The Parable of the Good Samaritan. Luke 10. 25-37.

(Unless otherwise stated, all quotations of Scripture are from the New King James Version)

Introduction.

The central issue raised by the Lord Jesus in His parable is that of our attitude towards others. In His story, He identifies four different ways in which we can look at those around us.

Running our eyes quickly through the characters, it is not difficult to identify the four categories. They are: the robbers, the priest and the Levite, the innkeeper, and, of course, the Samaritan.

The injured man is regarded differently by each of these characters and groups:

(i) to the robbers, he is ***a victim to be exploited***;

(ii) to the priest and the Levite, he is ***a nuisance to be shunned***;

(iii) to the innkeeper, he is ***a business proposition***; but

(iv) to the Samaritan, he is ***a neighbour needing help***.

Putting it another way:

(i) the robbers ***create*** the problem;

(ii) the priest and the Levite ***ignore*** the problem;

(iii) the innkeeper ***treats*** the problem ***professionally***; and

(iv) the Samaritan ***solves*** the problem.

And each character or group in the story has a different motto and philosophy of life. Simply stated:

(i) the motto of the robbers was *'**Yours is mine if I can get it**';*

(ii) the motto of the priest and Levite was *'**Mine is my own if I can keep it**';*

(iii) the motto of the innkeeper was *'**Mine is yours if you can pay for it**'*; and

(iv) the motto of the Samaritan was *'**Mine is yours if you need it**'*.

The setting. First, the Lord painted the scene.

He began His response to the lawyer's question by referring to the road which went *down* from Jerusalem to Jericho; which it did quite literally by over 3,000 feet.[1] This road was a desolate, uninspiring sort of place. And I suspect that the Lord chose such a scene for his story intentionally. For here there would be no audience, no spectators. Each of the key characters was therefore free to act naturally. And already we learn that our Lord would challenge us through His story as to how we respond to a 'neighbour's' need when there is nobody around to look over our shoulders and no point in pretending to be what we are not.

But this particular road wasn't only *lonely*; it was downright *dangerous*. It stretched for the best part of 20 miles, and by far the longest section of it passed through a rocky gorge bracketed by barren and bleak mountains. With its many rocks and caves, this wild region lent itself naturally as a resort for bandits and brigands. The name of the gorge in Arabic means the 'Ascent of Blood', a name which may well derive from the acts of violence once regularly committed there.[2]

Having set the scene, the Lord introduced the first of our four categories.

Enter the robbers. They weren't 'thieves' as suggested by some Bible translations. These men didn't pilfer or steal. They were robbers, outlaws; they plundered and took by force.[3] That is, they were of the Barabbas type ('Now Barabbas was *a robber*', John 18. 40 – the same word), not the Judas Iscariot type ('he was *a thief*, and had the money box; and he used to take what was put in it', John 12. 6). They represent the nasty type of person who looks somebody else up and down and asks 'what can I get out of him?' … 'what use is he to me?' To characters like these, other people are simply tools to be used and exploited for their own selfish purposes.

In this connection, we should note that these robbers stripped their victim *before* they wounded him. It wasn't therefore that their greed compelled them to an act of violence. It wasn't that they were required, reluctantly, to disable the man to obtain his garments. Indeed, they took the precaution of removing his clothes before they injured the poor man, that his garments, which were an all-important part of the spoil, wouldn't be torn or stained with blood. It was only then that they 'wounded' him (literally, 'they laid blows on him'), either to ensure that he wouldn't be able to follow them or for the sheer fun of it!

Before leaving the robbers, I need to stop and ask, 'Is there nothing of the robber character in *me*?' Am I never influenced by what I can get out of others? Do I never feel a sadistic sense of satisfaction and pleasure when somebody I dislike suffers in some way? Do I never wish ill on others – for any reason?

Exit the robbers and **enter the priest**. Jesus introduced this character to us with the words, 'by chance a priest was going down that way'. In other words, it was 'by sheer coincidence' that the priest happened to be passing that way.

And such words may well sound strange to those of us who believe in divine providence. But, by these words, our Lord emphasised at least two things. First, He stressed the loneliness of the road. The wounded man lay in an isolated spot, and might easily have lain there too long for help to arrive. And, second, our Lord stressed the casualness of the meeting, emphasising that there was nothing special or exceptional about the encounter. For He wants us to know that it is our response to the ordinary, everyday situations of life which best reveal our character.[4] We are to 'do good to all', we are told, 'as we have... opportunity'.[5]

We should note that Jesus didn't dispute either the orthodoxy or the knowledge of the priest. We can assume therefore that our Lord was happy for us to believe that the priest was fully versed in all the Temple ritual. No doubt, the priest could have put others right on any matter of the ceremonial law. And yet he was blind to the practical implications of the very law which men sought at his mouth.[6] For *his own law* required him to assist his brother in lifting up a fallen *beast*; 'You shall not see your brother's donkey or his ox fall down along the road, and hide yourself from them; you shall surely help him lift them up again'.[7] And this was no donkey or ox which the priest spied by the road; it *was* his 'brother'! It was his 'neighbour'.

But if our Lord didn't challenge the priest's orthodoxy, neither did He accuse him of doing any active harm to the unfortunate man lying on the roadside. The priest didn't go across to inflict further injury on the motionless form, nor to steal any goods which the robbers might had missed. His was altogether a sin of omission, consisting entirely in what he failed to do. James captured the spirit of it at the close of his fourth chapter, 'to him who knows to do good and does not do it, to him it is sin'.[8]

We pause for a moment to ask, 'Do *we* never, indifferent and uncaring, walk past those in trouble? Do we never deliberately look the other way and heartlessly ignore their plight?' Ah, but then we usually manage to come up with some good excuses for doing so. And before we dare 'point the finger'[9] at the priest, we ought perhaps to imagine some of the very plausible – and perhaps uncomfortably familiar – excuses which he could have offered.

He might have argued, for example, that he couldn't spare the time just then. Jericho was a very attractive location, spoken of repeatedly in the Old Testament as 'the city of palms'.[10] Indeed, there are occasions in the year when others can be shivering in the snow in Jerusalem while you bask in the sun in Jericho! It is hardly surprising therefore that Jericho was one of the main country residences of the Jerusalem priesthood. I understand that about half of Israel's priests in our Lord's day resided there. And it is quite likely that our priest was on his way home after finishing his work in the Temple.

It is estimated that there were tens of thousands of priests in Israel at the time.[11] With only one Temple, the whole priesthood was on duty at the festivals of the Passover, Pentecost and Tabernacles. Dating back to the days of King David, the priesthood had been divided into 24 courses, each of which served at the Temple for another two weeks in the year.[12]

I imagine that this priest had just finished his round of Temple duty. His wife knew what time to expect him home, and would, no doubt, have a fine meal ready for him. If, therefore, he delayed to help the robbers' victim, his meal would be ruined, his wife distraught with worry, and, likely as not, his life not worth living when he finally arrived home! Indeed, given the choice, on balance he would probably have rather faced the robbers!

Again, the priest could have pleaded that he wasn't suitably dressed. Surely it was unthinkable that he should get his splendid robes either stained with the blood of the man or soiled with the dirt of the road.

He might have pleaded also that for him to help could easily have interfered with his own spiritual life and service. Remember that our Lord described the man as 'half dead'. For all the priest knew, the prostrate figure might have been that of a dead man, or, if not, he might soon die. This would have proved a calamity for the priest if he had touched the body. For, according to the books of Leviticus and Numbers, the priest would have then been ceremonially defiled and unclean for seven days.[13]

And then he could have argued that the risks involved in stopping to assist were far too great. Clearly the man lying there had not been knocked down by a passing chariot! And the unsavoury characters who had recently waylaid the poor fellow might well still be lurking around, just ready to pounce. Indeed, for all the priest knew, they might even have left the man's body lying there to lure other unsuspecting souls to the spot.

Surely, there was no sense in risking his own life for that of a man about whom he knew nothing at all. For him to do so could well have meant that within five minutes or so there would have been, not one, but two men lying 'half-dead' by the side of the road, and one of them a very valuable clergyman from the Jerusalem Temple!

And yet again he could have argued plausibly that he was not the right man for the job. The poor fellow on the roadside evidently needed proper medical care and attention, and he, the priest, was neither trained nor skilled to give this. Now if the man had only wanted a lecture on the tabernacle …! Or if he, the priest, had only been the author of this Gospel, who was 'medically qualified', that would have been different![14]

And then the priest had one final excuse: he could see a Levite coming along behind. This case was surely more in the Levite's line than his. After all, were not the Levites supposed to perform the more menial tasks? Had not God appointed them to minister to the needs of the priesthood.[15] Surely, it would therefore be more appropriate for 'the servant' to stop and assist the robbers' victim than for 'the master' to do so. Yes, this was definitely more up his street.

And have *we* never excused ourselves from helping someone in need on similar grounds? Do the following ring any bells? 'In other circumstances I should have been

only too glad to help, but I'm afraid it isn't convenient right now' … 'It's a pity, but I just happen to have my tidy clothes on at the moment' … 'I have set aside this morning for Bible study and I can't let my neighbour's crisis interfere with my spiritual life' … 'Frankly, the risks are too great' … 'There are others far better qualified than me to help' … 'I can safely leave it for somebody else.'

And so, the priest gingerly picked his way around the man, passed on, and passed out of our Lord's story.

Exit the priest and **enter the Levite.** The Levite could, of course, have offered similar excuses as the priest. There was, however, one obvious difference. Because, rather than seeing somebody coming along behind, he could see a familiar figure up ahead. It was that of the priest, disappearing over the horizon as quickly as his legs could carry him.

'Well now', the Levite might have said to himself, 'I had thought at first of stopping to help this poor man, but, in all honesty, I fail to see how this can be at all necessary. For that worthy priest, at whose mouth men seek the law, has just passed him by. So he evidently didn't look at it that way. Apart from which, for me now to stop and help would, in effect, be to accuse the priest of heartlessness and indifference'.

But let us examine our own ways. Have *we* never shirked our duty towards a neighbour on the ground that others have been content to pass by and do nothing?

Yet it is a serious matter to 'pass by' someone in need. In verses 11-14 of the prophecy of Obadiah, the prophet traces a progression in the attitude and behaviour of Edom at the time of the fall of Jerusalem in 586 B.C. Before ever the Edomites appropriated some of the spoils, v. 13, or actively prevented the fleeing Jews from escaping and handed them over to the Babylonians, v. 14, they had first stood aloof and indifferent when their 'brother' needed their help, v. 11.[16] And Obadiah makes it clear that the person who, when they have the opportunity to do so, neglects to come to the help of someone who is abused is, in God's sight, as responsible for that person's suffering as is the person who abuses; 'In the day that you stood on the other side…even you were as one of them (the Babylonians)'.

It is at this point that Jesus introduced his hero, **the Samaritan**.

Our Lord could, of course, have contrasted the religious leaders with one of the common Jewish people. Yet there is something exceedingly noble about the way in which our Lord cast the star role in His story. For it had been only a short time before that a village of Samaritans had refused to receive Him.[17] The 'Sons of Thunder' (James and John[18]) had rumbled loudly that day! They were all for calling down fire from heaven on the village, just as Elijah had twice called down celestial fire on men who came from Samaria.[19] Yet, in spite of the insult and slight which He had recently received from the Samaritans, Jesus chose a Samaritan to be his personification of goodness and generosity.

You can almost sense the shock and horror felt by the lawyer when Jesus used the word 'Samaritan'. The more so as, unlike with his introductions of the priest and the Levite, the word 'Samaritan' is emphasised by its position at the beginning of the Greek sentence.

One commentator claims that the words 'as he journeyed' signify that the Samaritan 'was a commercial traveller'.[20] This man, unlike the wounded man, priest or the Levite, may not have been going 'down' from Jerusalem. For his sacred site was Mount Gerizim in Samaria, not Mount Moriah in Jerusalem. Indeed, not to put too fine a point on it, the Samaritan was a heretic!

From what I can tell, the Jews and the Samaritans had three main things in common. They had both worshipped in temples (albeit very different temples), they both accepted the five books of Moses as inspired by God, and they both spent half their

time cursing each other! John's gospel tells us that the Jews of our Lord's day had 'no dealings with Samaritans'.[21]

Scholars claim that relations between the Jews and the Samaritans were especially bad at the time,[22] the situation not being helped because, according to the apocryphal book of Ecclesiasticus, the Jews insisted on calling the Samaritans that 'foolish people that dwell in Shechem', one of the central cities of the Samaritans.[23]

So, this Samaritan had no shortage of ready-made excuses for continuing on his way. He was exposed to at least the same risks as the priest and the Levite. Indeed, if he was a commercial traveller, he might well have been carrying samples of his wares with him, which would have made it all the more dangerous for him to have stopped. He would have been an obvious target.

In addition, the wounded man had no claim whatever on him by way of national ties; he was, after all, the member of a hostile race. And the Samaritan would have known that, had their situations been reversed, and he been lying on the road, the Jew would have cheerfully passed by, and would probably have chuckled to himself all the way to Jericho. It was well for the injured man, therefore, that the Samaritan did not live by the rule, 'Do to others as *you think they would do to you*'. How wonderfully different was the 'golden rule' of Jesus, 'Just as *you want men to do to you*, you also do to them likewise', Luke 6. 31.

And the Samaritan also knew that he was most unlikely to receive any thanks for kindnesses shown. It is claimed that Jews were forbidden by their Rabbis to accept works of charity from anyone of another race – especially from a Samaritan.

There was also every possibility that any action taken by the Samaritan would be misinterpreted and the finger of suspicion pointed directly at him if he was found anywhere near the body. After all, he was now on foreign soil. And any Jew would have taken great delight in accusing the Samaritan to the proper authorities.

But, without stopping to frame any excuses, this good man, Jesus informs us, 'had compassion'. There is a fascinating incident recorded in 2 Chronicles 28 in which men *from Samaria* clothed some 200,000 naked Jews, *anointed* them with oil, and carried the weak and feeble on *donkeys* to *'Jericho*, the city of palms'. Yet those men from Samaria did this only because of the stern warning sounded by one of the Lord's prophets, Oded by name. But there was no Oded on the road in Jesus' story! The actions of this Samaritan in Jesus' story were entirely spontaneous; he did what he did out of 'compassion'.

The words quoted by the lawyer, 'you shall love ... your neighbour as yourself', formed part of the Samaritan Scriptures also, and, without stopping to *debate*, 'Who is my neighbour?' (Are you listening, Mr. Lawyer?), this Samaritan set about *acting* like one. Our Lord said that the priest, the Levite and the Samaritan each '*saw'* the wounded man.[24] But the Samaritan 'saw' the robbers' victim through very different eyes to those of the priest and the Levite.

And so the Samaritan set about performing what simple first-aid he could. He bound up the wounds of the injured man, presumably either with some of his commercial wares or with strips of cloth torn from his own garments.

He poured oil and wine on the man's wounds; the oil to soothe the pain and inflammation, and the wine, acting as a disinfectant and antiseptic, to cleanse the wounds. Doctor Luke would have readily appreciated this.

Clearly the Samaritan carried the wine for refreshment, but we in the West we may wonder why he carried oil. But it was common practice for travellers in the Middle East to carry gourds of oil at their waists that they might anoint themselves to stop their skin from blistering under the blazing sun.[25] The oil was therefore a very

important item in the Samaritan's travel kit. Yet without a moment's hesitation he expended both his oil and his wine on the injured man.

He then sat the wounded man 'on his own animal'. It may be that the Samaritan traveller had two beasts, one on which to ride and one on which to carry his wares. But, whether this was so or not, he now chose to walk the distance from the scene of the robbery to the nearest inn.

And when they arrived at the inn (in all likelihood at or near Jericho), the Samaritan didn't immediately leave the man and continue on his way. He saw personally to the needs of the injured man; he 'took care of him'.[26] Only on the following day, when compelled to leave, presumably on account of business commitments, did he commit the injured man to the care of the innkeeper. And then, with commendable foresight, knowing that the man had been stripped and therefore had no money of his own, the Samaritan made ample financial provision for him, taking out two denarii from his girdle or purse to give to the innkeeper.

Nor is this sum as trivial as might first appear. Some thirty years before, in the days of Caesar Augustus, the pay of an ordinary soldier in the Roman army was only 225 denarii for a whole year's military service.[27] Two denarii therefore represented about three day's pay for an ordinary soldier. And we know from another of our Lord's parables that two denarii also amounted to two days' generous wages for an agricultural worker.[28] I understand that such a sum would have provided up to 24 days' basic board and lodge.

And then, as if this was not enough, the Samaritan undertook, should it prove necessary, to cover any additional costs on his return; effectively giving the innkeeper a blank cheque. And we should remember that the Samaritan had little or no prospect of ever being recompensed by the wounded man. But this he never stopped to consider.

Leaving our Lord's model of compassion and kindness, let us briefly consider **the innkeeper**. This man wasn't violent or bad like the robbers. He wasn't neglectful and indifferent like the priest and the Levite. He was a businessman who provided his services for a fee. There is no suggestion that the innkeeper of our Lord's parable was anything but scrupulously honest, and all his dealings above board.

But he wasn't the hero of the parable. He was prepared to help, but only if there was adequate payment for his services. As we noted, the Samaritan handed him two denarii and offered to make good any extra costs the innkeeper incurred in caring for the wounded man.[29] But at no point did the innkeeper offer to share the expense involved.

When it comes to helping others, do *we* never consider whether there will be anything in it for us – even if only the praise and the approval of others or the possibility of the favour being returned one day.[30]

And, finally, we should consider **the lawyer**, whose question about inheriting eternal life had given rise to the parable.[31] Our Lord had immediately cornered him, asking, 'How do *you* read?' This was a technical term, constantly used by the Jewish scribes and lawyers, who, when consulting one another about some point of the law, would ask, 'How do you read?'

In effect, the Lord told the lawyer that he had no need to ask his question at all. As a '***law***yer' his business was 'the law', and he should therefore have known the answer![32] All he needed to do was to practise what he preached, loving God with his all and his neighbour as himself. The lawyer, not wishing to look foolish, and attempting to evade the force of God's commandment, replied that it was not as simple as all that.

As far as the requirement to love *God* was concerned, there could be no doubt who God was. But there was every doubt, the lawyer argued, as to the meaning of one's 'neighbour'. And he was unable to observe this particular commandment until its meaning had been clarified. And, indeed, there were many Jewish teachers of the day who claimed that 'neighbour' applied only to Israelites and to full proselytes and that it most certainly did not extend to gentiles[33] or to Samaritans.[34]

But, in responding to the lawyer, the Lord pointed out that his question 'who is my neighbour?' had been wrongly formulated. His question was itself defective. And I note that the word translated 'answered' in verse 30 is not the usual word for 'answering' in the New Testament, which word occurs over 200 times in the Gospels alone, including in verses 27, 28 and 41 of our chapter.

The word our Lord used here means properly 'to take up, to catch up',[35] and is used, for example, in a literal sense to describe our Lord's ascension, 'when He had spoken these things, while they watched, He was *taken up*, and a cloud received Him out of their sight', Acts 1. 9.[36]

In other words, Jesus didn't 'answer' the question – he 'took up' the lawyer for ever asking it. And our Lord made it clear that the lawyer's concern should have been, not how to 'define' a neighbour, but how to 'become' one. Indeed, the Saviour's question was literally, 'which of these three *became* neighbour to the one who fell among the robbers'.[37]

The right question for us to ask therefore is not 'Who *is* my neighbour?' but 'To whom *can I become* a neighbour?' The fundamental issue isn't whether I am able to define a neighbour, but whether I am willing to behave like one to any needy people who cross my path. [38]

The lawyer had, seemingly, choked on the obvious answer to our Lord's question, and so, deliberately avoiding the (to him) detested word 'Samaritan', he grudgingly answered, 'the one who *did* mercy to him', literally. To which our Lord responded, 'Go and you *do* likewise' – using, I note, the present tense: 'do it habitually, not as a single action but as your lifelong course of action'. In effect, our Lord was saying, 'The priest, chancing on the man, walked past him – and the Levite *did likewise*. But the Samaritan, chancing on the man, *did* mercy to him – you *do likewise*!'

With this exhortation Luke abruptly ends his story. What, we may wonder, became of the lawyer? We are not told. For it seems clear that the Holy Spirit's purpose in recording this particular incident was not to entertain us or to satisfy our curiosity. But rather to leave us face to face with the demand of our Lord Jesus, 'go and do likewise'.

There can be no doubt that 'To whom can I become a neighbour?' was the question which our Lord Jesus asked Himself as He 'went about doing good'.[39]

It seems likely that this parable was spoken in the synagogue of Jericho for Luke tells us that the lawyer 'stood up' to address Jesus, v. 25, and records the next stop as being Bethany, v. 38.[40] If our Lord was indeed speaking in the synagogue at Jericho, He was Himself about to travel up the very road He chose as the setting for His parable.

No incident is recorded on that particular journey but one is recorded on the next and last time that Jesus travelled that way. Matthew provides the details in the closing section of chapter 20 of his gospel. On that later journey, when leaving Jericho for Jerusalem, the Lord encountered Bartimaeus and his unnamed companion, who, Matthew informs us, 'heard that Jesus was *passing by*', v. 30 (compare the language our Lord used to describe the actions of both the priest and the Levite), and who cried out for '*mercy*', v. 31 (the word of Luke 10. 37).

'Jesus', we read, 'had compassion', v. 34 (the word He used to describe the response of the Samaritan).[41] And our Lord didn't 'pass by' on the other side, as everyone expected Him to do,[42] even though He had every reason to do so at the time – for He was then on His way to Jerusalem to save the world! And so, to this degree the Lord Jesus *was* the Samaritan of whom He spoke.

But surely none of us can leave our study of this parable feeling completely at ease. For, like it or not, each of us is in the parable somewhere, and we need to ask constantly:

(i) Do I make trouble for others, and enjoy doing it?

(ii) Do I conveniently bypass the needs of others?

(iii) Do I help only if there is something in it for me? Or

(iv) Do I help because it is the right thing to do?

Each of us has to decide **'What is *my* motto?'**

(i) **'Yours is mine if I can get it';**

(ii) **'Mine is my own if I can keep it';**

(iii) **'Mine is yours if you can pay for it';** or

(iv) **'Mine is yours if you need it'**?

Notes

[1] A road from Jerusalem to Jericho had probably had existed from ancient times. It is possible that David had escaped along this road, 2 Sam. 15. 23, and that King Zedekiah of Judah had fled on this road when attempting to escape from the Chaldeans, 2 Kings 25. 4-5. Josephus tells us that the Tenth Roman Legion followed this route on their way to besiege Jerusalem in A.D. 69, '*Wars of the Jews*', Book V, Chapter II, paragraph 3.

[2] It corresponds to the Hebrew translated '*Adummim*' ('the ascent {or 'pass'} of red'), Joshua 15. 7; 18. 17. 'Adummim' means 'something red', and may originally have referred to the red rock found in the area. But Jerome (the so-called 'Church Father', 342–420), interpreted the name as related to the shedding of blood there.

[3] In his gospel, Luke uses the Greek word for 'thief' as well as that for 'robber'. He uses the first (*kleptēs,* from which we derive the English word 'kleptomaniac') in both Luke 12. 33 and 39. Occurring 17 times in the Septuagint and 16 times in the New Testament, this word describes a non-violent offender who committed his crimes in secret. Luke uses the second word (*lēstēs*) here in the parable of the Good Samaritan. Occurring nine times in the Septuagint, used 42 times by Josephus and 15 times by New Testament writers, this word describes armed bands who are intentionally brutal and violent when they committed their crimes. See R. C. Trench, '*Synonyms of the New Testament*', number xliv.

[4] Compare the words of the French philosopher Blaise Pascal, 'A man's virtue must be measured, not by his extraordinary efforts, but by his usual course of action'.

[5] Gal. 6. 10.

[6] Mal. 2. 7.

[7] Deut. 22. 4; cf. Exod. 23. 5.

[8] James 4. 17.

[9] Cf. Isa. 58. 9.

[10] Deut. 34. 4; Josh. 3. 13; 2 Chron. 28. 15. Jericho received only eight inches of rain a year.

[11] 'Over and above those that were scattered in the country and took their turn, there were not fewer than 24,000 stationed permanently at Jerusalem, and 12,000 at Jericho', *Smith's Bible Dictionary*, article 'Priest'.

[12] 1 Chron. 24. 3-19; Luke 1. 8.
'Although priests were officially associated with the temple ninety miles south in Jerusalem, it was not unusual to find them in outlying regions like Galilee. The Aaronic priesthood was a hereditary office; priests, like Levites, in other words, were born, not made …They were divided into twenty-four priestly families or "courses". Each course needed to be present in Jerusalem in order to serve pilgrims at the major festivals of Passover (spring), Pentecost (or the Feast of Weeks, late spring), and the Day of Atonement, followed by the Feast of Booths (or Tabernacles, fall). Thereafter each course of priests served in the temple for one week, twice annually. A priest's temple duties were thus fulfilled in a few weeks of every year. According to the Epistle of Aristeas, such duties included officiating at worship, burning incense, leading in liturgy, accepting sacrifices and offerings, hearing confessions, and, above all, butchery of animals for sacrifice. In normal rotations a priest's service would not have been overly taxing, but at festivals priestly service in the temple could be long and demanding. Once their temple duties were fulfilled, priests were free to return to their homes, even, as here, in distant Galilee', J. R. Edwards, 'The Gospel according to Mark (The Pillar New Testament Commentary)', on Mark 1. 43-44.
See also J. Jeremias, '*Jerusalem in the Time of Jesus'*, pages 198-207.

[13] Lev. 21. 1-4; Num. 5. 2; 19. 11.

[14] Col. 4. 14.

[15] Numb. 3. 6, 9; 18. 6.

[16] The words translated ‘stood on the other side’ in Obadiah 11, are translated 'stand aloof’ in Psalm 38. 11; ‘my friends stand aloof from my plague, and my kinsmen stand afar off’.

[17] Luke 9. 51-55.

[18] Mark 3. 17.

[19] 2 Kings 1. 2, 9-12.

[20] J. A. Findlay, ‘*Jesus and His Parables*’, page 63.

[21] John 4. 9.

[22] See John Bowman, ‘*The Parable of the Good Samaritan’*, *Expository Times*, volume 59 (1947-48), page 152.

[23] Ecclesiasticus 50. 27-28 – which also speaks of them as ‘no nation’. The Jewish Testament of Levi also calls Shechem ‘a city of fools’. Shechem was located in the narrow sheltered valley between Ebal on the north and Gerizim on the south.

[24] Luke 10. 31, 32, 33.

[25] This is why, for example, Jacob at Bethel had oil available to pour on the top of his stone pillow, Gen. 28. 18.

[26] This is the word used by Paul; ‘if a man does not know how to rule his own house, how will he take care of the church of God?’, 1 Tim. 3. 5.

[27] Tacitus, Annals.1.17.

[28] Matt. 20. 2.

[29] Indeed the ‘I’ in ‘I will repay you’ is emphatic.

[30] Compare Luke 14. 12-14.

[31] I see no reason to believe that the lawyer was trying to trap Jesus – that he came with any sinister motive. It seems more likely to me that he wished to test this unauthorised Galilean teacher to see if He would give the right answer.

[32] The ‘*nomikos*’ should have known the ‘*nomos*’.

[33] ‘Interpretation of (Leviticus 19. 18) in Jewish tradition … suggests that “neighbour” is the Jewish person who shares the same Jewish religious values. Also included in the category of “neighbour” were Gentiles who observed the “laws of the sons of Noah”, rules ordained by God for non-Jews according to Jewish tradition, or Gentile proselytes to Judaism who practiced some of the Jewish *mitzvoth* (laws or commands). Jews and Gentiles who lived according to the will of the Almighty, therefore, were “neighbour” … whereas pagans, because of their idolatry and immoral conduct (in the eyes of Jewish observers) were not considered to be “neighbour”’, J. Poulin, ‘*Loving-kindness towards gentiles according to the Early Jewish sages’*, *Théologiques* 11/1-2 (2003) p. 89-112.

[34] The Baraitha (extra-Mishnaic Tannaitic teachings) says of Exodus 21. 35, 'If the ox of an Israelite has gored the ox belonging to a Samaritan there is no liability'. This brought the Samaritans into line with the gentiles. (Compare John Bowman, *op. cit.*, page 248). There was even a tendency on the part of some Pharisees to exclude the ordinary Jewish people from their definition! When summarising the Law for a would-be convert to Pharisaism, Hillel (who flourished 30 B.C. to 10 A.D.) loosely paraphrased Leviticus 19. 17, 'That which is hateful to you do not do to your *Haber* (a member of the Pharisaic Haburah)', T. B. Shab. 31a. The Qumran community declared that anyone who did not belong to their own group was 'a son of darkness' and should be hated. The lawyer's question clearly implied that a limit could be set on one's duty - that there were non-neighbours. This idea may well lie behind the words of Jesus, 'You have heard that it was said, You shall love *your neighbour* and hate *your enemy*', Matt. 5. 43.

[35] See W. E. Vine, '*An Expository Dictionary of New Testament Words*', article 'Answer', '*hupolambanō*'.

[36] Also from the pen of Luke.

[37] The Lord Jesus used the word 'neighbour' in an unusual way; in the Old Testament it was used to describe the object of the action, whereas He used it to denote the giver rather than the receiver.

[38] 'The lawyer's question is, "Who is (*ἐστίν*) my neighbour"? (Luke 10. 29). It was a limiting question, designed to restrict his responsibility to a smaller group. I would guess the lawyer was thinking in ethnic and geographical terms. … Jesus tells the parable and concludes, "Which of these three do you think was (*γεγονέναι*) a neighbour to the man who fell into the hands of robbers?" (10. 36, NIV, also NLT). The problem with this translation is that *γεγονέναι* is a perfect, not an aorist. Why use a perfect?
'The first clue is in Jesus' actual answer. The issue is not who am I responsible to help. The issue is who I am able to help. The neighbour is the person who you are able to help, regardless of racial and geographical restraints.
'The second clue is the verb used, *γίνομαι*, which generally indicates coming into a new state, "to become".
'Thirdly, since the perfect indicates a completed action, it changes the time frame from who currently is my neighbour to the past in which I have become a neighbour.
Given these facts, an aorist would not have communicated properly. It isn't a matter of who was a neighbour (as if the focus were on the person in need), but an issue of what you have become to those in need.
'You can see most of the other translations recognizing there is some meaning in the perfect. Most have "proved to be a neighbour" (NASB, ESV, CSB); the NET has "became a neighbour" and includes this note: "Do not think about who they are, but who you are".
'The simple "was" misses the point. It is not a matter of who was a neighbour (as if the focus were on the person in need) but who has become a neighbour by helping someone in need'.
(Bill Mounce, '*Who "Is" or "Becomes" your Neighbour?*', Mondays with Mounce, 27 March 2019; accessed at …
https://zondervanacademic.com/blog/who-is-or-becomes-your-neighbor-mondays-with-mounce.)

[39] Acts 10. 38.

[40] Bethany lay on the way into Jerusalem from Jericho, Luke 19. 1, 28-29.

[41] All twelve occurrences of the verb 'to have compassion' in the Greek Bible are found in the Synoptic Gospels. Apart from three occasions when it is found on the Lord's own lips (Matt. 18. 27; Luke 10. 33; Luke 15. 20), it is only ever used of Himself.

[42] Hence the multitude telling the two blind men to be silent, Matt. 20. 31.