



Links Players

Suffering - Suffering With Those Who Suffer

Jesus replied, "A man was going down from Jerusalem to Jericho, and he fell among robbers, who stripped him and beat him and departed, leaving him half dead. Now by chance, a priest was going down that road, and when he saw him, he passed by on the other side. So likewise, a Levite, when he came to the place and saw him, passed by on the other side. But a Samaritan, as he journeyed, came to where he was, and when he saw him, he had compassion...." (Luke 10:25-37).

I don't know about you, but when the wheels are coming off a player I admire, I enter into a different mode of television engagement. Emotionally entering into their struggles, I identify with their pain.

If it is a player about whom I am ambivalent, it is still hard to watch him unravel. For instance, watching Greg Norman lose his form on Sunday at the 1996 Masters was awful. I deeply empathized with him when he and Sir Nick walked off the 18th green.

Full disclosure on the following: However, if Patrick Reed is spraying it all over the lot, I usually find a grin on my face. I am not suggesting this is an appropriate attitude. Here is my commitment-I'll work on it.

In the case of The Good Samaritan, Jesus tells this "mini-story" to a lawyer endeavoring to justify his lifestyle. Jesus crafts this story to expose a hidden motive—the lawyer had decided for himself who his neighbors were; his neighbors were people like himself.

The power of a parable is in its "shock value." In this case, the Jewish lawyer is shocked to discover that a Samaritan is the story's hero. As is well known, Jewish and Samaritan cultures don't gee haw.

As Luke's gospel circulated among the Jewish community, some would recoil angrily that an "enemy" is the hero; others would be gripped by it. Parables are designed, at least in part, to divide.

One person will hear and follow after Christ. Another will hear the same parable and head in the opposite direction. Parables, among other things, expose the condition of our hearts.

Parables reveal what is hidden not only to others but, more often than not, things hidden to ourselves. When the prophet Nathan confronted King David with a parable, David's heart was laid bare, and he repented.

The parable of The Good Samaritan was never intended to be a nice story about doing good to others; rather, it is intended to bypass our justifications/ excuses and penetrate the deepest places of our calloused hearts.

Jesus tells this power-packed parable for us to see that our neighbors are those who are suffering and who desperately need us to "lean in" to their pain. In other words, Jesus calls us to suffer with those who suffer, even if they are from the "wrong side of the tracks."

After all, the heart of the gospel is that the King of the Cosmos left his throne above, entered our misery, and died for us, his enemies (Romans 5).

What can we learn from this parable? Like the Good Samaritan, we are to show compassion to the suffering, especially those unlike us, by entering into their suffering and investing our time, money, and reputations. When we do, we usually discover an opportunity to share the gospel.

Prayer: Jesus! Give us opportunities to "go and do likewise."

READING - Luke 10: 25-37; Isaiah 49:13

1. How do you relate to watching a good friend or partner struggle on the course? How do you relate to that guy no one likes or an opponent unraveling in a round? Should a Christian think differently about these matters than a non-Christian? Discuss.

2. After meditating on The Good Samaritan, what can we learn about ourselves regarding caring for those who suffer, especially those ethnically or culturally different from ourselves?

3. Application: Discuss how you might serve those who work at the club, especially those who inhabit a different cultural and economic space than the members.
