

Taking Care of Others - The Inkeeper in the Parable of the Good Samaritan

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‘But a certain Samaritan, as he journeyed, came where he was: and when he saw him, he had compassion on him, and went to him, and bound up his wounds, pouring in oil and wine, and set him on his own beast, and brought him to an inn, and took care of him. And on the morrow when he departed, he took out two pence, and gave them to the host, and said unto him, Take care of him; and whatsoever thou spendest more, when I come again, I will repay thee’ (*Luke 10.33-35*).

When the Saviour spoke, he spoke volumes. We take a little bit of his gold and hammer it out into acres of gold leaf, and we do well in so doing, for we cannot talk ingots of gold as he did.

His words were pearls and rubies and diamonds, and often they meant not only the finite meaning which we can put into practice, but infinite meanings which only he can fulfil. We shall be wise if we carefully weigh his sentences.

I am going to throw a sidelight on the parable. It is not the direct teaching of the parable, but it is a gleam of latent light on another subject. What our Saviour taught us to be, he was. When, therefore, he described the good Samaritan, he pictured himself, for to us he has acted the good Samaritan. What he has commanded us to do in this parable, he has himself done, for he is our example as well as our teacher. This is my first head, and after it I shall briefly touch upon four more points.

1. The Lord’s example

This Samaritan, we are told, took care of the injured man. Christ has taken great care of wounded souls. The Samaritan brought him to an inn, and took care of him.

I will not dwell upon it at length. I think you understand it. You too were wounded once and you have not forgotten it. You were sore wounded; it seemed as if all sorrows had met in you, and all because you discovered that you had sinned.

Personal sin is a dread discovery when a person has really made it for himself. It is not much to say, ‘I have sinned.’ It is not much to believe the fact that you have sinned. But to find it coming home to you; your sins clinging to you like so much burning pitch cleaving to your skin; even worse, your sins within you pricking your conscience so that you cannot rest day or night – this is terrible!

You feel anxious to flee, but know not where. We did not all pass through this state of mind to the same degree, but, more or less, each child of God knows what this means. We find ourselves wounded, bleeding, faint, and dying, with no power to help ourselves, and no friend near who could succour us!

You recollect all that; and in that hour Jesus came by. I think I see him now as first I saw him when I looked to him – so tender in his looks! He came where I was, stopped at the sight of me, stooped over me, and bade me trust myself with him, for he would handle me most tenderly.

I did so. What could I do better than just leave myself with him? I think I see him now, looking at my wounds, washing them, pouring in the oil and wine, then binding them and strapping them about. Never was there such a surgeon.

I felt my life returning to me at his every touch; at his every look and breath; and, more, I felt a

strange realisation creeping over me that made me know that, somehow, I was new – was, in fact, born again, and had passed from death unto life.

The first perception of that fact is with me still; it was no dream or passing enthusiasm. That day is as fresh to me as if it were yesterday. The snow was falling fast, yet ten thousand winged doves seemed to come flying out of Heaven to meet me on my way, for I was at peace with God.

I had to tell out my joy. I had to tell it straightaway. I could not hold it in: the joy was too great for silence. Christ Jesus had done it. He had made a miserable heart glad in a moment. He had taken away my sackcloth, and girded me with gladness; taken away the ashes on my miserable head, and set there a coronet of joyous hope. He did it all. He took great care of me. I want you that know all about his love to supplement my story by saying, ‘Yes, that is what he did with me. He took care of me.’

My Lord sat up with me at nights, and when I woke up in the morning, what encouraging things he put into my mind! Yes, and he followed me when I had to go about the world, and was likely to be tempted. He took care of me.

My boyish sports might have brought temptations, and my mixing with other youths might have brought me into evil; but he took care of me. Looking back upon my first days of conversion I bear witness that he really took care of me. And because of this I am bound to take care of others. Do you not feel the same?

2. The Lord’s command

Secondly, Jesus in his absence would have his church take care of wounded souls. He – ‘brought him to an inn, and took care of him. And on the morrow when he departed, he took out two pence, and gave them to the host, and said unto him, Take care of him.’

Jesus Christ has brought many a wounded soul to his church, and his order is, ‘Take care of him.’ For this purpose is the church instituted, that you may have the cure and care of souls. You who just now were agreeing that Christ took care of you, must now hear him say of another, ‘Take care of him.’

It is my special office to take care of all the sick souls who come to this great caravanserai [see end-note 1]; but I cannot do this unless you all help me. Some of my friends look round the Tabernacle to find out the wounded ones, speak with them, and so take care of them.

Alas, even many church members come in and out, and never think about others; but this must not be so any longer! Jesus says to his church, as to the host of an inn, ‘Take care of him,’ for in a sick soul there are wounds which need much care. They are not easily healed, these wounds of the heart. They bleed afresh, even when you think that you have healed them.

Some minds are so terribly bruised on account of past sin that they will never come to a permanent healing so that they can rejoice in the Lord and serve him, unless you take special care of them. We have around us despondent ones who will not get into light and liberty unless we take care of them by instruction and consolation.

How we must care

Besides wounds, they suffer from weaknesses. A man cannot be beaten and bruised and left half dead, without being very weak. Take care of him then. Let us look out for Little-Faiths, and Much-Afraid, and Feeble-Minds; and lay ourselves out to strengthen them. When we find them, let us not despise them.

Let us not seek out more congenial company, and avoid the feeble and despondent; but let us converse with them, that we may take care of them. After we have healed their wounds, and bound up their broken bones, let us continue to nurse them, and give them food suitable to their sick state. Would God that a tenth part of the care which some Christians show towards their horses [nowadays their cars] and their dogs were exercised upon Christ's beloved ones whom he commits to our charge, and of whom he says, pointing them out one by one – 'Take care of him!'

When wounds are healed, weakness is removed and hunger is satisfied, he who acts as Christ's host will discover that the needy man has no adequate clothing. We are told that this poor man had been stripped of his raiment. Supposing the host had said, 'I have doctored you up so that you can walk; and now you may go.' He might have answered, 'How can I go? I have lost my clothes.' Then would come to the host's mind the word of the good Samaritan, 'Take care of him' – which included – 'Clothe him.'

So let us endeavour, as much as we can, to clothe every renewed soul with the garments of salvation. Let us so teach, instruct, and console, that those who come to us naked shall go forth from us with the robes of joy, comfort, and strength wrapped about them, to take their journey to the New Jerusalem in fit apparel. In all things we must see that the man of God be thoroughly furnished for his heavenward journey.

Nor is this all. The succoured pilgrim says, 'I am going on my journey, and I am thankful for what you have done for me. But when I started out from home, I had bread in my pack, and money in my pocket, with which to pay the charges of the way. Alas, I am now penniless!'

Then the host would say to him, 'He that brought you here said, "Take care of him," and I must interpret his words very liberally, for he is of a generous mind. Here is money to pay your charges till you reach your home.'

Let us never relinquish the care of a soul till it is safely housed in Heaven. Take care of one another, but especially let those who are strong take great care of the weak. Some will want to be cared for throughout all the way.

I am occupied, in my small way, just as Mr Greatheart was employed in Bunyan's day. I do not compare myself with that champion, but I am in the same line of business. I am employed in personally-conducted tours to Heaven, and I have with me, at the present time, dear Old Father Honest: I am glad he is still alive and active. And there is Christiana, and here are her children. It is my business, as best I can, to kill dragons, and cut off giants' heads, and lead the timid and trembling.

I am often afraid of losing some of the weaklings. I have much heartache for them, but by God's grace, and with your kind and generous help in looking after one another, I hope we shall all travel safely to the river's edge. Oh, how many have I had to part with there!

I have stood on the brink, and I have heard their singing in the midst of the stream, and I have almost seen the shining ones lead them up the hill into the celestial city. That is my line of business. My Lord has said to me, 'Take care of him.' I want many of you to share in this happy work, for our dear Master's sake. He has gone away, but he has left sick souls in our charge. Let us take great care of them.

3. The Lord's provision

Thirdly, I have to note to you that our Lord has provided for these sick ones. We read of the good Samaritan that 'he took out two pence, and gave them to the host'. Two pence then meant a great deal more than two pence would mean in these times. Two pence was a considerable sum in those

days, and would defray the charges of such simple living as they had at oriental caravanserais for a considerable time.

Now the Master has given to many of you these two pence to pay the charges of sick ones for some time to come. What a sum we have in hand in the means of grace! The preaching of the Word: what a help it is to the wounded, the sick, and the weary!

The writing and scattering of sound religious books is another way of nourishing those who are committed to our charge. The ordinance of baptism, and especially the ordinance of the Lord's Supper – the Master has given us these things as spending money for the hospitalities of his church. 'There,' says he, 'use these. Use these, that you may find in them sufficient for taking care of the wounded and weak.'

Another piece of spending money that he has given us is the benefit of Christian fellowship. You and I know that it is one of the sweetest things outside of Heaven to talk to one another, and to exchange notes of our experience. As nations are enriched by commerce, so are Christians enriched by communion.

As we exchange commodities in trade, so do we exchange our different forms of knowledge while we speak to one another of the things of the kingdom. The Saviour has given us this Christian fellowship to be as it were the two pence to defray the charges of those whom he has entrusted to our care. In what he has left as a legacy to the church he has left us ample means to go on with. We have not spent the two pence yet in any one case.

4. Special cases

But fourthly, I now call to your notice that there may be some persons with whom there may be greater expenses than usual. 'There,' says the Master, 'there are the two pence; but if anything more be needed, spend it, and I will repay thee.' Some will need more than preaching; more than ordinances. What sort are these?

Some are more than ordinarily injured. They have long lived in sin. Their conviction of sin is very terrible. You cannot make them well on the usual expenditure of two pence. The ordinary means will not reach their desperate cases. Do not despair, but go on, and spend more. Do more for them than you would do for the rest of the sick and wounded who lodge at the church's inn.

Some are more than ordinarily weak. There is Miss Much-Afraid. Sometimes when I talk with her I leave her in a comfortable frame, and I hope she will be no more sad. Alas, she is just as much afraid tomorrow!

Mr Feeble-Mind – do you not know him? You sometimes get a little out of patience with the brother because he is so very weak. Let us be doubly tender to his feebleness, and spend on him more than we should like to lay out on all comers. The Good Samaritan who put them under our care, has said, 'If you spend more, when I come again, I will repay you.' Let us not stint these needy ones, for the Lord would not be pleased if we did.

Many are not only more wounded, and more weak, but they are more dull of comprehension. Some flesh is hard to heal; some minds find it very hard to receive consolation. It takes a long time to get a Gospel notion into certain people's heads.

Martin Luther talked of beating the heads of the Wittenbergers with the Book to get justification by faith into their brains. But beating is of no use. We must spend much more than twopennyworth of patience on them. We must repeat over, and over, and over again the elements of Truth. It must be, 'Precept upon precept, precept upon precept; line upon line, line upon line; here a little, and there a

a little.' If any require more trouble and patience than others, we must spend it on them freely.

Some are more desperately tried than others. We wonder why some men do not make better Christians than they do. Ah, you do not know their wives! You wonder why some women do not make brighter Christians. You do not know their husbands!

You wonder that yonder dear child, who showed such bright early tokens of grace, did not grow into a fine man. You do not know the example he had at home! Oh, if we could follow many of our dear brothers and sisters back to the rooms which they are forced to call 'homes' and see what they have to see, and hear what they have to hear, we would not be astonished that they need a great deal of care! But the Master says to us, 'Take care of them. See them through. Never be weary of them.'

Lastly, some of these people are lamentably trying. I know persons whom I love very much, and hope to see in Heaven, but they are a sad trial to me now. All of you who work for the Lord must have fallen in with good people who are a living cross to all around them.

Ill temper, obstinacy, changeableness, singularity, each one will produce a character hard to put up with; but we are bound to bear with them all to the end. When we have gone as far as the customary two pence, we must not stop, but spend on. Our Lord seems to say, 'Run up a bill: put no limit to your spiritual expense; for whatsoever thou spendest more, when I come again, I will repay thee.'

5. The reward of the Lord

With that I am going to finish – for those who want more care than usual, we shall be rewarded when the Lord comes. 'When I come again, I will repay thee.' This reminds us that he will come again. He is on the road. He may be here very soon; and when he comes again he will repay us. Think of his ever being in our debt! Imagine his asking us to let it stand over till he comes again!

I have been turning this over in my mind, and I can hardly accept it. A dear friend did me a great kindness in a difficult matter. It was in his line of business, and when I saw him, I said, 'You will send in your bill, please.' He said, 'You will pay it when I send it in.'

A month or two passed away, and I wrote to him, telling him that I was never in anybody's debt, and I did not like to leave an account outstanding. Would he send me his bill? He only said, 'Yes, yes: you will pay it when I send it in.'

I worried him to send the bill, and at length said, 'I must have it.' Then he sent it in, and put down his charge in full, but across a stamp at the bottom he had written, 'Settled by love'.

When my Master says to me, 'When I come again, I will repay thee,' I reply, 'It is already settled by love.' In fact, it was settled long ago. We owe him so much that it is impossible that he can ever owe us anything that would need to be booked.

Dear friends, if you will look after the Lord's poor wounded ones, he says, 'I will repay you.' You have an 'I-O-U' from your Lord. Jesus is such a liberal paymaster that we are glad to wait as long as he pleases. The interest which he gives is beyond measure. He pays ten thousand percent on all that he owes; and we are therefore willing to let the 'debt' keep on running as long as he pleases.

Let us henceforth grudge nothing, but spend with all our might upon the wounded ones whom Jesus brings to our door. Beloved, this is a short sermon, but it will take you long to carry it out in practice.

Endnote

[1] Eastern quadrangular inn with huge inner court for caravans of merchants or pilgrims.

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