

The question, "Who was the wounded man's neighbor?" cannot be answered in terms of space, for the priest and the Levite were just as near in space to the wounded man as the Samaritan. All three passed near the wounded man. All three were neighbors to the wounded man in space, but only one became a neighbor in love. Of the three travelers who came in contact with the man left half-dead, two of them closed their hearts and their hands to him and withdrew from him. Only one opened his heart and hands and drew near to help that pitiful figure lying beside the road.

What does it mean to love your neighbor?

As it is used in this context, love for one's neighbor means a sincere desire for his well-being, his welfare, and his best interests.

How was love in this sense manifested by the Samaritan? The following considerations help us to answer this question.

First, from all appearances, the Samaritan did not know the wounded man. The man was a perfect stranger! Yet the Samaritan showed love to him.

Second, the wounded man was no doubt a Jew, and the one who assisted him was a Samaritan. These men were natural enemies! Yet the Samaritan showed love to him.

Third, the wounded man's condition was not the fault of the Samaritan. He was not to blame for the poor fellow's unfortunate circumstances! This is especially true when it is recalled that the incident took place in Judea; and the Samaritan had no influence in Judea with regard to police protection against highway robbers! Yet, although it was not his fault, he showed love to the wounded man.

Fourth, the Samaritan did not allow the consideration of personal safety to keep him from helping another human being in need. This is especially significant, since the Jericho Road was notorious for its bands of thieves and cutthroats. Yet the Samaritan showed real sacrificial love to him.

Fifth, he took time out from his own business to show mercy to this stranger in his need. The Samaritan was probably a merchant or a civil servant who had travelled this road many times; and he had business to attend to. If "time is money," then stopping to help the wounded man was an expenditure of his valuable time. Yet he showed love to the wounded man.