

Luke 10:25-37

## Aim of lesson

To emphasize that if we say we love God, we must show that we do by loving our fellow human beings, no matter who they are.

## Background study

Look into the geographical, historical and social background of the story, so that your word pictures will be vivid and accurate. Jerusalem was built on a high plateau in the Judean hills. It was the centre of Jewish worship, and also the centre of politics and commerce. The road from Jerusalem to Jericho (a beautiful city of palm trees built in the Jordan valley near the site cursed by God centuries before) passed through lonely country that was rocky and desolate - ideal for outlaws and bandits. Joshua 6:26; Judges 1:16; Deuteronomy 6:4-9; 2 Kings 17:24; Ezra 4:1-6; Matthew 25:31-46.

## Suggested outline of lesson

### Stranger danger

Ask the class to think of places they know or have heard about, where they would not wish to travel alone. Find out why they think it would be unsafe or possibly dangerous. Unfortunately muggings are commonplace today. Talk about the sort of people involved in such an incident, both those who carry out the attack and those who suffer, and especially the latter's feeling of helplessness. Some topical news item might give a lead. Such violence is not a recent phenomenon; it has been a problem throughout the ages. It was not uncommon in Jesus' day and he used the event in order to teach a lesson.

### The lawyer's question

Go on to introduce the lawyer - not a lawyer in the modern sense, but a student of the Mosaic Law. Relate the conversation that preceded the story and, in doing so, quote verse 27. Jesus was always ready to answer questions on the scriptures, but he wanted the listener to understand the meaning behind the Law. Instead of just giving him a simple answer, Jesus told a powerful story, which could well have been true.

### The parable

Describe the steep, rocky road from Jerusalem to Jericho, on which robbers lurked to ambush the unprotected traveller. People used to travel in companies, or caravans, which provided protection from robbers. This man evidently had urgent business and decided to risk travelling alone.

Bring home the suddenness and violence of the attack, which was cruel and meaningless. The victim was outnumbered, and the callous robbers took what they wanted, caring nothing for his suffering. They took not only his money but his clothes and all his

belongings, leaving him lying in pain and without protection from the scorching sun. How long he lay there we can only guess; it may have been hours. Perhaps he heard footsteps approaching, if he was conscious, but his raised hopes were dashed as first one then a second traveller passed by. Perhaps both the priest and the Levite were going to or from worship in the temple in Jerusalem. Maybe they had duties to perform at a certain time and knew that stopping to help would make them late. Both were very much involved with their religion, intent on pleasing God in their own way, but they had no compassion for their fellow man. Their worship and study of God's word was meaningless - they had missed the whole point, for we show our love for God by the way we treat other people. Contrast the attitude of the priest and Levite with the immediate, unselfish response of the unnamed Samaritan. He did not see an enemy Jew in front of him but a man in desperate need, and he took great trouble to meet that need. Note the words, "he had compassion on him", and show that this led the Samaritan to help the injured man in a practical way.

### **Points to keep in mind**

Although this is not a point you will wish to discuss in this lesson, there is a lot of symbolism in this parable. Jerusalem is God's city; Jericho represents a place of curse. Christ came to save fallen mankind from sin and its effects and to bring them back to God. The priest and levite were going down the road, as symbolically are also the rest of mankind, but Jesus (who at the time was travelling via Jericho to Jerusalem) was going in the opposite direction. The parable does not say that the Samaritan was going to Jericho, and it will help the children's later understanding if you are either ambivalent about the direction in which he was walking, or teach that he was going to Jerusalem. After all, the first part of a Samaritan's journey would be towards Jerusalem, not away from it.

### **Relevance to the children's lives**

Does being kind to one's neighbour simply mean helping the people who live next door? How do you feel when you see boys and girls being cruel to each other, old people in need of help, or pictures of people starving and homeless? Most people feel sympathetic about such suffering, but is feeling sorry enough?

### **A question to think about**

When Jesus had finished telling the story he asked the lawyer a question, now that the answer had been made clear. The lawyer, who was no doubt a religious man as were the priest and Levite, walked away with much to think about.

# Worksheets

The code reads 'Man looks at the outside but God looks at the heart'.

The solution to the puzzle is:

	H	E	L	P	<b>F</b>	U	L		
			C	A	<b>R</b>	I	N	G	
		F	O	R	<b>I</b>	V	I	N	G
G	E	N	T	L	<b>E</b>				
S	H	A	R	I	<b>N</b>	G			
		K	I	N	<b>D</b>				

## Prayer

Dear Lord God, help us to feel compassion for any who suffer. Please show us how we can do something to help them. Amen.

## Memory verse

"You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, and with all your soul, and with all your strength, and with all your mind, and your neighbour as yourself" (Luke 10:27).