Am I a Good Neighbor? An Exegetical Study of Luke 10:25-37

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ABSTRACT

The narrative found in Luke 10:25-37 has long served as a significant reference point for preachers and biblical scholars. This passage has been subject to countless interpretations, addressing various themes ranging from ritual purity to personal safety, and extending to contemporary issues such as advocacy for freedom fighters, universal healthcare, and the ethical obligation to support the marginalized within society. The diversity of these interpretations often reflects an intention to connect the parable with current societal concerns and the evolving needs of the audience. However, many of these analyses risk misinterpretation, underscoring the importance of a contextual approach to the text through the exegetical method inherent in biblical scholarship. Such an approach necessitates an examination of the genre, translation, historical context, and principles of textual criticism, ultimately fostering a clearer theological understanding that facilitates appropriate applications of the passage. Researchers propose that the primary objective of the parable of the Good Samaritan is to prompt self-evaluation, encouraging the question, "Am I a good neighbor?" rather than merely inquiring, "Who is my neighbor?" This parable serves as an ethical exhortation to lead a life characterized by the treatment one seeks to receive, emphasizing the importance of caring for and supporting the neighbors we encounter in our daily lives.

INTRODUCTION

The parable of the Good Samaritan is one of the major parables, well-crafted and the most quoted parables in the entire Bible. This parable has been referred to by both Christians and non-Christians. This is where English men got their concept of a Good Samaritan. When a person receives a favour from a random stranger, that "very stranger" is been referred to as a Good Samaritan, for this reason, the parable is attractive and fictional but truthful in its moral lessons and message. Notably, the parable of the compassionate Samaritan (Luke 10:30-37) has been among the most famous narrative portrayals that were exemplified by Jesus. In the parable, Jesus is abruptly interrupted by an expert in the law who intends to test the Lord (Luke 10:25). The expert asks, "Who is my neighbour?" (Luke 10:29b). The paradigm of the good Samaritan parable serves to demonstrate that the demand to love God has to be complemented with the command to love a fellow neighbour beyond personal biasness and affiliations. The question of being a neighbour and knowing a neighbour is the thrust of the parable and the fundamental argument of this paper. The interpretation of the parables ought to be accomplished with the connection with Jesus' ministry in first-century Palestine and then ask the following question especially when it comes to the parables of the Good Samaritan; what connection would the hearers have made? What would have given them an unexpected shock, given their social and cultural assumptions and relations? Two things require attentiveness, such as structure and parallelism, as well as the investigation of the cultural and social realities that appear in the paragraph.[1] There is something so very important that Dodd rightly notes that the parable has the character of an argument, in that it entices the hearer to the judgment upon the situation depicted, and

[1] David A. Desilva, *New Testament: Contexts, Methods And Ministry Formation* (Downers Grove, Illinois: Intervarsity Press, 2004), 340

then challenges him/her, directly or by implication, to apply judgment to the matter in hand.[2]

THE PREVIOUS STUDIES ON GOOD SAMARITAN

The narrative of the Good Samaritan in Luke 10 warrants a thorough study that considers the contributions of various scholars who have approached it through different lenses and methodologies. One notable work is by Moses N. Mwangi in "Who Is My Neighbor? A Challenge In Our Modern Society. A Study Of The Parable Of The Good Samaritan (Lk. 10: 25-37),"[3] where he delves into the theological implications of this passage. Mwangi emphasizes that the choices readers make can indicate their alignment with Jesus' teachings. He advocates for a methodology that is descriptive, comparative, and exegetical, enabling the Gospel message of Good News to resonate with Christians committed to biblical study. In another perspective, Chandra Han and colleagues in "Solidarity in Christianity to Foster 'Bhineka Tunggal Ika': A Biblical Analysis of the Good Samaritan"[4] aim to leverage the Good Samaritan narrative to promote unity within the nation. Their work underscores the importance of fostering solidarity among diverse groups, drawing directly from the text of Luke 10:25-37.

Furthermore, J. M. Darley and C. D. Batson[5] conducted a fascinating simulated field experiment examining the behavior of seminary students in response to a real “victim.” Their

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[2] Desilva, *New Testament,* 340-350

[3] Moses N. Mwangi, “Who Is My Neighbor? A Challenge In Our Modern Society. A Study Of The Parable Of The Good Samaritan (Lk. 10: 25-37),” (Long Essay, Bachelor of Arts Degree in Religious Studies, Catholic University of Eastern Africa, 2021)

[4] Chandra Han et al., “Solidarity in Christianity to Foster “Bhineka Tunggal Ika”: A Biblical Analysis of the Good Samaritan, Luke 10:25-37,” *Pharos Journal of Theology* Vol. 104/ 1 (2023):1-14

[5] Darley, J. M and Batson C. D. “From Jerusalem to Jericho”: A Study of Situational and Dispositional Variables In Helping Behavior.” *J. Pers. Soc. Psychol.* 27 (1973):100–108.

findings revealed that those primed to reflect on the Good Samaritan parable were not more likely to help than those who discussed unrelated topics, highlighting complex interactions between faith and action. Additionally, the author of "Implications of Good Samaritan Laws for Physicians"[6] discusses how such laws incentivize the provision of emergency care by protecting medical professionals from civil liability, thereby reinforcing the spirit of the Good Samaritan in a legal context. Yong Lu's study, "The Good Samaritan Parable Revisited: A Survey During the COVID-19 Pandemic,"[7] explores the motivations of the priest, Levite, and Samaritan through the lens of regulatory focus theory. It reveals the interplay between goal pursuit and prosocial behavior during crisis situations, specifically in the context of the pandemic. Despite the varied approaches to the text, there remains a significant gap in scholarly work regarding a reflective, exegetical study of the Good Samaritan within the context of ethical living, particularly in Nigeria and Africa as a whole. Addressing this deficiency is crucial for fostering a deeper understanding and application of the parable's teachings in today's world.

EXEGETICAL STUDY OF LUKE 10:25-37

Greek Text

25 Και ιδου, νομικος τις εσηκωθη πειραζων αυτον και λεγων· Διδασκαλε, τι πραξας θελω κληρονομησει ζωην αιωνιον;
26 Ο δε ειπε προς αυτον· Εν τω νομω τι ειναι γεγραμμενον; πως αναγινωσκεις;

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[6] Timothy J Paterick, et al., "Implications of Good Samaritan Laws for Physicians," *The Journal of Medical Practice Management* 23(6) (2008):372-5

[7] Yong Lu, "The Good Samaritan Parable Revisited: A Survey During the COVID-19 Pandemic," https://pmc.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/articles/PMC9043862/ accessed 13 December, 2025

27 Ο δε αποκριθεις ειπε· Θελεις αγαπα Κυριον τον Θεον σου εξ ολης της καρδιας σου και εξ ολης της ψυχης σου και εξ ολης της δυναμεως σου και εξ ολης της διανοιας σου, και τον πλησιον σου ως σεαυτον.
28 Ειπε δε προς αυτον· Ορθως απεκριθης· τουτο καμνε και θελεις ζησει.
29 Αλλ' εκεινος, θελων να δικαιωση εαυτον, ειπε προς τον Ιησουν· Και τις ειναι ο πλησιον μου;
30 Και αποκριθεις ο Ιησους ειπεν· Ανθρωπος τις κατεβαινεν απο Ιερουσαλημ εις Ιεριχω και περιεπεσεν εις ληστας· οιτινες και γυμνωσαντες αυτον και καταπληγωσαντες, ανεχωρησαν αφησαντες αυτον ημιθανη.
31 Κατα συγκυριαν δε ιερευς τις κατεβαινε δι' εκεινης της οδου, και ιδων αυτον επερασεν απο το αλλο μερος.
32 Ομοιως δε και Λευιτης, φθασας εις τον τοπον, ελθων και ιδων επερασεν απο το αλλο μερος.
33 Σαμαρειτης δε τις οδοιπορων ηλθεν εις τον τοπον οπου ητο, και ιδων αυτον εσπλαγχνισθη,
34 και πλησιασας εδεσε τας πληγας αυτου επιχεων ελαιον και οινον, και επιβιβασας αυτον επι το κτηνος αυτου, εφερεν αυτον εις ξενοδοχειον και επεμεληθη αυτου·
35 και την επαυριον, οτε εξηρχετο, εκβαλων δυο δηναρια εδωκεν εις τον ξενοδοχον και ειπε προς αυτον· Επιμεληθητι αυτου, και ο, τι συ δαπανησης περιπλεον, εγω οταν επανελθω θελω σοι αποδωσει.
36 Τις λοιπον εκ των τριων τουτων σοι φαινεται οτι εγεινε πλησιον του εμπεσοντος εις τους ληστας;
37 Ο δε ειπεν· Ο ποιησας το ελεος εις αυτον· Ειπε λοιπον προς αυτον ο Ιησους· Υπαγε και συ, καμνε ομοιως.

English Translation

25 Behold, a certain lawyer stood up and tested him, saying, "Teacher, what shall I do to inherit eternal life?"
26 He said to him, "What is written in the law? How do you read it?"
27 He answered, "You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, with all your soul, with all your strength, and with all your mind; and your neighbour as yourself."
28 He said to him, "You have answered correctly. Do this, and you will live."
29 But he, desiring to justify himself, asked Jesus, "Who is my neighbour?"
30 Jesus answered, "A certain man was going down from Jerusalem to Jericho, and he fell among robbers, who both stripped him and beat him, and departed, leaving him half dead.

31 By chance a certain priest was going down that way. When he saw him, he passed by on the other side.
32 In the same way a Levite also, when he came to the place and saw him, passed by on the other side.
33 But a certain Samaritan, as he travelled, came where he was. When he saw him, he was moved with compassion,
34 came to him, and bound up his wounds, pouring on oil and wine. He set him on his own animal brought him to an inn, and took care of him.
35 On the next day, when he departed, he took out two denarii and gave them to the host, and said to him, 'Take care of him. Whatever you spend beyond that, I will repay you when I return.'
36 Now which of these three do you think seemed to be a neighbour to him who fell among the robbers?"
37 He said, "He who showed mercy on him." Then Jesus said to him, "Go and do likewise."

THE GENRE'S ISSUES OF THE TEXT

Identifying the genre of a written work clarifies some of the shared expectations both the author and audience bring to a text. In the case of Luke's gospel, two items have influenced the scholarly consensus concerning genre. Luke's gospel, as a single work, could be classified as an ancient biography.[8] However, because the Gospel is considered to be the first volume of a larger two-volume work (Luke-Acts), critics have used the composite two-volume work to determine genre.[9] Talk about Genre in a simple term is a literary classification that describes the broad contours and features of a particular literary work. There are several represented within the biblical text and the following are inclusive; poetry, letters, apocalyptic, proverbs and psalms some of the books that are classified as narrative are Gospel and Acts. [10] This narrative is

[8] David Aune, The New Testament in its Literary Environment (ed. W.A. Meeks; LEC 8; Philadelphia: Westminster, 1987), 77

[9] Aune, Literary Environment, 77.

[10] Michael H. Burer, "Narrative Genre: Studying the Story", 197-219, in Darrell L. Bock and Buist M. Fanning, (eds)., *Interpreting the New*

often a story in which characters are followed through various events that are connected to form a plot with an initial conflict and eventual resolution and this narrative genre often retells history, that is, events that occurred and people who lived within space and time [11] and sometimes fictional parables to communicate truth for practical living.

The text of a Good Samaritan is our consideration in this narrative genre. The ethical impulse of this good Samaritan's narrative style is very important to give careful attention to the narrative genre of the text. The periscope is categorized into the so-called 'example narratives', a genre of parable, differentiated from 'similitude' and 'parable'.[12] This kind of narrative is explained by Jülicher who understands this type of figurative speech to be "narratives that demonstrate a general set of religious-moral character in the clothes of a particularly impressively designed isolated case" and "that confirm the general truth through the evidence of the action".[13] The narrative is anything but unambiguous. It provokes, questions, and it offers alternative actions. The listeners are prompted to enter into various roles, to experience mixed emotions.[14]These are all criteria that identify the narrative as a parable, which is not less appellative and action-oriented than the narrative example but denies a simple ethical application. The implicit ethics of the parable

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Testament Text: Introduction to the Art and Science of Exegesis (Wheaton, Illinois: Good News Publishers, 2006), 1 98

[11]Burer, "Narrative Genre", 199

[12] R Zimmermann, "The Etho-Poietic Of The Parable Of The Good Samaritan (Lk 10:25-37). The Ethics Of Seeing In A Culture Of Looking The Other Way", *VERBUM ET ECCLESIA* JRG 29(1) (2008): 274

[13] A. Jülicher, *Die Gleichnisreden Jesu I und II, Tübingen* 114f (1910): 585-641

[14] D. Dormeyer, Die Parabel vom barmherzigen Samariter Lk 10,25–37 oder die Kunst, dem anderen zum Nächsten zu werden. Erzählen und interaktionales Lesen als katechetische Arbeitsweisen der Bibel, in Terbatz F.-P v. Elst (Hg.), *Katechese im Umbruch. Positionen und Perspektiven* (1998): 100–116.

are – this much is now clear – more than the application of an example, a general rule of action. It becomes a challenge.[15]

TEXTUAL CRITICISM

The lack of original manuscripts of the New Testament led to the issue of textual criticism that involves even the text of Luke 10. What we have today is trusted copies of copies which are handwriting copies and no two of these copies have exact agreement in most passages. We have misunderstood the formation of books during the New Testament because of our understanding of the production of books today through the printing press that was invented in the 1400s. However, the books of the New Testament were not produced during this printing press era.[16] The only way to get a copy of a letter or book was for someone to copy it with his hand which took a long and was not even a cheap issue. They did not have copy machines but they have professional hand writers called scribes and so textual criticism studies this manuscript evidence to determine the original text's exact wording. [17]

The textual criticism often deals with the variant reading that is acknowledged from the text which other translators have taken note of. This variant reading calls for our careful examination of the original Greek text and other English versions for careful interpretation of the text for application. This variant is based upon the fact that the pericopes found in Mark 12:30b, "…thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy mind, and with all thy strength…(emphasis mine)" and Luke 10:27b, "…Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy strength, and with all thy

[15]Zimmermann, "The Etho-Poietic Of The Parable Of The Good Samaritan (Lk 10:25-37)", 275

[16] Andrew David Naselli, *How to Understand and Apply the New Testament: Twelve Steps from Exegesis to Theology* (Phillipsburg: P &R Publishing, 2017), 36

[17] Naselli, *How to Understand and Apply the New Testament*, 36

mind…(emphasis mine)" are the only ones that give the fourfold predicate of Deuteronomy 6:5: heart, soul, mind, and strength. It is theorized by some scholars that an early scribe could have used Êáñäßá instead of äéÜíïéá for mind and a later scribe, in an attempt to harmonize manuscripts, could have included both Êáñäßá and äéÜíïéá for clarity. However this may have taken place, if it even did, does not change the overall meaning of this passage.

This writer will consider the variants of the entire periscope utilizing the English variants found in the Nestle-Aland Greek-English New Testament. The first variant is found in v. 25b. The King James Version (KJV) and the English Revised Version (ERV) follow the variant, "…a certain lawyer stood up and tempted him…," the American Standard Edition (ASE) follows the variant, "…a certain lawyer stood up and made trial of him," and the Nestle-Aland variant says, "…a lawyer stood up to put him to the test." Also in v. 25 the KJV and the ERV have the Lawyer call Jesus, "Master," while the Nestle-Aland and the ASE call Jesus, "Teacher." In v. 27 the Nestle-Aland drops 'said' from the KJV, ERV, and the ASE, "And he answering said…" In v. 29 the Nestle-Aland, ERV, and ASE replace the KJV word 'willing' with 'desiring.'[18] There are many variants found in v. 30. The KJV uses "And Jesus answering said…", the ERV and the ASE translation reads, "Jesus made answer and said…," and the Nestle-Aland reads, "Jesus replied…." Again, as in v. 25, the Nestle-Aland drops "certain" from "A certain man…" as redundant, that is found in the KJV, the ERV and the ASE. The Nestle-Aland, ERV, and ASE use the words, "…was going down…" and the KJV merely states he "…went down…." The same split among scholarly texts replaces the KJV 'thieves' with 'robbers.' In v. 36 the ASE, the ERV, and the Nestle-Aland remove 'now' from the KJV's "Which now of these three…" and changed "…was neighbour unto him…" to "…proved neighbour unto him," with

[18] Barbara Aland and Kurt Aland, *Nestle-Aland Greek-English New Testament* (Stuttgart, Germany:Deutsche Bbelgesellschaft, 2001), 193

the exception that Nestle-Aland changed 'him' to 'man.' Also in v. 36, as before in v. 30, the ASE, the ERV, and the Nestle-Aland change KJV's 'thieves' to 'robbers.' Finally, in v. 37, the Nestle-Aland reads, "He said, The one who showed…" and the rest read, "And he said, He that showed…"[19] While there are a multitude of small minor variants throughout this pericope, none of them are of any substance and there seems to be no disagreements among mainline scholars as to any of its inclusion in the earliest manuscripts.

GRAMMAR

Some scholars have identified some grammatical connotations and intentions within this parable that call for proper examination within the context. The first understanding lies in the Torah scholar calls Jesus *didaskale* a vocative form of the nominative *didaskalos* which is a normal koine translation of Hebrew rabbi.[20] The usage of *didaskale* or rabbi is an honorific that stands for a particular respected religious status. The usage of the teacher here is more of a mockery than an actual intention to learn from a respected religious leader. The narrator makes it plain to us that The Torah scholar interrupted, "wanting *to test* Jesus" (ἐκπειράζων αὐτὸν– *ekpeirazōn auton*). *Ekpeirazōn* signals hostile intent.[21] And it is not just the grammar to test Jesus that calls for our reflection on this issue but it is also the fact that he asked Jesus the question of who is my neighbor for self-justification. The grammar that was used is de *thelon daausai* which connotes self-justification in connection with the question, who is my neighbor? The narrator wants us to connect the grammar of the "test" that he first noted and the "self-justification" to show us that the intention of the man is not really to know

[19] Aland and Aland, *Nestle-Aland Greek-English New Testament*, 193-194

[20] J.B. Green, *The Gospel of Luke* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1997), 427

[21] Luka Timothy Johnson, *The Gospel of Luke* (Collegeville: Liturgical Press, 2006), 172.

but to test Jesus who he thinks does not know much compared to him the teacher of the law.

When it comes to the issue of the identity of the neighbour who was a Jew, the narrator used a Greek word πλησίον - *plēsion* "near" – certainly did apply literally to someone living in the immediate physical vicinity. But of course, the meaning is not in the word, all by itself. The literal spatial orientation frame evoked by "near" becomes (via frame metonymy) a social-relational one, and it is a reciprocal Relationship. Three terms are used γείτων, περίοικος, and πλησίον, the last is somewhat broader in meaning. At least πλησίον is used in Luke 10:27 in a somewhat extended sense of 'fellow man,' …. The translation of πλησίον as singular in Luke 10:27 may pose a problem in understanding, since the singular may be understood in a specific rather than in a generic sense, that is to say, 'love your neighbour as yourself' might immediately give rise to the question 'which neighbour?' therefore, one must often translate Luke 10:27 as 'you must love your neighbours as you love yourselves' or 'you must love other people as you love yourselves".[22]

HISTORICAL AND LITERARY CONTEXT

According to the Bible, the Samaritans were descendants of Assyrians who settled in the former kingdoms of the land of Northern Israel in the Sargon time (cf., 2 Chronicles 28, Ezra, 2 Kings 17, Nehemiah).[23]A large number of research regarding the Samaritan Pentateuch, papyri, inscriptions, archaeological discoveries, and others indicate that the Samaritans assembled as a small communal group and resided in certain, locally bounded places near the temple on Mount Gerizim.[24]

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[22] Johannes P. Louw and E. Nida (eds), *Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament Based on Semantic Domains,* 2nd edn, 11.89 (New York: United Bible Societies, 1988, 1989), 1:135

[23] F. C. Fensham, *The New International Commentary on the Old Testament: The Books of Ezra and Nehemiah* (Grand Rapids, MI: William B. Eerdmans. , 1982), 67

[24] Fensham, *The New International Commentary on the Old Testament*,18

Moreover, the Samaritans preserved their seemingly self-rooted religious kinship systems, as mostly represented by a surrogate form of worshipping venerated YHWH, the God of Israel.[25]

According to Tanaitic sources, "The ways of the Cuthites are sometimes like idolaters, sometimes like Jews. Most of them are like Jews" (Tractate Cuthim 1,1), the Cuthites/Samaritans are classified neither as Jews nor as idol worshipers. Besides, the Second Temple Jews syncretized that the Samaritans were antitheses between Israelites and pagans concerning their collective identities, politics, and religious interests (Matthew 10:5; John 4:9, 8:48, 9:51-56;[26] for conjectural employments of the Samaritans and the historicity and socialization of relevance to the Second Temple period.[27]Nevertheless, the Samaritans remained faithful servants of Israel's God. More recently, Chalmers argued against the conventionally scholarly exclusion of the Samaritans in first-century Palestine from Israelites—they were nevertheless understood by Jews as enmities; rather, the status of the Samaritans was presumably situated as an interactive inclusion of Samaritan Israelites rather than non-Israelite "others."[28] Compared with Jews, due to a lack of knowledge of the ritual precept, the Samaritans were occasionally suspicious of their strictness of abiding by the legal system of impurity and purity.[29] Even though there existed many rebuttals in late antiquity against

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[25] R.T. Anderson and T. Giles, *The Keepers: An Introduction to the History and Culture of the Samaritans* (Peabody, MA: Hendrickson, 2002), 24-34

[26] M. Kartveit, *The Origin of the Samaritans* (Leiden: Brill, 2009)

[27] M.P. Knowles, "What Was The Victim Wearing? Literary, Economic, And Social Contexts For The Parable Of The Good Samaritan", Biblical *Interpretation*, 12 (2004):145–174.

[28] M. Chalmers, "Rethinking Luke 10: The Parable Of The Good Samaritan Israelite", *J. Biblical Literature* 139, (2020): 543–566.

[29] Y. Amit, " The Samaritans—Biblical Positions In The Service Of Modern Politics", in *Samaritans—Past and Present: Current Studies*, eds Mor M., Reiterer F. V., Winkler W. (Berlin: De Gruyter, 2010), 263

the Samaritans by the Jewish tradition,[30] the Gospels show sympathetic perspectives on the ostensibly "alien" Samaritans (e.g., Luke 10:25-37, 17:16; John 4:39-42).

This narrative of Luke 10 provides a specific geographical location: somewhere along the road from Jerusalem to Jericho (the only other instance of a geographical reference for a parable is the Pharisee and the tax collector in the Jerusalem Temple in Luke 18:10). This geographical reference may have historical plausibility. Jericho was known as a place with a high population of priests and officials dedicated to serving the Jerusalem Temple. These officials were attracted by "the fertility of the Jericho region as well as its administrative importance."[31] There existed a "close connection between the Temple in Jerusalem and the priestly city of Jericho."[32] Priests and Levites were a regular feature on the Jerusalem-Jericho road as a consequence of their regular rotations to undertake service in the Temple.

Therefore, the avoidance of the man because of impurity has been a major issue in the interpretation of the text. However, John Meier observes: 'If the wounded person in Luke's parable is 'half-dead' … he therefore posed no immediate danger of corpse impurity to a Jewish priest."[33] No Torah prescriptions exist concerning priestly care for a person who is "half-dead." And if the argument is alluding to Leviticus 21:1 ("no one shall defile himself for a dead person") for guidance on contact with a corpse, the law applied only to priests, not to Levites. Therefore, there seems not to be an excuse for the Priest and Levite not to help a dying man within their religious and

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30 M. Schreiber, *The Comfort of Kin: Samaritan Community, Kinship, and Marriage, Volume 51 of Brill's Series in Jewish Studie* (Leiden: Brill,2014), 112

31 Joshua Schwartz, "On Priests and Jericho in the Second Temple Period," *Jewish Quarterly Review*, 79, no. 1 (1988): 23.

32 Schwartz, "On Priests and Jericho," 36.

33 John Meier, *A Marginal Jew: Rethinking the Historical Jesus: Probing the Authenticity of the Parables*. Volume 5 (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2016), 227.

cultural obligations. Consideration of the reversal of expectations from all actors in this drama leads us to consider what motivated the actions of the priest and Levite in their decisions to avoid the injured man. Significantly, the story itself provides little indication of the motives for their actions. This has left Gospel readers to fill in the blanks, commonly to the detriment of Christian attitudes towards Jews and Jewish religion. Martin Luther King, Jr. once preached a sermon where he offered an alternative perspective to the majority view to account for the actions of both: King Jr gives us the following reasons below:

> So it is possible that the Priest and the Levite were afraid that if they stopped they too
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> would have been beaten; for couldn't the robbers still be around? Or maybe the man on
>
> the ground was just a faker, using a pretended wounded condition to draw passing
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> travellers to his side for quick and easy seizure. So I can imagine that the first question
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> which the Priest and the Levite asked was: "If I stop to help this man, what will happen to
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> me?" Then the good Samaritan came by, and by the very nature of his concern reversed
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> the question: "If I do not stop to help this man, what will happen to him?"[34]

It is obvious that looking at the literary context and historical context of this parable, there are no religious reasons that stop the religious leaders from showing compassion. Meanwhile, we have to understand that the literary context of the parable is offered as a response to a very specific question from expect of the Law. Placing it back into its context we find

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[34] Ben-Zion Rosenfeld, "Innkeeping in Jewish Society in Roman Palestine," *Journal of the Economic and Social History of the Orient* 41, no. 2 (1998): 136.

a narrative structure (the parable itself) inside a wider narrative; that of the questioning lawyer who was arrogant and unreachable. The deliberate nature of the parable itself is noteworthy: we can ask 'why' about every feature it contains.

There is a need to acknowledge that Jesus drew his message from the Old Testament and the reason was simply because that was the only available Bible in his time and the only available for the lawyer who was challenging him. On this note we can see that verse 27 is a direct reference to the commandments drawn from Deuteronomy (6:5) and Leviticus (19:18). In Matthew and Mark, the response comes to the question about "the greatest commandment" in Jesus' public ministry in Jerusalem. In Luke, the commandments to 'love the Lord your God' and 'love your neighbour' are collapsed into one. Some characters need proper explanation within the literary context of this text:

WORD STUDY

Throughout the New Testament the word 'neighbour' is translated from the Greek word ðëçóßïí (*pleôsion*). *Pleôsion,* when used as an adverb, is translated as 'near', and, when used as a noun, is translated as 'neighbour', meaning one who is close by.[35] Considering the commandment to love those who are close by as oneself, and also the commandment to love even one's enemies, changes entirely the common thoughts on such relationships. Jesus answered the question, "Who is my neighbour?" with a parable that answered the question from the perspective of the man in the ditch, which made havoc on all the accepted modes of thought both then and now. "Your neighbour is not your blood-relation only, not the circle of your acquaintance only, not your countryman or co-religionist only; but he or she whom you can help in any way whatsoever – the wretched tatterdemalion from the slightest contact with

[35] H.D. M. Spence, ed, The Pulpit Commentary, Vol. 15 (Grand Rapids, Michigan: WM. B. Eerdman's Publishing Company, 1950), 366.

whom you shrink; the besotted and degraded; even your enemy, who hates you and despitefully uses you; him, her, mankind, you are to love."[36] , a significant part of the meaning of the joint commandments is to expand on the meaning of neighbour beyond "…simply one's own ethnic, social, or religious group."[37]

THEOLOGY AND APPLICATION OF THE TEXT FOR CONTEMPORARY AUDIENCE

There are many levels of understanding for this parable, and it is sad to note that our church fathers have employed the allegorical sense to the understanding of the text. They avoided the plain meaning which has to do with our own need to be compassionate and care for those who are hurting. It is very possible that the church fathers considered the plain meaning as anthropocentric and wanted to be Christocentric and not just allegorical in their interpretation of the Good Samaritan.

Because writers like Irenaeus, Clement, Ambrose, Origen, and others taught that Jesus was the Good Samaritan and that the wounded man represented each of us individually, and also all of mankind entirely. The priest ("the Law") and the Levite ("the prophets") did not (or could not) save mankind in their sins. It was the "outcast" (Jesus) that bound his wounds, "anointed" him with oil and wine, and carried his burden to the inn (the Church) where he would be safe (literally saving the man from spiritual death). In the end, he left the man in the innkeeper's care, and promised to come again to his "church".

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[36] H.D. M. Spence, ed, The Pulpit Commentary, Vol. 16 (Grand Rapids, Michigan: WM. B. Eerdman's Publishing Company, 1950), 283.

[37] Victor Paul Funish, "Love of Neighbor in the New Testament." Journal of Religious Ethics: October 2002, 329.

In his book, *Be Compassionate,* Warren Wiersbe condemns such an allegorical approach to the scripture because to him, "the worst thing that we can do with any parable, especially this one, is to turn it into an allegory and make everything stands for something. Like the victim becomes the lost sinner who is half-dead (alive physically, dead spiritually), helplessly left on the road of life, the priest and Levite represent the law and the sacrifices, neither of which can save a sinner. The Samaritan is Jesus Christ who saves man, pays the bills and promises to come back again. The inn stands for the local church where believers are cared for, and the "two pence" are the two ordinances; baptism and communion. If you take this approach to the scripture, you make the Bile says almost anything you please and you end up missing the messages God wants you to get."[38]

Therefore, we must understand that parables often have plain meaning without any form of allegorizing for any reason. The passage gives us a plain teaching of how to care for our neighbours without giving any form of excuse. The Priest and the Levite lost far more by their neglect than the Samaritan gained far more by his concern.[39] These Priest and Levites lost the opportunity to become better neighbours and good stewards of God because instead of becoming a good influence in a bad world, they chose to bad influence opposite to the Samaritan because there is no act of service in Christ's name that will ever be lost. We must see people in need as neighbours to love and help and then make sure that we take care of them.[40] We should all take the words of Jesus to the lawyer as a direct application to our lives, when he says, Go and do like a Samaritan. Help everyone who needs help without discrimination and segregation for any reason

[38] Warren W. Wiersbe, *Be Compassionate: Let the World Know that Jesus Cares , Commentary Luke 1-13* (Eastbourne: David C. Cook, 1988), 136

[39]Wiersbe, *Be Compassionate*, 138

[40] Wiersbe, *Be Compassionate*, 138

because in Christ every human being needs a fragrance of God's presence of love and care.

CONCLUSION

The examination of the translation, genre, historical context, textual criticism and the rest of Luke 10:25-37 help in exploring the meaning of a text which should be faithfully interpreted as a literal text with a plain meaning of compassion towards fellow human beings in need. The parable is a warning to us that we should not let our power and prestige (priest and Levite) make us cold to the needs of others. We need to be humble, like a warefaring stranger despised and neglected (Samaritan). That is, we need to have compassion on others, as Jesus (represented by the Samaritan) does on us. One more thing. Do you notice that the innkeeper agrees to in effect lend his own money, relying on a promise from a travelling Samaritan that he (a total stranger and a foreigner), will pay him back? The innkeeper too is a good neighbor.

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