THE 2013 BECHTEL LECTURES

Violence, Victimhood, and Recovery: Insights from the Parables of Jesus

Lecture Two

Compassion, Justice, and the Work of Restoration[1]

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On April 4, 1967, the great American civil rights leader, the Rev. Martin Luther King, Jr., delivered a speech to a gathering of an organization called "Clergy and Laity Concerned about Vietnam" at Riverside Church in New York City.[2] Professing his wholehearted agreement with the aims and work of the organization, King recounted how, over the preceding two years, he had moved to "break the betrayal of my own silences" on the Vietnam war. Many had questioned the wisdom of his doing so, he said, fearing it would detract from his focus on civil rights. But coming out against the war, King retorted, was not only consistent with the ongoing commission to peacemaking implicit in the Nobel Peace Prize he had received in 1964, it was also consistent with his commitment to the ministry of Jesus Christ: "To me the relationship of this ministry to the making of peace is so obvious that I sometimes marvel at those who ask me why I am speaking against the war."

King proceeded to deplore the dishonorableness of America's intentions in Vietnam, and to detail the enormous suffering that three decades of war had inflicted on the people of that blighted peninsula. He called for an end to aerial bombardment, the declaration of a unilateral ceasefire, the

[1] This lecture draws on several sections of my new book *Compassionate Justice: An Interdisciplinary Dialogue with Two Gospel Parables on Law, Crime, and Restorative Justice* (Eugene, OR: Cascade Books, 2012); reproduced with permission. I have kept bibliographical citations to a minimum in this lecture because they are available in the book.

[2] Martin Luther King Jr., "Beyond Vietnam: A Time to Break Silence": www.americanrhetoric.com/speeches/mlkatimetobreaksilence.htm.

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opening of negotiations with the Viet Cong, and the setting of a firm date for the withdrawal of all foreign troops from the country. He also proposed that all young men in America should register as conscientious objectors, and encouraged all ministers of religion to give up their ministerial exemptions from military service and also enrol as conscientious objectors.

But King went further still. True to his trade as a preacher and a public prophet, he asserted that the war was a symptom of a far deeper malady in the American spirit. "If America's soul becomes totally poisoned," he said, "part of the autopsy must read Vietnam." A nation that is prepared to send its poor Negro and white boys to kill and die together in the villages of Southeast Asia, but is unable to seat them together in the same schools, or to house them in the same city blocks, is a nation in spiritual decline. A country that chooses to invest its vast wealth and resources in the demonic destructiveness of militarism, rather than in rehabilitating the poor, is a "society gone mad on war." What America needed, King declared, is "a radical revolution of values," entailing a shift from being a "thing-oriented" society to becoming a "person-oriented" society, and accompanied by a re-ordering of priorities so that the pursuit of peace takes precedence over the pursuit of war. Without such a moral and spiritual revolution, America will never be able to conquer "the giant triplets of racism, materialism and militarism." He continued with these memorable words:

> A true revolution of values will soon cause us to question the fairness and justice of many of our past and present policies. On the one hand, we are called to play the Good Samaritan on life's roadside; but that will be only an initial act. One day we must come to see that the whole Jericho road must be transformed so that men and women will not be constantly beaten and robbed as they make their journey on life's highway. True compassion is more than flinging a coin to a beggar; it is not haphazard and superficial. It comes to see that an edifice that produces beggars needs restructuring.
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> A true revolution of values will soon look uneasily on the glaring contrast of poverty and wealth … and say: "This is not just." … A true revolution of values will … say of war: "This way of

> settling differences is not just." This business of burning human beings with napalm, of filling our nation's homes with orphans and widows, of injecting poisonous drugs of hate into veins of people normally humane, of sending men home from dark and bloody battlefields physically handicapped and psychologically deranged, cannot be reconciled with wisdom, justice and love. A nation that continues year after year to spend more money on military defence than on programs of spiritual uplift is approaching spiritual death.

The Vietnam era is over, and many things have changed in American society since then. But King's searing critique of American militarism and its inextricable relationship with racism and social injustice remains as pertinent today as it did 40 years ago (read "Afghanistan" in place of Vietnam, and it could have been delivered last week).

Three Insights on Christian Social Engagement

King's speech is also an instructive example of a particular way of approaching Christian social engagement. The speech is fundamentally an anti-war homily, not an analysis of domestic social and political policy. But King refuses to compartmentalize the nature of justice, and moves backwards and forwards between the tragedy of Vietnam and the violence and poverty of America's ghettoes, as two sides of the same coin. He explains that one of the things impelling him to raise his voice against the war was the incongruity of commending nonviolent social change to the desperate, rejected, and angry young men on the streets of America's cities while the American government modeled a way of solving its problems overseas through employing "massive doses of violence." King's style of social commentary is one that exposes the interconnectedness of all spheres of collective life and insists on consistency between what the State expects of its citizens and how the State itself acts.

A second noteworthy feature of King's approach is that he does not begin with some speculative theory of justice, or a pre-cast list of ethical principles or human rights, that are then applied to social reality in order to determine an appropriate course of action. Instead King begins on the one hand with a personal confession of his complicity in the problems he is describing, and on the other hand with an account, again grounded in

vivid personal experience, of concrete situations of poverty, violence, racism, and injustice both at home and abroad. What justice requires, he assumes, cannot be discerned in the abstract from the safe distance of a policy analyst, academic specialist, or media commentator; it can only be discovered by looking squarely at the actual, embodied suffering of the victims of oppression and questioning the structural arrangements that perpetuate their suffering.

A third feature of King's approach is his appeal to religious or spiritual resources to envision change. He speaks of his own commitment to Jesus Christ and emphasizes the universal brotherhood, and, indeed, the divine sonship of all people under God's fatherhood. Along with quotations from President Kennedy, Arnold Toynbee, and several black poets, King cites two biblical texts verbatim (Isa. 40:4/Luke 3:5; 1 John 4:7), and alludes to a third, the Parable of the Good Samaritan (Luke 10:30-35). It is this third allusion that is most interesting, and most frequently quoted by Christian social activists. King's striking words make the point that while doing works of compassion is an important part of the Christian calling, by itself it is not enough. It must be accompanied by transformation of the social structures that generate poverty and violence in the first place—by the re-paving of the Jericho road.

King's point—that there is more to Christian mission than patching up the victims of structural injustice—is absolutely correct. As well as being good Samaritans, we have to ask about *why* the road from Jerusalem to Jericho is so damned dangerous in the first place! But there is still a huge amount for us to learn about the nature of justice and the task of Christian social engagement by attending closely to the actions of the Good Samaritan himself. This is what I want to do in the remainder of this second Bechtel lecture.

A Parable of Enormous Cultural Influence

Of all the stories Jesus told, none has been absorbed more deeply into the moral and legal traditions of Western civilization than the Parable of the Good Samaritan (Luke 10:30-35). It is the story of a man who is brutally assaulted on a trip from Jerusalem to Jericho and is left for dead on the side of the road. Two passing temple officials notice the unconscious man in the ditch, but instead of stopping to help they cross to the other side of the

road and carry on their way. Next a travelling Samaritan happens upon the victim. He is moved with compassion at what he sees. He bandages the man's wounds, lifts him on to his donkey, and transports him to a nearby inn, where he takes care of him overnight. The following day the Samaritan resumes his journey, but only after paying the innkeeper in advance to continue nursing the injured man back to health.

The impact of this parable has been immense, and its influence far exceeds the boundaries of strictly religious or theological discourse. The parable still figures frequently as a starting point for discussions in moral philosophy and social psychology about altruism and the nature of social responsibility, while in legal theory it continues to inform debates about the relationship between morality and law and the scope of personal liability. It has also played a huge role in medical ethics and in shaping the practice codes of several helping professions. It is frequently cited to encourage charitable pursuits in the local community and to support philanthropy on the global stage, especially in the form of emergency aid and relief assistance. In the political arena, good Samaritanism has been used to justify military interventions in other countries for humanitarian reasons, or to uphold human rights, or to remedy failed states. Most recently, it has figured in debates about immigration, the treatment of asylum seekers, and the obligations of hospitality towards displaced populations. The intellectual and cultural legacy of the parable has been enormous. As a commentator once remarked, this parable has built hospitals all over the world, and if it were truly heeded it would end racism, eliminate national hatreds, and abolish war.[3]

That the parable has particular pertinence to the theme of restorative justice is evident in at least four ways. First, it deals with an episode of criminal violence and, as we will see shortly, it affords remarkable insight into the experience of criminal victimization. Second, the story reflects extensively on the duty of care owed to the victims of crime by other members of the community. More words are devoted to describing the actions of the Samaritan than those of the two temple officials combined. His compassionate deeds are spelled out in extraordinary detail, because

[3] A.T. Robertson is quoted to this effect by Peter Rhea Jones, "The Love Command in Parable," *Perspectives in Religious Studies* 6 (1979): 248.

each individual action helps to define what is entailed in restoring victims to wholeness and autonomy following the tragedy they have suffered.

Third, it is hugely significant that the parable is told in response to a question from a lawyer about how to gain eternal life and about the scope of provisions in biblical law legislating care for one's neighbor (Lev. 19:17-18). We looked at this in the first lecture. This is the only parable in the Gospels that is expressly used to explain or defend an item of legal interpretation. The entire narrative is saturated with legal terminology, allusions, procedures, and assumptions that cannot be laid out in detail here but reinforce the parable's relevance to questions of legal theory and practice.

The fourth way in which the parable bears on the concerns of criminal justice was also discussed in the previous lecture. That Jesus deliberately casts a hated national enemy, a Samaritan, as the one who upholds God's law and fulfils the love commandment directly challenges our human propensity to categorize people dualistically as friend or foe, citizen or foreigner, good or bad, guilty or innocent, even as victim or offender. The parable subverts our tendency to divide the world simplistically into goodies and baddies, and teaches that goodness may be found even in those we most often call bad or evil. Nowhere is this lesson more relevant today than in the sphere of crime and justice.

My contention is that the parable has much to say about crime, the rule of law, and restorative justice. However, I will focus on just two dimensions: the insight the parable affords into the bitter experience of victimization—what it means experientially to be a victim of injustice and brutality—and its remarkable depiction of what is required to restore victims to wellbeing. In both respects the parable deals primarily with *criminal* victimization and repair. But its insights are equally applicable to other kinds of victimization—such as being a victim of family violence, social injustice, racial discrimination, political oppression, or countless other kinds of systemic evil. Research shows that victims of human malice, in whatever form it takes, have many similar reactions and needs, and I am sure you will be able to transfer much of the parable's message to your own area of specialist interest or community service.

The Bitterness of Victimization

The story opens with a "certain man" setting out of a journey from Jerusalem to Jericho, some 23 km (15 miles) away. Nothing is said of his religious, ethnic, or social identity. He is simply a "man." The road he traveled was steep and treacherous, twisting through barren terrain honeycombed with caves and gullies that provided ample hiding places for the many robbers who infested the area. It was extremely dangerous territory to pass through, and remained so for most of subsequent history. The journey would normally have taken at least six hours to complete on foot, but on this occasion the man's progress is cut short by a violent attack. The Greek word used for his assailants (*lēstais*) indicates that they are not opportunist thieves but well-armed brigands or outlaws who preyed on vulnerable travelers in the countryside. Social banditry was a major problem at the time. Unemployed workers or peasants driven off their land through debt, famine, or excessive taxation resorted to brigandage in order to survive, and their primary victims were the ruling elites whom they held responsible for their plight.

Some commentators suggest that Jesus' first hearers would have felt immediate sympathy for these highwaymen, viewing them as Robin Hood-type figures struggling valiantly against social and political oppression. But this seems fanciful to me. The penalty for brigandage was death, and fear of being attacked by bandits was widespread in the populace. Besides, the parable scarcely portrays the robbers in a positive light: they are responsible for extreme violence against a nameless victim whose simple humanity is highlighted while his social rank is left deliberately ambiguous. It is ambiguous because the only thing seized from him by his attackers is his clothing: "in addition to beating him they stripped him" (v. 30).[4] In the ancient world, clothing was a consistent indicator of wealth and status, so the stripping of the victim could imply he was a wealthy man whose expensive clothing was worth stealing. Or it could indicate he was so poor that the only thing he possessed was the rags on his back, which the bandits took in spiteful frustration.

Whatever his social rank, the man is treated cruelly by his assailants and left for dead. The dramatic description of his attack captures no fewer than five common aspects of the experience of criminal victimization. These

[4] My translation, to capture the temporal sequencing of the Greek construction.

need to be spelled out carefully at the beginning of the story, for if the man is ever to be restored to wellbeing, each dimension of his victimization will need to be addressed.

First, and most basically, his victimization was an occasion of profound disempowerment: "he fell into the hands of robbers." Without warning, total strangers invaded his life, disrupted his normal routine, seized control of his person, and reduced him to abject impotence. From this point on, the man is portrayed as completely passive, utterly dependent on the goodwill of others for his very survival. He is radically disempowered by his assailants. That is what being a victim is fundamentally about—an enforced, uninvited, crippling, debilitating powerlessness.

Second, his victimization was an experience of physical violation: "they beat him," to within an inch of his life, leaving him "half dead." The phrase used for his beating (*plēgas epithentes*) is the same expression used for the ferocious flogging dished out to Paul and Silas in the Philippian jail (Acts 16:23, cf. 2 Cor. 6:5; 11:23). The word "half dead" (*hemithanē*) is exceedingly rare in biblical Greek, though there is a striking parallel in a later papyrus document where a woman lays a complaint about an episode of domestic violence in which her brother and sister-in-law "nearly killed me by numbers of blows and left me half dead."[5] Clearly, the traveler is subjected to severe violence. His bodily integrity is brutally violated by his attackers and he is discarded like a worthless piece of garbage. Later, his rescuer must bandage his oozing wounds before attempting to move him to safety.

Third, the traveler's victimization was an experience of psychological humiliation: "they stripped him." As noted, clothing in the ancient world was an essential means of signaling one's wealth, class, or religious role, and the ability to recognize one's social peers by their appearance was enormously important. Wearing ornate clothing was a sign of personal dignity, honor, and status, while being stripped of clothing was a sign of humiliation and degradation. This is what happens to the victim: in being stripped nude and left exposed on the roadside, he is also profoundly humiliated. He is not only robbed of personal dignity; he is also deprived of his social belonging, for with his stolen clothing went all available markers of his ethnic identity

[5] See James Hope Moulton and George Milligan, *The Vocabulary of the Greek New Testament* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1963), 280.

and social location. As he is naked and unconscious (and thus unable to speak), all external clues as to his individual or cultural identity are taken away. He is reduced to an absolute minimum: an exposed, anonymous, insensible human being, whose only claim on anyone else's attention is his abject misery.

Fourth, the victim's experience is one of social isolation: "they went away, leaving him." He is left alone in a lonely place to die a lonely, lingering, solitary death. So isolated is he that it is only "by chance" (v. 31) that his battered and bruised body is seen by anyone at all. Even then, the first people who come across him elect to leave him in his abandoned state. He is twice forsaken, first by his attackers, then by his potential rescuers, whose indifference to his plight is a cruelty of equal magnitude. Victims of severe violence often speak of the disconnection they feel from those around them, even from close friends and acquaintances unable or unwilling to fathom their pain or bridge the gap to their desolate condition. The aloneness they experienced in being singled out by their assailant for harming and hurting is continued in a profound sense of aloneness in struggling with its aftermath. This sense of abandonment or forsakenness is perhaps the profoundest form of grief.

Finally, the victim's experience is one of enduring vulnerability: "they left him half dead." His suffering began at the time of the criminal assault, but his torment is not yet over. For the remainder of the story the injured man hovers between life and death. Those who stumble upon him on the road have a choice. They can either, like the priest and the Levite, regard him as good as dead already, beyond any worthwhile effort to restore. Or, like the merciful Samaritan, they can defy the logic of death and against all odds seek to fan the flicker of life back into flame. There is no middle way. Those who encounter victims can *either* surrender to the logic of destruction unleashed by the wrong that has been perpetrated, and reckon their powerless, violated, humiliated, and abandoned state to be hopeless, *or* they can strive to bring hope and healing to the victims, however remote those may seem at the time. The first option is starkly illustrated by the actions of the priest and the Levite. The second option is shown by the actions of the passing Samaritan.

An Unlikely Hero

In the first lecture I suggested that Jesus' original audience would have been taken aback at the appearance of a Samaritan in the story. They would have probably expected the third character to be an Israelite layman, since the threefold division of "priests, Levites and all the children of Israel" was a standard way of summarizing the religious diversity of the nation. Yet not only does Jesus use a Samaritan in place of an Israelite, he portrays him as responding in a way that puts the Jewish characters to shame. This unlikely character becomes the very embodiment of divine compassion towards the anonymous stranger lying motionless in the ditch. The Samaritan's actions are recounted in such exquisite detail because they exemplify exactly what is entailed in loving one's neighbor as oneself. For Jesus, neighbor-love is more than simple benevolence or showing respect for the equal rights of others. It is, rather, a love to be patterned after our love for God. Just as we are called to love God with all of our heart, soul, mind, and strength, so we are called to show the same all-encompassing love for others. This, I suggest, is the hermeneutical key to the parable and its most disturbing challenge. The Samaritan's display of love is unreserved in its passion and commitment. It exceeds mere charity, for it engages all the powers of his personality: his sight, heart, hands, strength, time, possessions, and intelligence.

Dimensions of Restorative Care

First to be engaged are the eyes of the Samaritan. Like the priest and the Levite, "he saw" the victim, but unlike them he saw him up close; he drew near to his actual person. Whereas the priest came down "that road" and the Levite came to "the place," the Samaritan drew "near to him" (*kat' auton*). Whereas the other travelers looked at the victim superficially from a distance, the Samaritan entered more fully into his personal space. The three travelers all had the same physical evidence to go by. For all of them, the naked, motionless body was without visible signs of ethnicity or social status, and for all intents and purposes appeared to be dead. The priest and the Levite used such equivocal evidence as an excuse to do nothing.

The Samaritan "saw" a suffering human being and got involved in rescuing him. Perhaps for that reason the next thing to be engaged was his heart or feelings: "he was moved with compassion." This is the crucial turning

point in the story. The reference to compassion comes exactly halfway through the narrative and shatters the parallelism between the three by-passers. All three "see" the victim, but only the Samaritan is overcome with compassion. The verb used here (*esplangchnisthē*) denotes a gut-wrenching surge of emotion, a stirring in the innards. In Luke's gospel, compassion is supremely a divine attribute. Just as God has compassion on expectant Israel and comes to her rescue in sending the Messiah (1:78, cf. v. 50), just as Jesus has compassion when he sees the widow of Nain burying her dead son and restores him to life (7:13), and just as the father of the Prodigal Son, himself an image for God, is filled with compassion when he sees his starving son stumbling up the road and rushes to embrace him (15:20), so the Samaritan is overcome with compassion when he sees the condition of the battered victim. Compassion expresses a God-like, and God-given, capacity to empathize with the sufferings of others, to enter into their world and share emotionally in their pain, while still regarding it as their pain, not one's own.

There was an important sense in which the Samaritan's heart overruled his head. The Samaritan could well have proceeded by way of logical calculation, first determining whether the victim was a fellow Samaritan, then choosing to show love to him. But there is no hint of any such reasoning. His instinctive response is one of compassion, not calculation. The casuistic strategy adopted by the priest and the Levite is simply not part of the Samaritan's moral universe. Of course, having one's heart in the right place is rarely enough in order to genuinely help someone in need; compassion may inspire the decision to help, but some level of rational analysis is also required to ensure that the assistance will actually prove beneficial. Deciding *how* to help is just as critical as deciding *whether* to help. In fact, even the decision whether to help is not the automatic product of compassionate feelings. An overpowering surge of emotion may even prove paralyzing in an observer and thus fail to generate any tangible results at all.

Not so for the Samaritan, however, for next to be activated are his hands and feet: "he went and bandaged his wounds." His interior experience of compassion was translated into exterior deeds of deliverance, and it was his act of "doing mercy" (v. 37), not his empathetic feelings, that fulfilled the commandment to love his neighbor as himself. His movement towards the victim counteracted the victim's isolation and rejection. The Samaritan's

bandaging of the wounds counteracted the victim's physical violation and started him on the road to healing. In dressing the wounds the Samaritan uses his own possessions: the bandages were probably torn from his clothing or headgear, and the oil and wine came from his commercial cargo. Oil was employed as a household remedy for pain relief, and wine was commonly used as a disinfectant.

Oil and wine not only served as medicinal remedies; they also played an important role in temple worship as sacrificial libations (Lev. 23:13, cf. Rev. 6:6). We need not posit elaborate allegorical associations to recognize an additional layer of symbolic significance in the Samaritan's use of oil and wine to minister to the victim. In showing practical concern for the injured man's welfare, irrespective of religious considerations, he offers true worship to God. What God requires, more than ten thousand rivers of oil poured out in cultic worship, is justice, mercy, and humility (Micah 6:7-8; cf. Hosea 6:6; Isa. 58:5-9; Matt. 23:23). The Samaritan enacts the truth of this message, in contrast to the priest and Levite. They would have often poured oil and wine on the temple altar in Jerusalem in acts of profound devotion, but they failed to manifest their spiritual worship in merciful justice toward the crime victim. It is the hated Samaritan who offers the worship of justice and mercy, in pouring oil and wine on the man's wounds, not just on the religious altar.

Next, the Samaritan enlists his power to change the victim's circumstances: "he put him on his own animal and brought him to an inn." He picked the defenceless man up in his arms, heaved him onto his own mount, and removed him to a place of greater security. The implication of putting the victim on "his own animal" is that the Samaritan dismounted and went ahead on foot, leading the animal by a tether, like a servant boy. In seeking to transform the victim's circumstances, he displays striking humility as well as astonishing courage, given that he was still in bandit-infested territory.

Once at the inn the Samaritan devotes time and attention to the victim's recovery: "and he took care of him." The inn itself was probably a dirty, dangerous place; it was no luxury resort. It would have been a square enclosure open to the skies, with rows of stalls for animals and straw on the ground for their owners to sleep on beside their beasts. But the Samaritan does not sleep. Instead, he tends the wounded man throughout the night. The

victim is not abandoned for a second time, but is sustained in a relationship of sheltering care. He is not left alone.

At daybreak, the Samaritan must depart on business, but the victim is still not fit to travel. So the Samaritan "took out two denarii, gave them to the innkeeper, and said, 'Take care of him; and when I come back, I will repay you whatever more you spend'" (v. 35). There are several remarkable details in this final scene of the story. One is the amount of money involved: it is estimated that two denarii would have covered room and board for several weeks. The Samaritan makes provision for the long-term recuperation of the victim. He cannot be there to nurse him in person, so he deputizes the innkeeper to serve as his agent, instructing him to continue rendering the same "care" (*epimelēthēti*, v. 35) that he himself has offered overnight (*epemelēthē*, v. 34).

By accepting payment in advance, the innkeeper bound himself to carry out this commission. This is the most extraordinary detail of all. The Samaritan enters into an open-ended financial arrangement with the innkeeper, promising to cover any further expenses he might incur. His solemn promise, "I will repay you," was a legal formula for taking over someone else's debt. His concern was to afford the injured man protection from being imprisoned or enslaved for unpaid bills at the end of his stay. The Samaritan's chances of being defrauded were considerable, but he makes himself vulnerable to extortion in order to spare the man the possibility of subsequent victimization.

That the Samaritan exhibits such concern for the future experience of the victim attests to an important, though uncomfortable, truth for all engaged in social justice and community development work. Once aid is given to those in need, that act initiates a chain of events in which the provider remains morally implicated. It is well known, especially in humanitarian work, that every intervention has unintended consequences, and even benevolently intended interventions may sometimes have a damaging impact on the beneficiary. Those who intervene are therefore obliged to anticipate, as best they can, the likely consequences of their involvement and to address negative effects that may flow from them. Good intentions are not sufficient. Moral foresight is also required, for well-meaning gestures may easily go awry.

The Samaritan anticipates the possibility that the victim may end up being indebted to the innkeeper and therefore be unrestored to wholeness. So he assumes personal responsibility to mitigate this potentially destructive outcome. He not only draws the victim into a community of care, he ensures that this community will continue into the future, as long as he has need of it. He also makes sure that the man will emerge from his time of convalescence into a position of independence and freedom. Charity alone can enslave; true justice seeks to restore autonomy and self-reliance.

All in all, the Samaritan performs some nine different actions. Such an extraordinary detailing of his deeds is not incidental; it is because they enact in concrete terms what it really means to "love one's neighbor as oneself." In essence, it means loving others in the same way we love God. The two obligations cannot be separated; they constitute a single reality. Just as our love for God must embrace all the dimensions of our personality—heart, soul, mind, and strength—so too must our love for others. The Samaritan was engaged emotionally, physically, materially, socially, financially, and morally in reaching out to the dying man on the roadside. He goes well beyond what was minimally necessary to save his life, and shows superlative dedication to his full restoration. His restoration to community is a re-empowerment and liberation, as well as a healing and recuperation, and for this reason the Samaritan's response qualifies as an exemplary demonstration of restorative justice in its fullness.

Concluding Observations

The parable was told to a lawyer who asks Jesus to pronounce on the necessary conditions for inheriting eternal life (v. 25). Jesus replies by asking the lawyer what the law says on this matter. The lawyer responds by nominating wholehearted love for God and love of neighbor as the law's most essential requirements. Jesus congratulates him on giving the "right" (*orthos)* answer, and tells him to "do" these commandments, and he will gain life. But the lawyer is after all a lawyer, and so he asks Jesus for a definitive statement on exactly "Who is my neighbor?" (v. 29). Clearly, if "doing" the law by loving one's neighbor is *the* critical requirement for entry to the new age, an unambiguous definition of the object of such love seems critically important. Jesus responds with the parable of the Good Samaritan, then

invites the lawyer to make his own interpretive judgment on the matter of neighborliness: "How does it seem *to you* (*dokei soi*)?" he asks. "Which of these three was a neighbor to the man who fell into the hands of robbers?"

This question returns to the lawyer's original inquiry but in a significantly modified form. It no longer focuses on the identity of the *other* as neighbor but on the questioner's *own* identity as a neighbor. It is not "Who is my neighbor?" but "To whom am *I* a neighbor?" There is a shift from object to subject, from recipient of compassion to agent of compassion, and with it a decisive shift from the realm of legal abstraction to the world of relational engagement. So, which of the three men, the lawyer is asked, acted like a neighbor to the man in the ditch? Posed this way, only one answer is possible, for only one of the three characters did anything to benefit the victim. "The one who showed him mercy," the lawyer replies. He had initially asked what he must "do" to win eternal life, and Jesus said he must "do" the law. By now indicating that the Samaritan "does" mercy, the lawyer implies that the heretical outsider meets the requirement of "doing" the law, which thus opens to him the door to eternal life. Jesus confirms this by issuing his second imperative to the lawyer: "Go you and do likewise" (v. 37, cf. v. 28). The present tense of the verb "do" underscores the constant or habitual nature of the specified action. Mercy is not a singular episode in one's dealings with others; it is a comprehensive way of life to which every individual is called.

The message of the parable is inescapable: *the continual practice of mercy is an essential individual requirement for entry to the age of salvation.* The Samaritan qualifies to enter; the priest and the Levite do not. In this way, as one commentator puts it, the parable "exposes any religion with a mania for creeds and an anemia for deeds, an uptightness about orthodoxy not matched by a parallel concern for orthopraxy (cf. I Jn. 3:23)."[6] It also exposes, I would add, any approach to criminal justice that places a concern for legal technicalities and professional decorum ahead of the actual needs of victims, and that diverts the wider social community from its overriding responsibility to work towards the restoration of victims to a place of health, strength, freedom, and autonomy.

Nothing is said in the parable about the need to catch and punish the robbers, though the justice of doing might be assumed. Nothing is said about

[6] Jones, "Love Command," 241.

what the kindhearted Samaritan would have done had he arrived on the scene in the middle of the attack, though he might well have intervened in some (hopefully nonviolent!) way. And nothing is said about the need to make the highways safer for travelers or about the value of drafting more police into the region to deter similar attacks in the future, though deterrence has its place and security is always worth considering. Martin Luther King, Jr. was right when he observed that "We are called to play the Good Samaritan on life's roadside. . . . but one day we must come to see that the whole Jericho road must be transformed so that men and women will not be constantly beaten and robbed. . . . True compassion is more than flinging a coin to a beggar. . . . It comes to see that an edifice that produces beggars needs restructuring." The parable does not address these larger systemic issues in detail, not because they are unimportant or inessential to consider in any comprehensive approach to crime, law, and social justice, but because the story's overriding concern is the duty of restoration towards the victim and the priority of the victim's needs in the interpretation and administration of the regime of law.

Yet the parable is not totally silent about the need for systemic change. In my new book,[7] I suggest that the action of transporting the victim to the inn and enlisting the innkeeper in his future care involved a transformation of his environmental circumstances, and in that sense intimates the need for structural change in the work of restorative justice. The same applies, as we saw in lecture one, in the Samaritan's forging of a personal relationship with the Jewish victim, thereby ignoring and de-legitimating the prevailing structures of violence and exclusion toward enemies. It is even possible to detect systemic implications in the absence from the narrative of any hint of counter-violence against the perpetrators of the crime, any suggestion that violence can serve the cause of justice, an assumption that was as much a commonplace in antiquity as it is today.

So, the parable has more to say on systemic and political matters than is often realized. But this is not its dominant focus, for the parable recognizes, I think, that there is something far more important and far more difficult for us as hearers than achieving social or systemic or political change—and

[7] See *Compassionate Justice: An Interdisciplinary Dialogue with Two Gospel Parables on Law, Crime, and Restorative Justice*, 133-37.

that is becoming truly loving persons who engage all the powers of our personalities on behalf of others. For that kind of love to emerge, we need more than political and social change; we need the power of God.

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THE BECHTEL LECTURES

The Bechtel Lectures in Anabaptist-Mennonite Studies were established at Conrad Grebel University College in 2000, through the generosity of Lester Bechtel, a devoted churchman with an active interest in Mennonite history. His dream was to make the academic world of research and study accessible to a broader constituency, and to build bridges of understanding between the academy and the church. The lecture series provides a forum though which the core meaning and values of the Anabaptist-Mennonite faith and heritage can be communicated to a diverse audience, and be kept relevant and connected to today's rapidly changing world. Held annually and open to the public, the Bechtel lectures provide an opportunity for representatives of various disciplines and professions to explore topics reflecting the breadth and depth of Mennonite history, identity, faith, and culture. Lecturers have included Terry Martin, Stanley Hauerwas, Rudy Wiebe, Nancy Heisey, Fernando Enns, James Urry, Sandra Birdsell, Alfred Neufeld, Ched Myers and Elaine Enns, Ernst Hamm, Roger Epp, and John Roth.