



Theme: Summer Stories with Jesus
"Risky Business"

Sermon preached by Jeff Huber, August 6-7, 2022, at Summit Church, Durango

Weekly Memory Verse:

²⁷ "You must love the Lord your God with all your heart, all your soul, all your strength, and all your mind." And, 'Love your neighbor as yourself.'" – Luke 10:27

VIDEO Sermon Starter

Several years ago, one of our members who was driving home up Florida Rd several weeks ago during one of those downpours we have been having and there was someone hitchhiking up the road just passed a car that look like it had stalled. They wondered, "Should I stop? Should I make an excuse in my head?" Have you ever come across a moment like that in your life? Hang in there with me and I'll give you their answer about that situation at the end of the sermon, because these dilemmas are the kind that Jesus is speaking into in the parable that is before us today.

Jesus told more than 40 different stories and it comprises 35% of the Gospel of Mark, 52% of Luke's gospel, and 45% of Matthew's

gospel. These stories are seen as the most authentic of the words of Jesus that we have in the Scriptures, and through them we have a chance to meet, know, and follow Jesus. These were well known stories that it is pretty clear Jesus told on multiple occasions. If we want to be the presence of Jesus Christ in the world, as we say in our mission statement in this church, we must know these stories and what they mean for our lives.

But these stories also extend beyond the church or even being a follower of Jesus. The story we focus on today is maybe his most widely known story. It's a story that is used outside the church as president have used this story in inaugural addresses. There are charities and nonprofit to use this story as their namesake which helps them live into their mission. There are laws in almost every state which use this story's name to describe them. There are hospitals named after this story because it describes who they long to be as they serve those who are broken, sick, and hurting. Given all that as introduction, what is this story called?

SLIDE The Good Samaritan

This story is broadly accepted across ideologies and cultures and seems to be a simple story about compassion, but we will see today it is much more. This story is meant to inform our actions and how we live as followers of Jesus. We have learned over the past few weeks that wild the stories that Jesus told might seem simple, there is nothing simple about them. It's easy to get stuck looking at the surface of a story, especially when it's short and succinct, but every one of the stories of Jesus has multiple layers that are meant to make us think and lead to a deeper truth.

SLIDE Parables have layers to take us deeper

Jesus understood that stories also help us be a part of something bigger than ourselves. Stories bring together a community. Stories capture our imagination. Stories invite us into a new understanding of

the world around us. Stories can change our perspective and in turn, change our world.

SLIDE parable = “to throw along beside”

I remind you that the word parable means to, “Throw alongside,” by extension meaning comparison, illustration, or analogy. It was the name given by Greeks to an illusion in the form of a brief fictional narrative. Jesus would tell brief stories and invite us to throw them alongside of the Kingdom of God because he knew that these stories would help us see more deeply who we are and whose we are. We are meant to enter the stories to help see God and ourselves more fully.

SLIDE We can’t separate Parables from Jesus

Jesus sets up this story and it's once again important to remember That we can't separate the stories from Jesus and from the context in which he is telling them. Here is what we read in Luke 10.

BIBLE

²⁵ One day an expert in religious law stood up to test Jesus by asking him this question: “Teacher, what should I do to inherit eternal life?”

²⁶ Jesus replied, “What does the law of Moses say? How do you read it?”

²⁷ The man answered...

Let's say these next words out loud because it is our scripture memory verse for the week, and it is at the core of our mission as a church Seeking to be the presence of Jesus in the world.

BIBLE

“‘You must love the Lord your God with all your heart, all your soul, all your strength, and all your mind.’ And, ‘Love your neighbor as yourself.’”

BIBLE

²⁸ “Right!” Jesus told him. “Do this and you will live!”

²⁹ The man wanted to justify his actions, so he asked Jesus, “And who is my neighbor?”

The expert in religious law, also known as an attorney in the 1st century, was simply asking who it is that he REALLY had to love. What he is really asking is, “Who can I leave out? Who do I not have to love? It would be nice to narrow down the list, don't you think?”

This interchange, in which Jesus asked a question in response to a question, sets up the parable of the Good Samaritan. The story is meant to take us deeper and be thrown alongside a powerful truth using a technique we learned about in the very first week of this sermon series, and that is when storytelling uses a set of three, or a trilogy. This pattern leads 3 characters through a story. Oftentimes, the first two characters fail which paves the way for the third character to become the hero of the story. We hear this in these stories.

GRAPHIC Cinderella and two stepsisters

GRAPHIC The three little pigs

GRAPHIC Goldilocks and the three bears

In the story that Jesus tells, he is going to use a set of three that everyone would have understood who was listening who had a Jewish background.

BIBLE

³⁰ Jesus replied with a story: “A Jewish man was traveling from Jerusalem down to Jericho, and he was attacked by bandits. They stripped him of his clothes, beat him up, and left him half dead beside the road.

³¹ “By chance a priest came along. But when he saw the man lying there, he crossed to the other side of the road and passed him by. ³² A Temple assistant walked over and looked at him

lying there, but he also passed by on the other side.

When Jesus begins this story by talking about a priest and a Levite, which would have been the temple assistant, everyone is waiting for the third character which they all know in their heads, because it was mentioned in scripture on multiple occasions. This third character will save the day and be the hero, and Jesus is setting people up to imagine who that third person will be. The idea of a priest and a Levite being together in the story was so well known that people would have been ready to recite the third person of this group much like they would add bears to lions and tigers and Moe to Larry and curly. It would be similar to the way that we would finish a sentence if I began talking about these trios that are so well known.

GRAPHIC Lions and Tigers and ... Bears

GRAPHIC Larry, Curly, and ... Moe

GRAPHIC The Three ... Amigos

GRAPHIC Alvin, Simon and ... Theodore

We respond instinctively to these first two by adding the third one. There is no hesitation because you know what is coming next. You need all three to complete the set. My guess is that most of us are not as familiar with The Three Amigos or The Chipmunks, but you get the idea. It becomes natural and it's something we're anticipating after we hear the first two or the introduction to the group. I said to you Father, Son, and... Holy Spirit.

SLIDE Father, Son, and ...

This is how it was for the Jewish audience listening to this story as Jesus tells it in Luke's gospel. The expected trio for those steeped in Judaism would have not been a Samaritan. That might be what we are anticipating, but it was not expected by those in the 1st century based on a scripture in Ezra 10 and Nehemiah 11 in the Hebrew Bible, what we call the Old Testament. Every time they heard a priest and a Levite

put together; they would round out the group of three with an Israelite.

SLIDE Priest, Levite, and an Israelite

This is the set of three they were expecting, and the Israelite was supposed to be the hero of the story, just like it was a Jewish person who was the victim. Instead, Jesus would radically offend them with this next part of the story.

BIBLE

³³ “Then a despised Samaritan came along, and when he saw the man, he felt compassion for him. ³⁴ Going over to him, the Samaritan soothed his wounds with olive oil and wine and bandaged them. Then he put the man on his own donkey and took him to an inn, where he took care of him. ³⁵ The next day he handed the innkeeper two silver coins, telling him, ‘Take care of this man. If his bill runs higher than this, I’ll pay you the next time I’m here.’

SLIDE Parables are not timid stories

The parables of Jesus should shock us and surprise us and sometimes offend us, and that certainly would have been true of this story for those Jewish listeners. They did not put Jesus to death on a cross because he told nice bedtime stories. These stories turned the world of the first century upside down, and I would argue that if we read them carefully, they do the same for us today. We like the parables to be nice and neat and tidy, which I don’t think Jesus intended, and that for sure would have been the case with this parable given those who were listening.

Samaritans were despised and ignored at all costs. Samaritans were always less than and you would never expect to help a Samaritan, let alone be helped by one. Samaritans were so disdained that those listening believed it would have been better to die on the side of the road than be rescued by one. Anytime a Jewish person would think of a

Samaritan, they would remember Genesis 34 where Shechem, a Samaritan, sexually assaults Dinah, a Jewish daughter of Jacob. they may have thought about Judges 9 or Abimelech, a Samaritan, was vying to be king and the only way he could do it was to murder 70 other Jewish leaders who were seeking the same position.

When Jewish people thought of Samaritans, they immediately thought of people who were impure, evil, rapists, and murderers. They certainly didn't think they would be the hero of any Jewish story, because they were the enemy. Jesus says that a priest and a Levite failed in his story and so everyone was expecting an Israelite to save the day, but Jesus turns their expectations and assumptions upside down when the hero of the story turns out to be a Samaritan. It is putting it mildly to say this story is surprising. This story was offensive. One of the ways we understand how offensive this story was is in the response of the attorney asking the questions of Jesus.

BIBLE

³⁶ “Now which of these three would you say was a neighbor to the man who was attacked by bandits?” Jesus asked.

The answer to this question is easy and should be a slam dunk. Jesus set the story up so well that there really is only one answer, and it is the Samaritan. Yet the religious leader misses it. Something interesting that we may not pick up on is that the Jewish men won't even say the word, “Samaritan.” Instead...

BIBLE

³⁷ The man replied, “The one who showed him mercy.”

He might as well have said, “He who shall not be named!” I can guarantee you that the man's jaw hit the ground when Jesus finished this story and his teaching with these words.

BIBLE

Then Jesus said, “Yes, now go and do the same.”

“Go and do the same...as a Samaritan?! You have got to be kidding me Jesus. How dare you compare me to a Samaritan and say that I should do what he did!” I don't think we have any idea how offensive this story would have been to the Jewish listeners of the 1st century who were following Jesus. It should also not surprise us that this story became known as the story of the Good Samaritan, as opposed to all the other Samaritans who were bad. The very title of the story is meant to tell us something about how people viewed Samaritans when Jesus was telling the story.

Why did Jesus tell this story in such a way that it took the expected hero and instead used an enemy to take on the role of that hero? Jesus knows that the assumptions of this religious teacher, and indeed our assumptions today some 2000 years later about the categories in which we place people, can keep us from experiencing the Kingdom of God both now and for eternity. Jesus is reminding us that this life is practice and we will create for ourselves prisons of division and judgment and anger and bitterness unless we learn how to go and do the same as the Good Samaritan, being willing to show mercy in the most unusual places.

It's also important to note that the attorney in this story was not really asking Jesus a question but was simply trying to make sure all of the boxes were checked so he would get into heaven or experience eternal life. Jesus makes it clear in this story that just getting ourselves ready for heaven is not enough, but we are to live in such a way now that we help this life look more like the Kingdom of God. The attorney wanted Jesus the attorney wanted Jesus to affirm his life choices and not challenge him.

Instead, Jesus challenges him and pushes him to live his life differently to experience a life that is full here and now, and for eternity. let's be honest and admit that it's much easier to love God and love others abstractly that it is to get specific like Jesus does in this story. Luke also tells us that the teacher and religious law was trying to

justify himself when he asked who his neighbor was. There's this idea that if we just do everything that we are asked, and follow all the rules, then we can experience salvation.

Jesus pushes us past the simple story of doing a nice thing for someone else. Jesus is asking us to put the name of the unexpected person in the third role as the hero. There was a Democrat and the Republican, and they both passed by, but a Politician is the one who stops to help! Yes, even the one who can't seem to work with others and pass any meaningful legislation! The illegal immigrant is the one who stops to help. The Democrat is the one who stops to help. The Republican is the one who stops to help. The news anchor you can't stand is the one who stopped to help. The Las Vegas Raider fan is the one who stops to help. The Texan, the Californian, the Russian, the Chinese, the... I can hear some of you thinking, "That's not right pastor Jeff! How dare you pastor Jeff!" You fill in the blank now.

SLIDE _____ **stops to help.**

This is exactly the point Jesus is trying to make. Experiencing eternal life is about learning to utter the word you would put in the place of Samaritan and doing so with compassion and mercy. **This is risky business** and sometimes we get burned. Jesus is challenging us to meet people where they are and offer them mercy, just like the Samaritan was willing to care for his enemy who was Jewish, beaten and battered on the side of the road. This is the way of Jesus, and it's the gospel which is good news for all, and it is challenging and leads to life that is full and rich and eternal. This is agape love, love that is a choice and sacrificial.

The Rev. Dr. Martin Luther King preached on this parable the night before he was killed. It was the last sermon he would give, and he describes this parable in a prophetic way, considering it most likely would lead to his death as he headed to Memphis TN to support sanitation workers in their strike for a livable wage and humanitarian

treatment. Dr. King said these words in that sermon.

SLIDE The first question which the Priest and the Levite asked was:
“If I stop to help this man, what will happen to me?”

SLIDE But the good Samaritan reversed the question: ***“If I do not stop to help this man, what will happen to him?”***

Dr. King reminds us that the point of this parable is to pull ourselves out of our tendency to be selfish and instead think about others first. If we don't act, what will happen to others? If we don't act, what will happen to God's creation? If we don't act, will we miss out on helping God's Kingdom to come here on earth as it is in heaven? Doctor King concluded his sermon by saying he had to go to Memphis because of what would happen to those sanitation workers. As a result, he would give his life. This is the risky business Jesus invites us into as we read this parable of the Good Samaritan.

I found myself thinking about the true story of Desmond Doss who was part of one of the bloodiest battles in World War II at a place called Hacksaw Ridge in the Pacific theater. The only things he took into that battle were his faith and his Bible as he was an active 7th day Adventist. Even though he was a pacifist, he felt called to serve his country, so he enlisted as a medic, and he endured moments like this during his training.

VIDEO Desmond Doss Basic Training

He persevered through that training and was called into active duty in 1945. His first major battle was named for Hacksaw Ridge, which was given its name because there was a 400-foot-high sheer cliff that needed to be overtopped before reaching the battlefield at the top. The battleground at the top was fortified with heavy artillery by Japanese soldiers. Private Doss' troop suffered massive casualties like so many groups before them as they tried to take the Ridge. They were forced to retreat, and Desmond was left at the top of the ridge as night fell, trying to decide what to do with the wounded soldiers still on the

battlefield ridge.

Should he stay and risk his life for the wounded soldiers left behind, or should he retreat like the rest of his troop? The climax of the movie happened as Private Desmond Doss responds in one of the most heroic efforts in battle history, and in many ways connect directly to this parable which is one that has read daily as part of his devotional and morning routine.

VIDEO Desmond Doss – Lord Just One More

Desmond continued all night, carrying over 100 men, both Japanese and American soldiers, over the Ridge and down the 400-foot Cliff. He wasn't worried about his salvation or his well-being. He rescued them and carried them to safety, just one more at a time. After lowering each person, he would pray, "Lord, help me find just one more."

What if that was our daily prayer? What if, as we went about our day at work or at school or in our neighborhood or in our building, we asked God to show us how we can serve just one more? What if we invited God to help us have courage to enter into the lives of people that we see as enemies so we might better understand them and begin to heal divisions in our country? How might the world be different if each one of us who followed Jesus made a choice to show mercy like the Good Samaritan in very practical ways on a daily basis?

While not all of us are called to be as exceptional as Desmond Doss, we all do have moments every day in which we are invited to respond by either opening our heart or closing ourselves off. That brings me back to the person driving up the road in a rainstorm and deciding whether or not they should pick up this person on the side of the road. They did pull over, but not before face timing a friend and letting them know they were picking up this person and keeping them on the phone while the person got into the car. They introduced their friend to this new stranger who was soaking wet and after it was clear

nothing nefarious was going to happen, they hung up the phone and continued up the road. I do want to be clear that there are moments where these situations might happen and especially if you are on your own it is important to take precautions. Sometimes, the best solution is to call 911 and let them handle the situation.

The reason I heard about this situation is not because the church member told me but because that soaking wet hitchhiker ended up in church the next week. In the course of their conversation driving home, the subject of religion came up and the person driving mentioned they came to our church. That drenched person on the side of the road decided to give us a try and began attending worship regularly. They would tell me later that being here changed their life and helped them through a very dark time. They had a Stephen Minister and they connected with a Bible study. Eventually, they reconnected with their family and reconciled by learning to let go of some old bitterness and resentment.

You see, it all starts with that prayer of just one more. My hope is that we might be a church where we are praying every day, “Lord, help me to love you and love others and share the good news by keeping my eyes open or just one more opportunity.” Who is your just one more, and do you trust God to be a part of God’s risky business? Let's pray.

SLIDE Prayer

Gracious God, we thank you for these stories which remind us of your sacrificial and unconditional love, which reaches far beyond our understanding. We thank you for the story of the Samaritan who had the courage to take up some risky business, serving the man who was his enemy on the side of the road. we thank you for heroes like Desmond Doss and Martin Luther King Who had the courage to risk and sacrificed everything so others might have life and freedom. help us to have that same courage and be the presence of Jesus Christ by loving you, loving others, and sharing the good news of risky business. Amen.

August 6-7 Order

1. Ely welcomes people and says, **“Today we continue looking at the stories Jesus, seeing how these stories point to how we look at each other and how we treat one another. This story challenges our assumptions, especially in a world like ours which seems so divided.”**
2. Two Songs
3. Jeff welcomes and invites people to greet each other however they are comfortable and be seated.
4. Ashleigh do Announcements (Check News Section on Website)
 - a. Help with Eagle Lake Camp
 - b. Drinks with the Pastor on August 11
 - c. Worship Night at Rotary Park
5. Invite congregation to prepare their hearts for the message.
6. Sermon
7. Prayer
8. Two Songs
9. Prayer and Lord’s Prayer
10. Offering SLIDE and Focus (Giving Garden and Ukraine School)
11. Care Ministers (If any are present)
12. Prayers and Closing Thoughts
 - i. Prayer focus August is Education
13. Closing Prayer