

Why Did the Samaritan Cross the Road?
Luke 10:25-37

In the 21st century we have become masters at erecting invisible walls to exclude others. They define who is worthy of our compassion and care and who is to be excluded from our concern. The 1st century was not so different. Jesus entered that world to knock walls down. He wants us to do the same.

In Luke 10, the questions of the Jewish lawyer seem honest and harmless, but he was attempting to make Jesus look either uneducated or heretical. His 1st question tested Jesus's familiarity with common Jewish teachings. His 2nd question tested Jesus's theological orthodoxy. If Jesus says, the "heretical Samaritans" or the "Roman occupiers," He will be breaking with Pharisaic orthodoxy and approved political identity. If He says, "only pure-blood Jews," He will effectively turn away many of those who had been attracted to His message.

In one sense, Jesus answered the Scribes' question with a story about a despised Samaritan, but in another sense, He didn't answer his question at all. The lawyer wants a list of people who qualify to receive his love based on shared identity. After telling the story of the Samaritan Jesus changes the word "neighbor" from a static noun to an action verb. "Neighbor" isn't a label you assign. It is an action you take.

This story is here for us. God knows it is hard for us to act like neighbors to those who don't love Jesus or obey Him. So, He instructs us to tear down any and every wall that would keep us from extending help and compassion and the love of Jesus to anyone in need. We aren't required to believe as the world does, but we are required to love the world as God loves the world and has given His one and only Son for it.

When we were sinful, ungodly, God's enemies, left for dead on the side of the road, He crossed the vast road between heaven and earth. Then He drew a circle to take us in. So, hear the one who crossed that road say to you, "Go and do likewise."