



WESTMINSTER
PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH

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Are You Still Coming Over?
Dr. Bruce Lancaster

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2 Corinthians 8:1-11

Luke 10:25-37

A woman telephoned a friend and asked how she was feeling.

“Terrible,” was the reply. “My head’s splitting; I’ve got a pain in my back, and my legs ache all over...the house is a mess, and the children are driving me crazy.”

Was it one of you she called?

“Listen,” said the woman caller, “you go and lie down. I’ll come right over, fix some lunch for you, take care of the kids while you get some rest, clean up a little bit and then have supper ready for when Sam gets home.”

“Sam?” asked the hurting housewife.

“Yes, your husband.”

“My husband is Joe, not Sam.”

“Oh my goodness, I must have the wrong number!”

There was a long pause on the other end, “Are you still coming over?”

And that’s the point of this old, familiar parable.

This man is walking the road from Jerusalem down to Jericho. It’s a road that is best traveled in the safety of a group.

Anyone with half a brain knew it was the fool who tempted fate by traveling alone.

But the Good Samaritan goes over to the one who is hurting because she hears in the “*Are you still coming over?*” the urgency of the love required.

Quite aside from any of the normal procedures of getting to know each other, making friends, traveling in a dangerous neighborhood, what might happen to me, just, “*He needs me here and now.*”

The Samaritan goes over and binds up his wounds.

Hans Kung, the great theologian, puts it in lawyer language, when he says of this story: It leaves no loopholes for excuses or equivocations.

No room for the priestly excuse: I help in other ways; I’ve already donated at the office.

No more room for the Levitical equivocation: He has only himself to blame for being in that situation.

A love without loopholes. That was new for the lawyer back then, and it’s a dulled point for us today with all our policies and biases and prejudices and politics and just plain old laziness: our excuses, our equivocations.

Wanda, a nurse, was talking to a church’s Session about her CPR class and recommended defibrillators for the church to have for emergencies, how it could save a life.

One elder spoke up, “The church’s role is to save souls, not lives!” Then he realized what he said, “Anyway, it costs too much!”

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And the discussion revolved around those two questions for the rest of the meeting, “Just what do we save and how much will it cost?”

But in Jesus’ story, which began with a question about salvation, the Good Samaritan goes over, and the one who asked the question in the first place finds out that neighbor might be a wrong number, a complete stranger.

And Jesus shows us that if you are going to live in the kingdom of God, the real question is not what it will cost but “how much am I willing to commit?”

And that’s more than the point of this old, familiar parable: It’s the personal, the person, the power of this parable.

Jesus turns to us all and seeks an explanation of our answer when he asks, “Are you still coming over?”

Because Jesus is asking us if we want to set limitations on love, to limit our love by how others look or worship or lifestyles or where you come from...or do you want to live out the generosity of God to go to any who need you?

John Calvin wrote: *Now, in seeking to benefit one’s neighbor, how difficult it is to do one’s duty! Unless you give up all thought of self and, so to speak, get out of yourself, you will accomplish nothing here. For how can you perform those works which Paul teaches to be the works of love, unless you renounce yourself and give yourself wholly to others?*

Let me stop. How did you hear what I just said, to ‘give yourself wholly to others: ‘wholly’ with a ‘w-h-o-l-l-y’ or holy with an ‘h-o-l-y’?

Could it be that they are actually one and the same: to give oneself ‘w-h’ wholly is the same as a ‘h-o’ holy act in the name of Jesus Christ?

Or to be ‘h-o’ holy is to give one’s self ‘w-h-o’ wholly to God.

A missionary was witnessing to the chief of a primitive tribe. The chief was trying to impress the missionary with gifts that were of great value in his culture: pigs and potatoes and jewelry.

The missionary said to the chief, "My God does not want the chief's pigs or potatoes or jewelry. My God wants the Chief himself."

The Chief smiled and replied, "You have a very wise God, for when I give your God myself, he also gets my pigs and potatoes and jewelry."

Just as Frances Havergal wrote in that beautiful hymn:

*Take my love, my Lord, I pour;
At thy feet, its treasure's store.
Take myself, I will be
Ever only, all for thee.*

Ever only, all for thee...a picture of generosity, lived out by the Good Samaritan.

And that’s the hashtag, #livinggenerosity, that Paul puts on this picture of the Macedonian church in his letter to the Corinthians: "*Their abundant joy and extreme poverty have overflowed in a wealth of generosity on their part.*"

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Abundant joy and a wealth of generosity...we know, don't we, how much the attitude of the giver has to do with the value of the gift.

A father told of a time, a rainy Saturday afternoon, as he was watching his football games on TV, his wife asked him to take their two little boys to the movies. He mumbled and grumbled a reluctant 'yes.'

On the way home, he asked them if they enjoyed the movie. One of them said, "No, not really." "Why not?" "Because we knew you really didn't want to go."

We make the choice about our attitude in giving, and it affects the value of the gift.

Generosity is always a reflection of your potential for giving, and then some!

As someone said, "We make a living by what we get, but we make a life by what we give."

What does it take for you and me to be generous for the sake of God who has given us everything, and most of all, has given us all his love in his only son, Jesus Christ?

Leslie Newbigin, a great missionary and keen observer of the church, says a church *"that is a force for God will be a community of praise...a community of truth...a community that does not live for itself...a community where men and women are prepared for and sustained in the exercise of their priesthood of believers in the world...a communion of mutual responsibility...a community of hope."*

I love that picture of a generous church: *a communion of mutual responsibility...a community of hope.*

Isn't that a picture of Westminster Presbyterian Church?

This church is known throughout this community, and its people are the forces behind it in this church's capacity to influence, your desire to help, a force for God and for good today...

There are communities who need your church, people who need your church; and your church needs you.

Now is not the time for excuses or equivocations, to pass by, to step away, to hold back, to wait and see; because the picture of generosity that this church, that you show the world is needed more than ever.

Can we see them...Some are family and friends, and we simply don't see that they are weighed down by pain and sorrow, worn out by day after day demands and difficulties, those depressed by the cruelties of nature, those who are slaves to their own passions and desires.

Others are neighbors, many are strangers who wonder and worry what Monday morning will bring: waiting for a doctor's diagnosis, insecurity at work, the pressures of school, stretched at keeping a home and family together, or those whose Monday is just another day alone.

Along the road we travel, from Haiti to Homewood, from Malawi to the oh-so-many missions in which you are the Samaritan to all those who are hungry for justice, who are thirsting to live without fear of hate and harm.

Are You Still Coming Over?

Along the road we travel, there are people looking, they are wondering, they are asking:

Are you still coming over?

TO GOD BE THE GLORY.



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