

INTRO: In our Christian walk, if you have not already experienced it, there will come a time when you may begin to doubt if you can go on further. It will seem the load has become so heavy, you have fallen so many times and with all your searching, you see no way out of the situation in which you find yourself, you have suffered in ways you have never suffered before and as you look around you, you seem to be all alone. At those times in your life, it is a blessing when a brother or sister comes along with perhaps only a word or two of encouragement or to let you know someone has been praying for you and is thinking about you and when this happens, you seem to be able to muster up enough strength to go a little further. As Christians, I want each of us to be that one who encourages others when they are in need. "If I can help somebody" in this life to make it a few steps further, if I can encourage them that they are not alone and not only have God with them, but I will be there with them also,... if through my actions they can see Christ in me and I can strengthen their walk with God, then I will KNOW my living was worth something. There are a lot of agencies that have been created that are supposed to help others, some good, some not so good and some totally worthless, but the church should be a refuge in the time of storms, it should be a place where those that are truly needy can come and find a friend; it should be a place where conflicts are left outside and assistance is found for those that are in need; it should be a place where the love of God is not only felt but demonstrated to one another. Several natives in Zaire, Africa were within close proximity of a nearby government medical station. Medical missionaries were therefore very surprised when the natives showed up at their compound which was some distance out of their way. The natives needed medical treatment and after the treatment was rendered, the missionaries asked why they had traveled so much farther. The natives replied, "**THE MEDICINE IS THE SAME AT THE OTHER STATION, BUT THE HANDS ARE DIFFERENT HERE.**" I would want to be that kind of individual, I would want our church to be that kind of church.

- A.** For our text, I read two familiar passages of scriptures that I want to look at for a few minutes. Everyone knows the story of the Good Samaritan but I want us to realize this was in response to a question presented to Christ in verse 29, "**...And who is my neighbor?**"
- a. Christ responded with this parable showing that everyone is truly our neighbor, especially those that are in serious need of our help. The religious leaders, those spouting their Christianity and proud of their standing in church, left the wounded man by the wayside for certainly they had more important things to do. But the Samaritan, who was despised by the Jewish race saw a man in need and he gave of what he had to help his neighbor. He did not see an enemy, he did not see a burden, he did not see other things more important, he simply saw another man in need and he acted. Christ said he was the neighbor so "**Go and do the same.**"
 - b. Max Lucado gave an illustration in one of his books, "**DURING WWI, A GERMAN SOLDIER PLUNGED INTO AN OUT-OF-THE-WAY SHELL HOLE AND THERE HE FOUND A WOUNDED ENEMY. THE FALLEN SOLDIER WAS SOAKED WITH BLOOD AND ONLY MINUTES FROM DEATH. TOUCHED BY THE PLIGHT OF THE MAN, THE GERMAN SOLDIER OFFERED HIM WATER. THROUGH THIS SMALL KINDNESS A BOND WAS DEVELOPED. THE DYING MAN POINTED TO HIS SHIRT POCKET, THE GERMAN SOLDIER TOOK FROM IT A WALLET AND REMOVED SOME FAMILY PICTURES. HE HELD THEM SO THE WOUNDED MAN COULD GAZE AT HIS LOVED ONES ONE FINAL TIME. WITH BULLETS RAGING OVER THEM AND WAR ALL AROUND THEM, THESE TWO ENEMIES WERE, BUT FOR A FEW MOMENTS, FRIENDS. WHAT HAPPENED IN THAT SHELL HOLE? DID ALL EVIL CEASE? WERE ALL WRONGS MADE RIGHT? NO. WHAT HAPPENED WAS SIMPLY THIS: TWO ENEMIES SAW EACH OTHER AS HUMANS IN NEED OF HELP.**" Can we look past those things that draw us apart and look upon others as our neighbors, maybe in need of our help? Our friends are the people whom we choose; usually friends are the same sort of people as ourselves. My neighbor is the man whom I do not choose; he is the man whom God gives to me. He is the man who happens to live in the house next to mine; he is the man who happens to sit opposite to me maybe in the bus or drive next to me on the highway, he is the clerk who works at the desk next to mine, he is the person I see at the store, etc. I have no right to say that he is no concern of mine, because if I am a Christian, I know that he is the man whom God has given His life for and perhaps has given to me to help.
- B.** In the second scripture we see the great missionary Paul that definitely spent a life of service for others. I believe when Paul saw a human, he saw a soul that needed salvation and certainly he did what he could to help those, even those that were his enemies. But I want us to note that in the passage that I read Paul was being helped by fellow believers. They knew his needs and they did what they could to assist him in the ministry for which he had been called.
- a. How many times have we seen a brother or sister in need and walk on by when we could assist in some way? Or may just said "God bless you", and then just left without administering any kind of help. I have come to the conclusion that sometimes we do not see a person in need cause we are too busy taking care of ourselves that we forget there are others around us that may need some kind of help.

- b. Friends are a wonderful thing to have, but if we become so involved with friends that we neglect others that may need our attention, perhaps we are too involved with ourselves. Especially those that are young in the Lord – often they are in need of guidance and help as they are struggling along a new path for them. Those of us that have been down the road for many years should assist them as they may be traveling through the same area that we have already gone and our help would be a great assistance to them.
- c. There should never be visitors that come into our church that are not greeted by the bulk of the congregation – conversation with friends and members of the church can always be postponed while we welcome new people that may simply be looking for someone who cares. Our church is here to help not only our own, but even our “neighbors” as well. T.C. Horton was the co-founder of Biola College and he wrote, “**YOU CAN MEASURE WHAT YOU WOULD DO FOR THE LORD BY WHAT YOU DO.**”
- d. Sometimes the greatest witness you can be is one of a friend. **DOUG NICHOLS, AN INDIA MISSIONARY, CONTRACTED TUBERCULOSIS AND WAS SENT TO A SANITARIUM. WHEN HE OFFERED TRACTS, THE OTHER PATIENTS REFUSED, WANTING NOTHING TO DO WITH THIS AMERICAN OR HIS GOD. ONE NIGHT, KEPT AWAKE BY HIS RASPY COUGH, DOUG NOTICED AN OLD MAN TRYING TO GET OUT OF BED, FALLING BACK BECAUSE OF WEAKNESS AND FINALLY, EXHAUSTED, LYING STILL AND SOBBING. IT WAS SOON OBVIOUS FROM THE STENCH THAT HE’D BEEN TRYING TO GET TO A BATHROOM. SAYS DOUG, “THE NURSES WERE ANGRY BECAUSE THEY HAD TO CLEAN UP THE MESS. ONE SLAPPED HIM.” THE NEXT NIGHT THE SAME SCENE REPEATED. DOUG WENT OVER, PICKED THE OLD MAN UP, CARRIED HIM TO THE BATHROOM AND, WHEN FINISHED, CARRIED HIM BACK. SPEAKING AN UNFAMILIAR LANGUAGE, THE OLD MAN KISSED HIM ON THE CHEEK. DRIFTING OFF TO AN UNEASY SLEEP, DOUG WOKE IN THE MORNING TO A STEAMING CUP OF TEA SERVED TO HIM BY ANOTHER PATIENT, WHO MOTIONED THAT HE WANTED ONE OF DOUG’S TRACTS. “THROUGHOUT THE DAY,” SAYS DOUG, “PEOPLE CAME TO ME ASKING FOR TRACTS OR GOSPELS OF JOHN, UNTIL EVERYONE IN THE HOSPITAL HAD ONE. OVER THE NEXT FEW DAYS, SEVERAL TRUSTED CHRIST AS SAVIOR!”** Until they saw an example of the love of God through his actions, he had made no impact but now, they were open to the truth.
- e. I realize it is difficult, and in some cases, almost impossible to be friends to some people cause they do not want help, they do not want someone concerned over them and they make it known by their actions and often by their speech. But, we should be ready to step in as soon as the opportunity presents itself and help if we can. I am sure the man on the road to Jericho would have nothing to do with the Samaritan if he had not been in such a dire need of help, but when the help was needed, the Samaritan was there and did what he could.

CONCLUSION: Especially of late, maybe because of my age, I have been thinking about what I have done with my life, have I helped anyone, have I been so involved in my own world that I have missed opportunities to live Christ in front of people instead of just telling them about Christ. Have I even been so involved in my church work that I fail to see a soul in need? So many times we may get discouraged when we think how little we seem to have done for the Lord – maybe because we have not taken advantage of those confrontations we have every day with others. If I go through this life, even as a professing Christian, yet cannot point to anyone that I have ever helped in some way, salvation or otherwise, then my life will have been lived in vain. There have been people that have lived, even some of the old kings in the Bible, that when they died, there was no one that mourned that death because they had never done anything to help anyone else. To me, that would be an awful life – God grant that we each be faced with the opportunity, with the privilege, to be a Samaritan to those that are hurt, a friend to the friendless, a witness to the lost, a help to a brother or sister, and a neighbor to those that are in need.

NOW IT CAME TO PASS THAT A CERTAIN MAN WAS TRAVELING LONESOME STREET, A LONELY AND DARK ROAD FROM TOM’S TAVERN TO BILL’S BAR, AND BEHOLD LIQUOR GOT A HOLD OF HIM AND STRIPPED HIM OF ALL HIS GOODS AND LEFT HIM DESTITUTE AND DYING ON SKID ROW. THERE CAME THAT WAY A CERTAIN RESPECTED RELIGIOUS LEADER, A BISHOP IN THE CHURCH. HE SAW THE DRUNK WITH THE BLEEDING SKULL AND VOMIT COVERING HIS CLOTHES. DECIDING HE WAS TOO DRUNK TO TALK TO ABOUT HIS SOUL, HE THOUGHT SOCIETY SHOULD DO SOMETHING TO PROHIBIT SUCH DRUNKENNESS. HE PASSED BY ON THE RIGHT AS FAR AND AS FAST AS POSSIBLE.

SOON A SOCIAL WORKER, WHOSE TRAINING TAUGHT HIM HOW TO CARE FOR PERSONS WITH ALL KINDS OF SOCIAL AND PERSONAL PROBLEMS, CAME THAT WAY. HE SAW THE MAN STRETCHED OUT ON THE SIDEWALK. HE LOOKED AT HIM, BUT CONCLUDING THAT THE MAN WAS BEYOND HELP OR HOPE HE STRAIGHTWAY CONTINUED ON HIS WAY.

AFTER SOME TIME AN OUTCAST OF SOCIETY, A DESPISED BUM, MAYBE FROM UNDER SOME BRIDGE SOMEWHERE, CAME DOWN LONESOME STREET. THOUGH HATED BY RESPECTABLE PEOPLE AND WATCHED WITH SUSPICION BY THE POLICE, THE BUM SAW THE DYING DRUNK. AND WHEN HE SAW THE MAN HE CAME WHERE HE WAS AND HE CALLED A FELLOW BUM TO HELP HIM, AND WHILE HE SPOKE SOOTHING WORDS HE LIFTED THE MAN IN HIS ARMS AND TOOK HIM TO A PLACE HE KNEW THE MAN WOULD BE CARED FOR. NOW, WHO WAS THE NEIGHBOR?

The Samaritan saw a fellow human being that needed his help and he did what he could. Have we done what we could or have we “walked on by”, too busy to be bothered or too religious to stoop to such depths as to help the unwanted? How many opportunities have we passed by. Jesus Christ helped the unchurched and the churched, those that were abandoned by society. He was our example and He was a neighbor to everyone He met, as much as they would allow Him to be – should we do any less?