



The Good News

April 28th, 2019

Volume 19, Issue 16

The Good Wichita Fallsian (?)

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Many years ago, I heard a story involving the friend of another Christian who was driving home after work on a rainy evening. After several miles, he began to have car trouble. He saw a large denominational church building with cars parked in the parking lot and pulled into the driveway, thinking it would be a good place to stop and determine what was wrong with his vehicle. Unfortunately, the driveway was muddy, and he became stuck. As services let out, people from the church building began to get into their own cars. As this fellow tried to get his car unstuck from the mud, he thought perhaps someone from the church might offer help, but as he fought the mud and the rain, the churchgoers honked their horns and drove around him. Not one individual stopped to offer help, or ask if he needed to use a phone. I don't know how many sermons these churchgoers had heard during their attendance to this denominational church, but it's safe to assume that they all would have known the story of the Good Samaritan. However, it would appear that knowing a story and applying its principle are two very different things. In the end, the friend of this Christian told this story and then relayed how bitter a taste it left in his mouth when he thought about this denomination. He was not looking for a "hand-out" nor did he ask anyone for help. He was simply a person who was in need and was ignored. Needless to say, he would never be visiting that church.

Consider the story of the Good Samaritan. In **Luke 10:29-37**, we find that the original question that was asked by a scribe, "And who is my neighbor?" follows on the heels of Luke informing us that this scribe was trying to justify himself. Jesus then brings this scribe (and us) to a road traveling from Jerusalem to Jericho. A man who was traveling this road "fell among thieves", was beaten and robbed, and left for dead. A priest and a Levite both passed this man

by the side of the road and didn't just ignore the man, but went onto the other side of the road as to avoid him. Then a Samaritan comes along who has compassion on this beaten man. He bandages his wounds, sets him on his own animal, takes him to an inn, and pays for his care. Consider the contrast Jesus provides here: A Samaritan, whom the Jews would find to be lower than dirt, provides care to a beaten man while a priest and Levite, whom one would think would have compassion and show mercy, chose to ignore this poor man. Notice Jesus' question at the end of this story, "*So which of these three do you think was neighbor to him who fell among the thieves?*" and the answer, "*He who showed mercy on him.*" See how Jesus does not offer qualifications or modifiers on who our neighbor is, but rather we see it is someone who is in need of, and on whom we have opportunity to show, mercy.

An opportunity to show mercy was ignored by the members of the denomination in our first story, and because of this, they will never be visited by the friend of this Christian. The question for us is this: Are we truly applying the story of the Good Samaritan, or are we content with "just knowing it"? Could there ever be a story told to another about a Good Wichita Fallsian (?), a member of the church of Christ, who had compassion and showed mercy by helping someone in need? Are we willing to have compassion and show mercy even if no one asks for it? While we should always use good judgment and caution, we cannot let prejudice or assumptions get in the way of showing mercy.

Consider the words of Jesus in **Luke 10:37**, "*Go and do likewise.*" Will we go and do likewise? Or will we ignore an opportunity to show mercy and lose any chance of teaching another lost soul?