

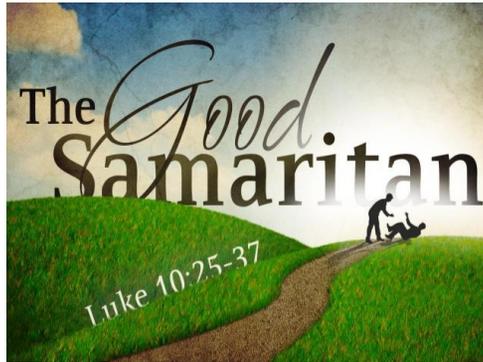
## Jericho Road: Word? Deed? or Sign?

Luke 10:23-37

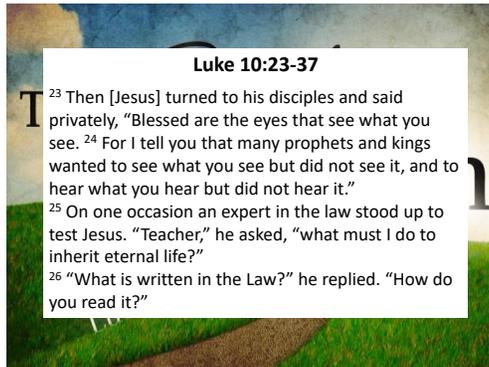
By pastor Ken Keyte

Date: 23rd July 2017

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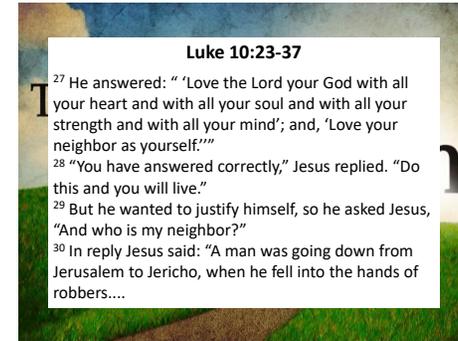


<sup>23</sup> Then [Jesus] turned to his disciples and said privately, "Blessed are the eyes that see what you see. <sup>24</sup> For I tell you that many prophets and kings wanted to see what you see but did not see it, and to hear what you hear but did not hear it."

<sup>25</sup> On one occasion an expert in the law stood up to test Jesus. "Teacher," he asked, "what must I do to inherit eternal life?"

<sup>26</sup> "What is written in the Law?" he replied. "How do you read it?"

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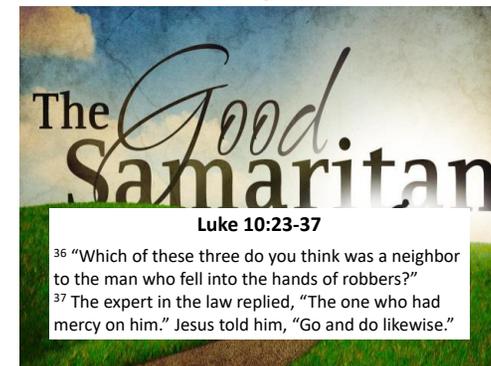
<sup>27</sup> He answered: " 'Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your strength and with all your mind'; and, 'Love your neighbor as yourself.'"

<sup>28</sup> "You have answered correctly," Jesus replied. "Do this and you will live."

<sup>29</sup> But he wanted to justify himself, so he asked Jesus, "And who is my neighbor?"

<sup>30</sup> In reply Jesus said: "A man was going down from Jerusalem to Jericho, when he fell into the hands of robbers...."

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[After telling what's become one of Jesus' *most famous parables of all-* (the Good Samaritan), Jesus asks the Law Expert...]

<sup>36</sup> "Which of these three do you think was a neighbor to the man who fell into the hands of robbers?"

<sup>37</sup> The expert in the law replied, "The one who had mercy on him." Jesus told him, "Go and do likewise."

The Law Expert was a man *of the written word*.

He was *testing Jesus' knowledge* of the written word with his question, "*What must I do to receive eternal life?*"

And his second question, "*Who is my neighbour*" was aimed at getting Jesus to *qualify the law expert as a man of the word who was worthy of eternal life.*

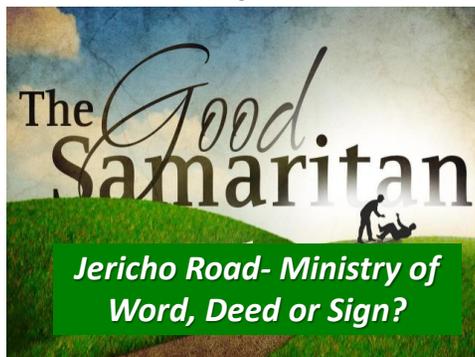
In a roundabout way, the law expert was asking Jesus *what's more important for receiving eternal life?*  
Ministry of *the word*? Or ministry of *deed*?

It's a question Christians have *struggled with* down through the ages and *still struggle with today.*  
Which should be our top priority: *biblical preaching and evangelism?* (which are ministries of "*the word*"), or *helping the poor and the oppressed?* (which are ministries of "*deed*").

To throw *another one in the mix*, what about ministries of *healing and deliverance*, known as *ministries of "sign"*?

Which should be our top priority then:

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*Ministry of word? deed? or sign?*

I'd be *interested in your views* about that.

If you had to *pick one of these three as the top priority for a church, which do you think it should be?*

- Who thinks *ministry of the word* should be the church's top priority?
- Who thinks *ministries of deed* should be the church's top priority?
- Who thinks *sign ministries* should be the church's top priority?

*Peter Wagner*, a Christian researcher in the United States, has investigated the *relative emphasis* churches have placed on *word and deed / evangelism and social concern* in the United States. He identified *five categories* of churches.

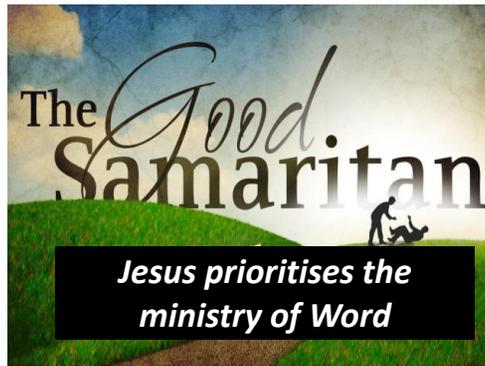
- Some teach that the **ministry of mercy and social concern** is the **only legitimate function** of the church in the world.
- Others hold that **social concern** is the most important function while **evangelism** is also important but to a **lesser degree**.
- Another category of churches think that **social concern and evangelism** (deed and word) are **equal in importance**.
- Then there are those that believe **evangelism** is the primary function of the church while the **ministry of deed** is necessary but secondary.
- Lastly there are churches who maintain that **social concern** is **not the job of the church at all in the world, only the ministry of the word** is for the church to do.

So *which category of church* do you think we are?

Let's see if the *parable of the Good Samaritan* and the *context* it was told in, can *help us discover what kind of church Jesus wants us to be.*

## Jesus prioritises the ministry of Word

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We've already seen that the *Law Expert* was a *ministry of the Word man* who could *recite the two greatest commandments off by heart*. So *how does Jesus respond to this ministry of the word man* who was trying to get Jesus to *qualify him as being worthy of eternal life* from God's word?

Bible commentators have noticed how Jesus *reverses the law experts original question*. The Law expert *had originally asked* Jesus, "*Who is my neighbour?*"

But after *answering his question with a parable*, Jesus *turned the question around on him*, "*Who do you think was a neighbour to the beaten up man in the parable?*"

If *you or I* had tried answering the Law Expert's question by telling a story like Jesus did, it probably would've gone *something like this*.

A *Christian* comes down a road and finds a man lying badly beaten in the road, robbed of all his possessions. Upon closer look he finds it's a *notorious patched gang member*. Nevertheless, the Christian gets out of his motor vehicle, bandages up his wounds, and takes him to hospital. We say to the law expert, "*Now there is the answer to your question 'Who is my neighbour?' Why even a notorious patched gang member is your neighbour if he is in need!*"

But *I doubt* the law expert would've been *moved* by that answer.

He would've most likely said, "*Ha, if I came across a notorious patched gang member lying badly beaten in the road, I would've reported him to the police and had him arrested. Better he rots in jail than gets fixed up in hospital so he can continue his gang activities!*"

But Jesus is a *far wiser teacher* than any of us! He reverses *the expected roles* of the characters in the parable by putting a Jew (which the law expert was) as the *one dying in the road*.

If Jesus was telling the parable *to us in our context* he would've put a *Christian* (like us) as the *one dying in the road*.

Along comes a *hated Samaritan* (or in our context perhaps a *notorious patched gang member*).

What do we need from him? *Help of course!*

And to everyone's surprise the Samaritan (or *notorious gang member*) stops and *shows mercy*.

In a sense Jesus is asking finally, "*If it was you in that situation, who was the neighbour to you?*"

The only answer is "*my enemy the Samaritan*" or "*the notorious gang member*".

And the *final word from Jesus?*

"*Well then, go and do likewise by doing unto others as you would have them do to you!*"

Do you see how Jesus *expertly used ministry of word* to *subvert* the Law expert's *legalistic view* that to *fulfill the second great commandment* he only needed to help his *Jewish neighbour* in need?

By *turning the question around on him*, the law expert was made to realise that *he should help anyone in need, even his enemy!*

In this *interchange between Jesus and the law expert* we hear Jesus *spreading God's kingdom by the ministry of word*.

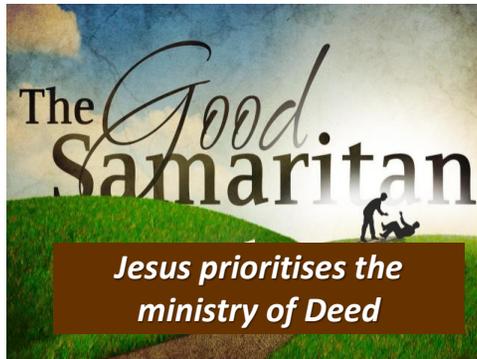
Jump across to the *book of Acts* and the *very first ministry* we see being practiced by the disciples after the Holy Spirit was poured out on the day of Pentecost, is *Peter preaching a sermon to the crowd in Jerusalem* (Acts 2:14-36).

When he *finished* he gave the *first ever altar call*, and about *3,000 people* responded to his invitation to *repent and be baptized and receive the Holy Spirit*.

So those of you who *raised your hand to ministry of word* being top priority for the church *could well be right!* Because *Jesus prioritises spreading the kingdom by the ministry of word!*

### Jesus prioritises the ministry of deed!

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But what about the *ministry of "deed"*? What does the *parable of the Good Samaritan* teach us about the *priority* the church should place on *ministries of "deed"*?

After *turning the tables* on the law expert to help him realise he must *help anyone in need even his enemy*, Jesus then commanded him to: "*Go and do likewise!*"

You see *this was a story* Jesus meant to be *put into practice*. "*Go and do likewise*" is a command *not just for the law expert* to put into practice, but for *every follower of Jesus* who reads or hears *the parable of the Good Samaritan*. That means *you and me!*

The *early Christians* certainly *knew how* to put this parable *into practice!*

The first ever Christian church started in *Jerusalem* comprising of *Jews* who'd become *believers in Jesus*.

In *Acts 4:34* it describes *Jerusalem City Church* as:

*'not having a needy person among them* for those who owned land or houses sold them and distributed the proceeds to *those in the church who had need.'*

This *economic sharing* was *extraordinary and conspicuous* to outsiders. It gave the *apostles preaching even more power!* It says, "*day by day the Lord added to their number those who were being saved.*"

Here is an example of the early church *being neighbourly to their own*, which the *law expert* would've had *no problem with*. But what about being neighbourly to *those who are different and would otherwise be regarded as an outsider?*

Jumping across to *Acts 11:19* we find many of the *Jewish Christians* who'd been in the *Jerusalem church* later on had to *flee to Antioch* to escape persecution for believing in Jesus. Some of these *Jewish converts* to Christianity began *witnessing to non-Jews* in the city who they'd normally have *had little to do with*. It says a *great number of non-Jews became believers and turned to the Lord*. And so was established the *Antioch Church*.

But then *news arrived* that a *world-wide famine* was about to strike and was already causing *severe hardship* for the *Jewish Christians* who'd remained back in Jerusalem.

Yet *this church* full of *non-Jewish believers in Antioch* must've been quick learners in *loving their neighbour like Jesus taught*. Because it says that according to their ability, they sent relief to the *Jewish believers in Judea*. In other words they sent money to *help Jews* who usually regarded *non Jews* (like them) as *outsiders!*

This same pattern of *helping the needy both within and outside* the church was practiced *over and over again* by the *early Christians*.

Historians have recorded how in the 4th century the *Roman emperor Julian* tried reviving the *dying religion of Greek paganism* by attempting to copy the Christian's *ministry of deed to the poor and needy*.

He is *on record* as having said,

*"It is disgraceful that while the Christians support both their own poor and ours as well, everyone sees that our people lack aid from us!"*

Now *jump ahead* to the situation we find the *church in today*. We now live in a culture where the church has *long since lost our monopoly on the ministry of deed* to the *plethora* of *government* and *non government* organisations who deliver *social services* to the needy in our community.

Tuesday afternoon *I ate pizza* and *listened to our MP and Minister of Trade & Development, Todd McClay* talking *politics* up in *The Loft* with a group of teenagers and adults from the community.

One of the *questions* he was asked was, "*What is the government doing to help young people who've dropped out of school, to help them get a job?*"

Todd McClay described this *category of young person* with an *acronym* I hadn't heard before. He called them *NEETs* which is someone between the age of *15 and 24* who is *Not in Education, Employment or Training*.

And it's a *serious problem* for many young people in our community.

Although the problem is *far from being resolved*, what I did hear from him is that the government *recognises the problem* and *has a plan to do something about it*. And there's *already people* in our community *doing something about it* like the *Alternative Education Centre*.

But what I *didn't hear* Todd McClay say, was *any mention of churches providing education, employment or training* to help the *NEETs* in our community *get a job!*

My *point is*, that while churches like ours are doing some *ministries of deed to help people in need*, it's not nearly as *conspicuous* to our community as it *used to be back in Roman times*

when *no-one except the church* was doing it!!!

But that *doesn't mean* we should be *put off doing ministries of deed*, we just need to be *smarter and more strategic* about *what we do and how we do it*, so we're not just *duplicating what's already being done by others*.

So those who *raised your hand to ministries of deed* being *top priority* for the church, *you're right also!*

Because *Jesus prioritises spreading the kingdom by ministry of deed!*

### Jesus prioritises ministry of sign!

8



But what about *ministry of sign?*

What does the *parable of the Good Samaritan* and the *context it was told in* teach us about the *priority* the church should place on *ministries of "sign"?*

Well the parable itself *doesn't say anything specifically* about the Samaritan practicing any *ministry of "sign"* on the *injured man*. Jesus doesn't say whether the Samaritan *prayed for him*, he *doesn't mention him* being *healed miraculously*, in fact it seems like he was expecting a *very unmiraculous healing* that might take several days or weeks because he *told the inn keeper* that he'd return and pay any outstanding bill from caring for the injured man.

But before *jumping to the conclusion that ministry of sign must be of lower priority to ministry of word and deed*, take a look at *what happened immediately before Jesus encountered the law expert*.

Luke 10:17-24 describes *Jesus's 70 discipleship interns returning from a short term mission trip full of joy because of their successful deliverance ministry*.

It says:

<sup>23</sup> Then turning to his disciples Jesus said to them privately, "Blessed are the eyes that see what you see. <sup>24</sup> For I tell you that many prophets and kings wanted to see what you see but did not see it, and to hear what you hear but did not hear it."

In fact the gospel of Luke is *full of Jesus spreading the kingdom of God through ministry of sign*.

So those who *raised your hands to ministries of sign being top priority for the church, you're right also!*

Because Jesus *prioritises spreading the kingdom through ministry of sign!*

But the gospel of Luke is also *packed with Jesus spreading the kingdom through ministry of the word*, and *chocka-block with Jesus teaching his disciples about spreading the kingdom through ministry of deed*.

It would seem that *none are more important than the other, all are priorities for spreading God's kingdom in word, deed and sign!*

So those who *raised your hands to ministries of word, deed or sign being top priority for the church, you're all as right as each other!*



Because Jesus *prioritises the ministry of word, deed and sign!*

Gary Scoggins told me about a man he'd had opportunity to minister to on his *outreach to Fiji* that he's *just returned from*.

Gary told me that before leaving for Fiji, he'd read about *King Nebuchadnessar* loosing his sanity and his position as king of Babylon *until he acknowledged the King of heaven*, upon which his sanity and position as king were restored.

Gary *felt burdened to pray for people in similar situations who'd lost the plot mentally and lost their position because of it* (he sensed he'd be ministering to people in this situation on his trip).

While in Fiji Gary did an *open air outreach* in *Baa* which he ran in conjunction with an *indigenous Fijian church* there. Among those who responded to what he said, was a *Fijian-Indian man* named *Raj Nesh*, who was *homeless* and had been *living rough on the streets*, who seemed to be suffering some kind of *mental illness*.

Gary *prayed for him*, that his *mind would be restored to good health as he surrendered his life to Jesus*.

That was on the Friday night. The local church got alongside upon Raj, they *fed him, clothed him*, someone took him *home* to stay. On Sunday Raj went to church, and everyone could tell that he was a *completely different man* to what he was like on *Friday night*.

His *mind had been restored to good mental health!*  
It turned out he was a *highly intelligent man* and a *qualified engineer*. *Miraculously*, Raj Nesh now *felt ready to start looking for work again*, which the church was going to help him find a job too.

What Gary shared with me is a *great example of spreading God's kingdom through the ministries of word, deed and sign!*

*Jesus prioritises the ministries of word, deed and sign*  
and he says to us, "*Go and likewise!*"

*Here endeth the series on The Jericho Road* which I hope will help us as a church *fulfill all five emphases* we set for our church this year: [road market sign]