

Bible Study Notes: 11 July 2026

Theme: “Who is my Neighbour?”

Scripture Reading: Luke 10:25–37 (NLT)

The Bible Study Notes for discussion this week are from Scott McKnight. I hope that you will find this changed format helpful for your Small Group meeting, and/or your personal devotional time. Have a blessed week.

Tim.

Comments:

REDEMPTION’S CALLING

One of the Bible’s most profound questions appears in our passage: “Who is my neighbor?” Jesus asks that same question in a slightly different form at the end of the passage: “Which of these three do you think was a neighbor to the man who fell into the hands of robbers?” Those questions have an answer that reveals redemption’s calling for each of us, and the answer is wrapped up in a parable (see remarks at Luke 8:1–21). Because of our mistaken stereotyping of characters in this passage, I will concentrate on correcting our readings.

STEREOTYPE 1

Stereotypes are useful except they aren’t, and many use stereotypes to read this passage in a way that wounds more than it redeems. In Luke’s Gospel a person designated as an “expert in the law” tends to be negative, and you can look up some references for proof (7:30; 11:45, 46, 52; 14:3). Such persons had deep concerns with the influence of Jesus, of course, but the problem is that too many Christians move from this text into thinking all rabbis are like this and then all Jews are like this, and before long we are staring into the face of our own anti-Semitism.

The lawyer here has a serious question: What do I need to do to enter the kingdom? (10:25). Jesus, in true rabbi-like fashion, answers the question by asking a question. The lawyer answers Jesus with the heart of what I call the Jesus Creed—love God, love your neighbor as yourself, both from the law of Moses (Deuteronomy 6:5–9; Leviticus 19:18). Jesus then tells him to “do this and you will live” into the kingdom (Luke 10:28).

The lawyer now acts out a stereotype. Wanting “to justify himself,” he asks, “Who is my neighbor?” (10:29), which surely means “Who is actually not my neighbor?” (Levine-Witherington, *Luke*, 290). To shame the man out of his arrogance Jesus tells his most well-known, hospitable—and social-justice-naming parable.

STEREOTYPE 2

In the parable three more stereotypes come to the surface: a (1) priest and a (2) Levite are depicted as Jewish religious leaders who are heartless followers of a law not even mentioned in this text. Namely, they excused their lack of compassion because they wanted to follow laws of purity. Yes, Numbers 19:11–13 teaches about defiling oneself by touching a corpse, and this is especially true for priests (Leviticus 21:1–4). But, as I have myself, think again about it: the disabled man was not dead (Luke 10:30 has “half dead”), and the priest and Levite were not headed toward Jerusalem and the temple, where purity obtains, but away from the temple, where defilement was not so serious an issue. Jesus’ audience was stunned by the lack of compassion of the priest and the Levite.

STEREOTYPE 3

A third stereotype is the Samaritan. In very common listings the Bible speaks of priests, Levites, and Israelites (Ezra 10:5; Nehemiah 11:3). So common is that listing that the first two lead one to expect something about the third, an Israelite, but there’s the surprise. Jesus hops lanes and speaks of a Samaritan (see Levine, *Short Stories*, 102–103).

We ache to find analogies in our world for this amazing parable of Jesus and we tend to grab something close to home: someone who is marginalized or oppressed. But both miss the point. A Samaritan in the first century was the ethnic, shunned, religious enemy (Matthew 10:5; John 4:9). Not only is the Samaritan the enemy, but Samaritans had just rejected the missionaries of Jesus (Luke 9:51–56). The apostles thought the Samaritans deserved Sodom and Gomorrah’s judgment! They thought of revenge; Jesus thought of love. Luke put this parable in this location to show how Jesus himself responded to Samaritans, and how the apostles should have responded.

(One more point: when we call the Samaritan the “good” Samaritan we suggest, or at least some suggest, the other Samaritans were not good. Which is ethnic profiling. Again, Levine-Witherington, *Luke*, 291.)

THE POINT

Jesus could not have been bolder: to expose the lack of compassion by two proponents of God’s will and by a group of missionaries who had revenge on their minds, Jesus reveals true compassion in the compassion of an enemy and so shames those who lack compassion. Instead of our pointing long fingers at the priest and Levite we are the ones, like the missionaries, who need to be exposed for our lack of compassion on those in need, including those Samaritans who rejected Jesus. Perhaps we need to pause right now to ask ourselves “Am I likewise doing?”

Redemption’s calling.

QUESTIONS FOR REFLECTION AND APPLICATION

1. In what ways can this story be misinterpreted to move toward anti-Semitism?
2. How does Jesus challenge expectations by bringing in a Samaritan?

3. How does this parable show the difference between Jesus' response to Samaritans versus the disciples' response to them?
4. Have you ever considered what this parable taught the disciples, more than what it taught the original question-asker?
5. Where in your life might you need to develop more compassion that takes action?

Acknowledgments:

New Testament Everyday: Luke

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Luke 10:25-37 NLT - The Most Important Commandment - One - Bible Gateway

FOR FURTHER READING

Amy-Jill Levine, *Short Stories by Jesus: The Enigmatic Parables of a Controversial Rabbi* (New York: HarperOne, 2014), 77–115.