

Perspectives from the Good Samaritan
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Thoughts from Martin Luther King, Jr.
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=BnP8FPviaiA>

The Priest and the Levite:

We saw him. But we didn't stop. We crossed by him on the other side of the road. We have to live with that shame – we're the part of the story you don't want to hear. We suppose you'd call us infamous.

But you, the reader, need us to really understand the story. We represent what you are most afraid to give up: your safety.

We thought being safe meant walling out those who are different. We never realized it was the opposite: the more neighbors we have, the safer we become.

Of the Samaritan, Jesus said, "Go and do likewise." We intend to give it our best shot.

Thief:

Maybe you haven't been hungry before or cold and homeless. Maybe you haven't had to look at your children who are trying to act like they're not hungry. When you're filled with despair, you can talk yourself into a lot of things. Did I want to attack the man? No! Did I want to steal from him? Absolutely not! I DIDN'T SEE ANY OTHER WAY. And so I added a large dose of guilt to that despair.

The Injured Man:

I was lying there on the ground – my head was ringing, and I was covered in dust and blood and sweat. I saw a priest, and then a Levite. They looked like me – their skin, their clothing, their station in life. These were my neighbors. But they didn't stop. And then came a Samaritan. He wasn't like me! His skin was much darker, and his dress was foreign, his whole way of life was different. And I'm ashamed to say it, but when he approached, and scooped me up I was terribly afraid – Where's he taking me, and what's he gonna do?

I've spent a lifetime believing that compassion is exclusive to my breed of culture. I was wrong. A stranger, no actually, a neighbor, set me straight. And thank God for it.

Samaritan

I was walking down the road preoccupied with all I had to do. I knew it was a dangerous place to be and even more so since I was alone but I had made the journey so many times at that time of day with no problems. When I saw him, I believed it might be a trap but as I drew closer, I could tell the injuries were real and even though our people just don't mix, I just

couldn't leave him there. I know you've had that feeling before where your heart opens up and your body begins to do things before your mind can object. Before I knew it, I was talking to an innkeeper and unwilling to take no for an answer. I did the right thing and I'd do it again today.

The Lawyer:

That Jesus. He never makes it easy for us lawyers – we're just trying to get a specific answer. All I wanted to know was: "Who's my neighbor?"

In the end, I suppose a neighbor is not something you really define by legal standards. It's a bit more intuitive. It's not based on religion or race or gender or creed or class. It's based on love. And since we're human beings, we all have the ability to love and be loved.

And I suppose, as I leave this place today, I have a new perspective. It seems to me I've got lots of people to be a neighbor to. Who's my neighbor? The better question is this: Who's not?