a story followed by a question, and again the lawyer and Jesus are in agreement.

Luke 10: 25 inherit eternal life: The same question reoccurs in Luke 18:18. Interestingly, Luke this combination of words does not occur in the Torah (the Law). In other words, it is an odd phrasing of the question from someone whose expertise is the Torah. The “inheritance” promised (*klēronomia*) promised the people is the land (Gen 28:4; Dt 1:8, 2:12, 4:1; cf. Acts 7:5). Ps 15 (LXX) speaks of the Lord as one’s inheritance. Other verses speak of eternal life (Dan 12:2) and others. In the NT, the idea of an eternal inheritance is found only in Hebrews 9:15 (although suggested in 1 Peter 1:4). “Eternal life” is mentioned frequently in the NT.

Luke 10:27 and with all your mind: With only minor variations, Luke has quoted Dt 6:5 but has added “*and with all your mind*” ***your neighbor as yourself***: This is an exact citation from Lev 19:18.

Unlike Mark 12:29–31; Matt. 22:37–40, where Deut. 6:5 and Lev. 19:18 are separately listed as the *prōtē* (“first”) and the *deutera* (“second”) of the greatest commandments, the two are merged into one in Luke in Jesus’ dialogue with the scholar of the law. The contexts of both passages are also alluded to in Luke’s account. First, these two passages appear in a dialogue concerning the inheritance of eternal life: *ti poiēsas zōēn aiōnion klēronomēsō* (“What must I do to inherit eternal life?”). An allusion to the wider context of Deut. 6 can be detected in that the observance of these commandments is required for the inheritance of the land:

“*Do what is right and good in the sight of the LORD, that you may, according to his word, prosper, and may enter in and possess [klēronomēsēs; inherit] the good land which the LORD promised on oath to your fathers*” (Deut. 6:18). In addition, the reference to *zōēn aiōnion* (“eternal life”) may also be an allusion to Deut. 6:24: “...the LORD commanded us to observe ...that we may always have as prosperous and happy a life [*zōmen*].” The attainment of salvation is understood in light of the ancient promises to Israel.

Luke 10:28 do this: *poieo*; the present tense in Greek would mean “continuously do”. This is parallel to the business of Martha in the following pericope. There *poieo* is not used of her work, but more “religious” words for “service” or “ministry” (*diakonia/diakoneo*) are used in v. 40.

An allusion to the wider context of Lev. 19:18 can also be identified in the verse that follows Luke's citation of the OT texts: *touto poiei kai zēsē* ("do this, and you will live"). This verse brings to mind Deut. 6:24, but its affinity with Lev. 18:5 is to be noted with the use of *poieō* ("do") and *zaō* ("live"): "You shall keep all my commandments, and all my judgments, and do [*poiēsete*] them; and if a person does [*poiēsas*] so, he shall live [*zēsetai*] by them."

Luke 10:29 *who is my neighbor*: Lev 19:18 makes "sons of your own people," i.e., fellow Israelites, as neighbors. Later Lev 19:33-34 extends this understanding to *ger* – the stranger or sojourner in the land. The Septuagint (LXX) translated *ger* as "proselyte" giving a more narrow understanding of the term to those drawn to Judaism. In the understanding of the Pharisees the limitations on interactions with non-Jews was extensive (see *m. Abodah Zarah* 1:1, 2:1-2, 4:9-10)

The focus is on the definition of one's "neighbor." To appreciate the power of this parable, the listing of priest, Levite, and Samaritan may be significant. Scholar have shown that forms of the trilogy "priests, Levites, and people" are common in postexilic texts (1 Chron. 28:21; 2 Chron. 34:30; 35:2-3, 8, 18; Ezra 2:70; 7:7, 13; 8:15; 9:1; 10:5, 18-22, 25-43; Neh. 7:73; 8:13; 9:38; 10:28; 11:3, 20; cf. 1QS II, 11, 19-21), and this is what first-century Jews would have expected. The appearance of the Samaritan instead of a lay Judean is therefore striking, and this directly challenges the Jewish interpretation of the "neighbor" of Lev. 19:18. Two specific OT passages may have further contributed to this parable. First, the story of the compassionate Samaritans in 2 Chron. 28:8-15 provides a conceptual parallel to Jesus' parable. Second, Hos. 6:6 may also have played a part, where one finds the discussion of mercy (or love) in the context of the cultic practices of Israel.

Luke 10:30 *Jesus replied*: *hypolambanō* – used for the understanding of a point and then furthering that understanding in the following response. ***A man*:** from the context of the on going conversation, the "man" of the story is himself a Judean. ***robbers*:** *lēstēs* is used by Josephus for organized bands of highwaymen who made traveling perilous. (*Jewish Wars* 2:228-230). ***he went down from Jerusalem to Jericho*:** Given Jericho was 3,500 feet lower in altitude, "down" is geographically correct. Augustine, allegorizing the parable, saying that the descent was from the heavenly city (Jerusalem) to the one that signified mortality (Jericho). The 17 mile journey was desolate and rocky and filled with places for an ambush. ***half-dead*:** the term is unclear in Greek usage. It may mean the man appeared unconscious and corpse-like or so badly injured that his life was in peril.

Luke 10:31-32 *Priest . . . Levite*: those religious representatives of Judaism who would have been expected to be models of "neighbor" to the victim pass him by. The priests and Levites were not among the wealthy or aristocracy, but were part of the religious leadership. They were also subject to purity regulations which limited their contact with others – Jews as well as Samaritans. It is likely the story, while contrasting Jews and Samaritans at one level, is more pointedly contrasting those who were established and recognized as part of the people and those who were not (*ger* – see note on Luke 10:29).

Luke 10:33 *Samaritan*: Luke has already noted hostility to Jesus' ministry (9:53). Who are the Samaritans? *Samaritan Version*. The Samaritans have insisted that they are direct descendants of the N Israelite tribes of Ephraim and Manasseh, who survived the destruction of the N kingdom of Israel by the Assyrians in 722 b.c.e. The inscription of Sargon II records the deportation of a relatively small proportion of the Israelites (27,290, according to the annals [ANET, 284-85]), so it is quite possible that a sizable population remained that could identify themselves as Israelites, the term that the Samaritans prefer for themselves. Samaritan theology of history would place the basic schism with the South at the time Eli moved the sanctuary from Shechem to Shiloh, establishing both an illegitimate priesthood and place of worship. From the time of Moses until that move was the Era of Divine Favor. With that move began the Era of Disfavor, which would exist until the coming of the Taheb or savior. *Old Testament Version*. Jewish accounts, characterized by 2 Kings 17 and Josephus (Ant 9.277-91)

claim that the Samaritans are descendants of colonists brought into the region of Samaria by the Assyrians from other lands they had conquered, including Cuthah, and thus the Jewish designation of Samaritans as Cutheans (Ant 9.290). The Jews have argued that the veneer of Israelite religion displayed by the Samaritans is the result of instruction by an Israelite priest repatriated from Assyria after the colonists had been attacked by lions sent by God (2 Kings 17:25–26).

moved with compassion: *splagchnizomai*; this term is most commonly used by Luke to express the divine compassion revealed in Jesus.

Luke 10:36 Which of these...was neighbor: Jesus reverses the question from one of legal obligation (who deserves my love) to one of gift-giving (to whom can I show my love as neighbor).

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Love of God and Love of Neighbor – some additional notes

taken, with adaptations, from G. K. Beale and D. A. Carson, *Commentary on the New Testament Use of the Old Testament* (Grand Rapids, MI; Nottingham, UK: Baker Academic; Apollos, 2007) 319–322

Jesus said to him, “What is written in the law? How do you read it?” ²⁷ He said in reply, “You shall love the Lord, your God, with all your heart, with all your being, with all your strength, and with all your mind, and your neighbor as yourself.”

A. NT Context: Definition of One's Neighbor. The quotations of Deut. 6:5 and Lev. 19:18 appear in the dialogue between Jesus and the expert of the law concerning the way to “inherit eternal life” (10:25). In its Lucan context this dialogue focuses on the definition of one's neighbor as the dialogue continues in Jesus' parable of the Good Samaritan.

Reviewing the Lucan context of this dialogue, one cannot avoid noting its relationship with its conceptual parallels in Mark 12:28–31; Matt. 22:34–40, especially when the same two OT texts appear together when Jesus is questioned by Jewish scribal leadership. Significant differences between Luke's text and its Markan and Matthean parallels are equally noteworthy, however. First, unlike Luke, who places this dialogue earlier in Jesus' ministry, Mark and Matthew place this passage in the final days of Jesus' earthly ministry. Second, the question that Jesus is addressing in Mark and Matthew centers on the “greatest command,” while the way to inherit eternal life is the topic in Luke. Third, Jesus is the one citing the OT in Mark and Matthew, while the lawyer cites the two OT texts in Luke. Finally, the parable of the Good Samaritan, which follows in Luke, is missing in Mark and Matthew.

B. Deut. 6:5; Lev. 19:18 in Context. Deuteronomy 6 belongs to a wider section that contains the stipulations, decrees, and laws that Moses gave the Israelites when they came out of Egypt. (4:45). This verse serves as a response to the first line of the Shema, which points to the pillar of Israel's faith: “The LORD our God, the LORD is one” (6:4). In response, Israel is called to “love” (*āhēb*) their God (6:5). This “love” must be interpreted within its covenantal context, where faithfulness and loyalty are to characterize the life of Israel as God's covenant partner. Both the focus on the exclusive devotion to the one true God and the command to love this God of Israel rest on God's faithful acts on behalf of his people:

It was because the LORD loved you and because of his fidelity to the oath he had sworn to your fathers, that he brought you out with his strong hand from the place of slavery, and ransomed you from the hand of Pharaoh, king of Egypt. Understand, then, that the LORD, your God, is God indeed, the faithful God who keeps his merciful covenant down to the thousandth generation toward those who love him and keep his commandments (Deut. 7:8–9)

These two aspects form the foundation of the rest of the detailed commandments and stipulations. The way the material is presented reflects covenant formulations that aim at clarifying the relationship between the great king and the vassals. As J. D. Levenson rightly notes, “One must first accept the suzerainty of the great king, the fact of covenant; only then can he embrace the particulars which the new lord enjoins upon them, the stipulations.”

The total dedication required for Israel the covenant partner is expressed by the references to one's *lēbāb* (“heart”), *nepeš* (“soul”), and *mēōd* (“strength”). Similar expressions are found throughout Deuteronomy (4:29; 6:5; 10:12; 11:13; 13:3; 26:16; 30:2, 6, 10). It is well known that in the Hebrew mindset *lēbāb* (“heart”) points to one's will or intellect, and together with one's life and physical abilities, this combination of terms refers to the totality of one's personhood.

The command to love one's *rēa* (“neighbor”; *ger* in Greek) is found within the Holiness Code (Lev. 17–26), where the focus is on the holy living of individual Israelites. In terms of theological coherence, the center of this section is in 19:2, which forms the basis for the covenantal relationship between the one God of all and Israel, his chosen people: “*Be holy, for I, the LORD your God, am holy.*” The call to love one's neighbor in 19:18 builds on this *imitatio Dei* command while summarizing the concern of a subsection (19:11–18) that focuses on the Israelites' relationship with and responsibilities to their fellow citizens.

The meaning of the word *rēa* (“neighbor”) has to be understood within this context in Leviticus. The wider literary context, which focuses on cultic concerns, shows that this section is addressed primarily to the people of Israel, and the phrase “one of your people” in the first part of this verse

confirms this observation. The existence of a separate provision concerning the “aliens” in 19:34–35 complicates the picture, however. Although this provision does confirm that the primary reference behind the word *rēa* (“neighbor”) is the fellow Israelites, these verses require that the Israelites also extend the mandate of 19:18 to aliens: “*You shall treat the alien who resides with you no differently than the natives born among you; have the same love for him as for yourself; for you too were once aliens in the land of Egypt. I, the LORD, am your God.*” It is precisely this perceived ambiguity that forms the center of Jesus’ dialogue with the expert of the law in Luke 10:25–37.

C. Deut. 6:5; Lev. 19:18 in Judaism. As part of the Shema, Deut. 6:5 belongs to Israel’s confessional statement, which was recited twice daily (see *m. Ber.* 1:1–4), and allusions to this verse are found in Hellenistic and Palestinian Jewish traditions where the worship of the one true God is affirmed (see Philo, *Decalogue* 64; 1QS V, 9; *Sib. Or.* 8:482; *T. Dan* 5:3). Rabbinic traditions make it clear that the affirmation of the one God in 6:5 is to be understood as the basis of all commandments (*m. Ber.* 2:2), and to recite the Shema is to affirm the sovereignty of God (*m. Ber.* 2:5). The call to love one’s neighbor is likewise repeatedly made (1QS VII, 8–9; *Sib. Or.* 8:481; cf. Rom. 13:9; Gal. 5:14; James 2:8). In rabbinic traditions this command is also considered to be the foundation of the whole Torah (*b. Šabb.* 31a; cf. *t. Peah* 4.19). In these traditions the definition of one’s *rēa* (“neighbor”) receives further attention. Most rabbinic interpreters see the word as referring to fellow Israelites, while the foreigners and the Samaritans are explicitly excluded (*Mek. Exod.* 21:35), although full proselytes are included in this category (cf. *Sipra Qed.* 8; see *TDNT* 6:135).

The combination of the commands to worship one God and to love one’s neighbor can be identified in Jewish traditions (cf. *T. Iss.* 5:2; 7:6; *T. Dan* 5:3; Philo, *Spec. Laws* 2.63) although they did not appear as explicit quotations or allusions to Deut. 6:5; Lev. 19:18.