



SERMON OF THE WEEK

First Presbyterian Church of Honolulu at Ko'olau

August 26, 2012

"The Good Samaritan" (Gospel of Luke Series)

The Rev. Dr. Dan Chun

Luke 10:25 Just then a lawyer stood up to test Jesus. "Teacher," he said, "what must I do to inherit eternal life?"

Luke 10:26 He said to him, "What is written in the law? What do you read there?"

Luke 10:27 He 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."

Luke 10:28 And he said to him, "You have given the right answer; do this, and you will live."

Luke 10:29 But wanting to justify himself, he asked Jesus, "And who is my neighbor?"

Luke 10:30 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.

Luke 10:31 Now by chance a priest was going down that road; and when he saw him, he passed by on the other side.

Luke 10:32 So likewise a Levite, when he came to the place and saw him, passed by on the other side.

Luke 10:33 But a Samaritan while traveling came near him; and when he saw him, he was moved with pity.

Luke 10:34 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.

Luke 10:35 The 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."

Luke 10:36 Which of these three, do you think, was a neighbor to the man who fell into the hands of the robbers?"

Luke 10:37 He said, "The one who showed him mercy." Jesus said to him, "Go and do likewise."

This is one of the most famous stories in the Bible. A lawyer, according to verse 25, set up the story. If it weren't for a lawyer asking the questions, we would never have gotten this parable. So let's hear it for lawyers!

Okay, that's the first time in history that there has been an ovation for lawyers. Hey, some of my best friends are lawyers.

The lawyer asks the piercing question, "What must I do to inherit eternal life?" And then we get this most interesting and stunning parable; a story that took place on a road where the people knew robberies happened all the time.

A man is beaten up by robbers on his way from Jerusalem to Jericho. It is a dangerous road that descends

quickly from Jerusalem, which was 2300 feet ABOVE sea level, to Jericho, which was 1200 feet BELOW sea level. It was narrow, rocky, and had sudden turns making it primo for bandits. In fact, in the 5th century Jerome reports that it was called "The Red or Bloody Way" – because much violence happened there.

So it would seem that our traveler is not very bright. He's *lolo*, or crazy. Who walks carrying money on The Bloody Way all by himself?

The bandits pounce on the traveler and take everything that he has. He lies there bleeding, in pain. A priest walks by, sees him, and does nothing. Everyone boo the priest. Hey, some of my best friends are priests.

Then a Levite, a common Jewish religious layperson, walks by, sees the hurt traveler, and does nothing. Everyone boo the Levite. Hey, some of my best friends are laymen.

Then comes the Samaritan. The eyes of the Jews listening to Jesus tell this story must have widened for now they thought here comes the villain of the story. The Jews hated Samaritans, you see. The word Samaritan would often be used to mean lawbreaker or heretic.

But with Jesus, it's always opposite day. The ugly duckling is really the beautiful swan. The person who is out is really in. And it turns out that the Samaritan is the only compassionate person in this parable. The Samaritan is loving. His credit is good, too.

He ministers to the beaten up traveler holistically. Look at what the Samaritan did:

Luke 10:34 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.

Luke 10:35 The 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.'

Look, he first comes to the man to say, "I will help." Then he bandages his wounds. Then he cleanses his wounds with oil and wine. Then he lets him borrow his car, so to speak, as he puts him on his animal. Then he takes him to an inn and it says that he took care of him all night. Then he gives money to the innkeeper and tells him to take care of him and when he comes back, he will pay for all the bills he has incurred.

The Samaritan is the epitome of complete compassion.

The stunning thing about this story is that in His answer to the lawyer who asks, "Who is my neighbor," Jesus is saying two things: (1) Any stranger in your area of contact and knowledge is your neighbor, and (2) you must show him or her complete compassion if given the opportunity.

Jesus says, "Go and do likewise and show mercy." Go and do likewise.

He is not asking us to go on Old Pali Road at midnight or on Kunia Road to look for people in trouble. The traveler on the road is anyone we come into contact with who needs help.

A slogan comes to mind: Be A Good Neighbor, First Prez is there. How is First Prez there?

Our church believes that we are to help people as holistically as possible. If First Prez members need help paying their bills, we have a fund to help them if they apply. If they need to be visited in the hospital or at home, our deacons and pastors visit them. If people need counseling, we offer free pastoral counseling. If people want teaching in various subjects, we offer them a huge buffet of adult education classes.

And when it comes to prayer, we don't just pray and hope for the best. We go for the gold! We pray for physical healing and that it could happen right then. We pray that burdens might be lifted right at that moment.

We also believe in miraculous healing prayer. To be honest, not every one does. Most people, including Christians, believe that God can heal immediately, but He doesn't do that anymore. Some believe the miracles of healing ended when Jesus left this earth or when the apostles died.

But then that would make the Bible the most frustrating book in the world because the narratives of all four gospels, the book of Acts, and the history of the early and modern church are full of reports of miraculous, immediate healings.

According to the Bible, the mark of Jesus' disciples was that when they prayed, people got healed right then. Jesus always spoke in terms of how His followers would cast out demons, heal the sick, and tell others the good news of the Gospel.

But somehow over the centuries, the church only continued telling others about the gospel AND SKIPPED over the casting out of demons and the healing of sick. When people get healed it should point them to Christ and the Gospel.

Today, when people pray for the sick, many of them don't expect in their hearts that healing will happen. But listen to the words of Jesus as He told the disciples how they and we are to minister. First, in the Gospel of Matthew:

Matt. 10:1 Then Jesus summoned his twelve disciples and gave them authority over unclean spirits, to cast them out, and to cure every disease and every sickness.

Notice how it says they were to cure every disease, not just pray for healing. Then in the Gospel of Mark:

Mark 6:7 He called the twelve and began to send them out two by two, and gave them authority over the unclean spirits.

Mark 6:12 So they went out and proclaimed that all should repent.

Mark 6:13 They cast out many demons, and anointed with oil many who were sick and cured them.

Then in the Gospel of Luke:

Luke 10:8 Whenever you enter a town and its people welcome you, eat what is set before you;

Luke 10:9 cure the sick who are there, and say to them, 'The kingdom of God has come near to you.'

Notice how the Gospel writers are not talking about praying for the sick; they are talking about praying and seeing people cured all in the context that the kingdom of God is at hand. It's a new day now that Jesus has come.

As you know, for many years I was one of those who didn't think that people could be healed in prayer right as they were being prayed for. But then one day I saw healing happen with my own eyes.

My friend David Bunker had polio, a nerve atrophy disease, for 52 years. Then one night 10 years ago we prayed for him at an HIM conference and he got healed! He said he felt his bones and muscles realigning.

The daily pain he lived with, which he said was a 7 out of a 10 where he couldn't even cross his legs or walk sideways without terrible pain, dropped to about a level of 2 or 3. He came to an HIM seminar with braces and crutches, and walked out without them! I knew him for 17 years and I knew this was no fake. Pam and I just visited him two weeks ago, and ten years later he is still in good shape and walks with no crutches.

Executive Director Ron Mathieu's son Chris hurt himself when he terribly twisted his foot that had gotten caught between the slats of a loading crate in a warehouse. He came to a new members class but couldn't stay because of the throbbing pain in his swollen foot. But before he left, we prayed for him, and the pain immediately disappeared!

Chris went home to find his parents talking with a friend about whether miraculous healing is really for today. Chris walked into the house as living proof that yes, miraculous healing still happens today. A long-time chronic injury in Chris's foot that had a constant clicking sound also got healed.

But the skeptic in us asks, "Where is the medical scientific proof?"

We don't always see it; it's out there, but here is one. You all know that my mom had stage IV lung cancer that spread all throughout her body and into her bones. She was expected to die within six months to a year. Doctors said that once the disease is in the bones, there is no medicine that can extract the cancer from the bones.

We prayed for miraculous healing for her. She lived longer than a year.

Fifteen months later they took another bone scan, and results showed that most of the cancer had disappeared!

My non-Christian radiologist said, "This is a miracle. This is not supposed to happen."

My mom lived for four and-a-half years longer, which is to say that not all healings last forever, or else no one would die.

We have had healing services here about every two or three months on a Sunday night, and normally anywhere from 100 to 400 people show up. And we have seen many, many miraculous healings.

You have heard people from this chancel share how they have had decades of knee pain, but after being prayed for, the pain immediately disappeared. Many have received answered prayers and healing for relief from migraines, depression, and even pancreatic cancer.

But we are not going to wait for a Sunday night for the next healing service. Today, we are having a healing service instead of our regular Sunday morning worship service. We are going to devote time during this service to give an opportunity to anyone who wants healing to come forward and be prayed for by our elders and the prayer team. It will be a short prayer, probably a minute or less.

I wanted to have a healing service on a Sunday morning to show the entire church that a healing service is not whacky or weird or highly dramatic. Nearly every one of us has seen horrible abuses on television of so called faith healers. They are often very theatrical, making us doubtful of their tactics and results. But in the Bible, whenever Jesus and the disciples

prayed for people, it was very casual and normal.

I believe praying for and, more importantly, expecting miracles should be part of the average Christian life, as normal as breathing in and out.

You may say, "But Dan, I don't have faith that I can get healed."

Let me and the prayer teams worry about that. We have faith that God can do something beautiful today. To relieve you, it has nothing to do with your faith on whether you get healed.

Lazarus was dead when he got healed, and so as far as I know he had zero faith while he was buried. He was dead! Jairus' daughter in the New Testament was dead, too, and was raised up and she had no faith. Over and over again people in the Bible got healed who had little or no faith. So no worry; faith on your part is not a prerequisite.

Now, it does seem clear that the people who pray and those in the room should have faith. And I know the prayer teams have faith, and I know we have an atmosphere of faith right here right now. And throughout today's service I am going to ask all of you to pray in faith for the people coming up front.

To come up front, all you need to do is give a short request for a miraculous healing – be it physical, emotional or spiritual. God will do the rest and the prayer teams will be His conduits.

Now let me say this, sometimes the healing happens later as people drive home or the next day. I don't know why. It's up to God how He wants it done.

Second, not everyone will be healed. Again, I don't know why and it's up to God's wisdom.

We're dealing with a personal God here, not a spiritual ATM. But all who come forward will be blessed.

And I should say that sometimes a person needs more than one prayer for the healing to happen. Even for Jesus there is an episode in the Bible where Jesus heals a blind man but not until after a second try. After the first prayer, the blind man's vision started coming back and things still looked blurry for him. Then after Jesus prays for him a second time, his vision becomes clear. So you may have to come back again for more prayer.

We should always be praying. Only twice do the words "this is the will of God" appear in the Bible, so when we come across them, we should do what the Bible says the will of God is.

1Thes. 5:16-18 Rejoice always, pray without ceasing, give thanks in all circumstances; for this is the will of God in Christ Jesus for you.

So here is how we are going to do this. I am going to say a mass healing prayer to ask that God send to us here His Holy Spirit and His healing power that there may be miracles of healings today.

In years past, people are normally healed during this time.

Then we are going to devote the rest of the time, as Cory plays music in the background, to pray for healing for anyone who wants it.

We encourage you to come forward and sit in the front row here. The ushers with the red lanyards will guide you from there to the prayer team who will be wearing the green lanyards.

No item is too big. All we ask is that you just mention one thing, not your whole life story, just one item (e.g. sore elbow, knee, depression,

cancer, migraine) and you will be prayed for by an elder or a prayer team member.

We ask you to come forward to the front row and sit there and the ushers will guide you from there to the prayer team member who is available to pray for you.

Some of you might want to instead go to the Mauka Room and there prayer team members are ready to pray for you, too. We have a waiting area with chairs in case the line for prayer gets long.

If, after 15 minutes of prayer, we have a big crowd here in the Sanctuary, we will move all of the remaining people to the Mauka Room or the lanai next to the Mauka Room.

As a reminder, to go to the Fellowship Hall and Ko'olau Kitchen today, which will be open till 2pm, please go around to your right so that the area outside the Mauka room can be easily used for prayer.

The rest of you, I invite you, if you do not come forward to sit and pray, pray for healing, pray for those going forward, pray for the Holy Spirit to saturate this room with His healing power.

After that, at any time you may leave when you want to, but I ask that you leave quietly without talking to others to maintain a quiet environment for those who are being prayed for up front.

If we have a lot of people coming forward and should there be a time we need to be ready for the next service, ushers will guide you to the Mauka room where we will finish praying for every person. There are many chairs set up for you just outside Mauka until the ushers can guide you into the prayer room.

So we ask you to be patient and we will get to you all.

I would suggest that you consider adapting the Dan-and-Pam practice of always asking for prayer when an opportunity presents itself. Whenever we are at a conference or a church and someone asks, "Does anyone want prayer," Pam and I always go forward. What is there to lose except pride?

Or maybe you find it embarrassing? But then many people will be up front for prayer, so what is there to be embarrassed by?

So if the elders and prayer team can come up and take your positions, I will now pray a mass healing prayer for all of us. Please join me and together, with all of our powerful prayers, may we see some miraculous healings today.

And so now I ask those of you who want prayer, please make your way to the front. Ushers, please hold up your hands so the people know who will be guiding them to the prayer team.

And the rest of you, please remain as long as you want to assist in praying from there and if you must leave, I ask you leave in silence to help maintain an environment that's conducive for prayer.

God bless you.

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