

## Samaritan II: The Victim

August 18, 2019  
Psalm 130

I want to start off today by doing a little survey. Your participation is not mandatory in any way. Show of hands: How many of you out there:

- Know someone with a mental illness, or have one yourself?
- Know someone who is/was an alcoholic/addict, or were one at one point?
- Have been affected by cancer in some way, whether that's battling it yourself, losing someone you love to it, know someone currently battling it, or know a survivor?
- Have been, or know someone who has been, abused?
- Have lost a friend/family member in a war?
- Have lost someone close in some other way that made you think, "they died too young"?

I want you all to know that not a single person in this room didn't raise their hand at least once. Everyone here knows pain. We know what it is to be thrown for a loop and hurt by something out of our control. This pain that we feel in these moments, this is the pain felt by the beaten man in the "Good Samaritan," made as a representation of our pain.

In the story, we need note that the man is very non-specific. We don't know how old, tall, heavy, or wealthy he is. We don't know his, race, hair color, eye color, or socioeconomic position. We know literally nothing about him. The only things we know are that he was walking from Jerusalem to Jericho, he is a "he," and he was victimized. Therefore, the beaten man in this story is a perfect representation of humanity. The lack of description makes it all the easier to imagine this man as much a young, spry teenager as an overweight man in his 50s or a walking skeleton in his 90s and everything in between. His rather non-descriptive nature makes it all the harder to deny that there people are all around us who know his pain: people who are crying out for a loving/helping hand; people who have been tossed around/hurt more times than they care to count; people who bear the weight of their scars, sometimes more when they believe they deserve what has been done to them.

What's more important than his non-descriptive nature for being a symbol for humanity is his reaction, or lack thereof, to those who help/don't help him. Honestly, he doesn't know who helps him. He is beaten by the robber, then left for dead. He doesn't move/say anything the whole story after we are told "he was left for dead." We can reasonably assume he was unconscious, maybe even comatose. Had he seen the Levite or the Priest, these public figures that are meant to be helpful, he would have cried out to them, saying, "Help me, help me, please!" Had he seen the Samaritan, we can rightly assume he would have said something along the lines of, "Don't touch me, you filthy Samaritan. Go on, beat it!"

This in essence is, yet again, every human. We all have people we would cry out for help to in our times of need (e.g. friends, siblings, (grand)children). At the same time, we all have a person/people that we would reject help from, even if badly injured, and we have our reasons.

- "He/she/they hurt me and I don't know if I can trust them."
- "They look like a shady character and I feel like I'm still in danger with them around."

- “He/she is a member of a group that I stand firmly against the beliefs of, and I don’t want anything to do with them.”
- Maybe it’s another reason.

If we did accept help, we’d question their reasons for doing it (“Why are *they* helping *me*?” “What do they stand to gain from this?”). We either don’t trust them period, or we trust them only to a small degree, doubting their true intentions all the while.

In our hours of need though, “beggars can’t be choosers.” We can’t always have it our way. We need to recognize that compassion comes from various sources and in different ways. We can’t close ourselves off to help. It’s easy to offer our help. To accept help/ask for it is a different story. We as children of God need to not be closed off to compassion. Being uncompassionate towards those who try to show compassion (e.g. the angry/ornery patient in movies/TV shows set in hospitals) is simply counterproductive. If you reject compassion, you make it hard for the person trying to give it to you to be honest in their compassion. Arguably, you also indicate you might believe yourself unworthy of compassion, that you in turn are not compassionate towards yourself.

For the man on the side of the road, a person similar to him beat him, robbed him, and left him there. Two persons similar to him saw him and passed him by, doing nothing to help him. The one person in the whole story that shouldn’t have been compassionate at all was the one who showed compassion. Help is help, no matter the source. I invite you as you go forward from this place to think about whose help you may have closed yourself off to, and how you can be more open next time.