the Revelator, “Behold I stand at the door and knock” 17 God is life’s supreme Dives that seeks to bridge that gap between himself and every Lazarus

The story doesn’t end here. It ends only as it is reproduced in the life of man. “As I loved you, so love the brethren” 18 In other words, God is saying, “As I have bridged the gulf between man and God, so bridge you the gulf between man and man. Each of us is a potential Dives, maybe not rich in material goods, but rich in education, rich in social prestige, rich in influence, rich in charm. At our gate stands some poor Lazarus who has been deprived of all of these. There is a gulf. But the gulf can be bridged by a little love and compassion. Bridge the gulf before it becomes too late. It is now passable. But it can become impassable.

THD CSKC Sermon file, folder 56, “The Impassable Gulf”

17 Revelation 3:20
18 Of John 13:34

I Introduction—
(A) Over the centuries the parable of the Good Samaritan has been cited as the definition of Christian social responsibility. 2 There is probably no description of what it means to be a good neighbor more widely known.

B Point out the virtue of the Good Samaritan in contrast to the Levite & Priest.

C Jesus told the story for one purpose only, and we are not to take it as a total description of our social responsibility.

D The shortcomings of the parable in describing true neighborliness.

1 A 20 November 1955 program from Dexter’s Sunday morning service indicates that King preached “The One-Sided Approach of the Good Samaritan.”


3 Levites were assigned to assist the priests and to perform sanctuary duties in the Temple.
E. Although the parable says nothing concerning \[\textit{where?}\] it is quite probable the Levite was on his way to Jerico to make a survey of crime in the vicinity, and perhaps the priest was en route to Jerusalem to serve on the National Committe for the Improvement of Public Highways\footnote{In an incomplete draft filed in the same folder as this sermon, King wrote “Give Liston Pope’s analysis” at this point in the outline (King, “The One-Sided Approach of the Good Samaritan,” Sermon outline, 20 November 1955) Pope wrote that Jesus “was an emissary to all people, associating with despised groups (including Samaritans) without discrimination and illustrating neighborliness with a story of a merciful act by a Samaritan” (Pope, \textit{The Kingdom Beyond Caste} [New York: Friendship Press, 1957], p 149). Liston Pope was a professor of social ethics at Yale University, and served as dean of its Divinity School from 1949 until 1962.} So by a slight stretch of the imagnation, or at least for argument sake, quite an excellent case can be made for the priest and Levite. Before we completely condemn the Levite and the Priest we should consider this.

II But not only is it possible to see the possible elevate the roles of the Priest and Levite, it is also easy to see the shortcomings in the conduct of the Samaritan\footnote{The United Appeal was a fund-raising campaign for local charities.}

(a) There is no suggestion that the Samaritan \textit{organized} sought to investigate the lack of police protection on the Jerico Road. Nor did he appeal to any public officials to set out after the robbers and clean up the Jerico road. Here was the weakness of the good Samaritan. He was concerned \textit{merely}\footnote{Cf Luke 10 31–32} with temporary relief, not with thorough reconstruction. He sought to sooth the effects of evil, without going back to uproot the causes.

III Now, without a doubt Christian social responsibility includes the sort of thing the good Samaritan did. So we give to the United Appeals, the Red Cross, to all types of unfortunate conditions\footnote{IV But there is another aspect of Christian social responsibility which is just as compelling. It seeks to tear down unjust conditions and build anew instead of patching things up. It seeks to clear the Jerico road of its robbers as well as caring for the victims of robbery.} In the midst of such staggering and appalling conditions we cannot afford to “pass by on the other side”\footnote{Like the good Samaritan we must always stand ready to descend to the depth of human need. The person who fails to look with compassion upon the thousands of individuals left wounded by life’s many roadsides is not only unethical, but ungodly. Every Christian must ply the good Samaritan.}

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