

# The Good Samaritan



Luke 10:25-37  
Year C Proper 10

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## Parts by scene

■ = large part   ▲ = medium sized part   ● = small part

		1	2	3
▲	<b>Priest</b> - a friendly traveler who honestly tries to give the disciples some good advice	■		
▲	<b>Phillip</b> - one of the youngest disciples, always well-meaning and honestly curious, sometimes lacking in confidence	●	●	▲
▲	<b>Jesus</b>	●	●	▲
▲	<b>Joanna</b> - a wealthy woman with a perceptive and agile intellect who abandons her life as the co-manager of King Herod's household to follow Jesus	●	●	▲
▲	<b>Judas</b> - possibly the deepest thinker and best organizer, the one who usually sees the big picture most clearly, and also the disciple with the best sense of humor	▲	●	▲
▲	<b>Levite</b> - an expert in the law who dresses in all the trappings of his office and loves the idea that people will recognize him as a legal authority wherever he goes		▲	
▲	<b>Innkeeper</b> - an honest small businessman trying to do right by all his customers			▲
▲	<b>Robbed man</b> - a wealthy and arrogant man who is robbed and beaten on the road			▲

## Scene 1

Jesus , Joanna , Judas , Phillip , Priest

*{The group is traveling down a road when they meet a priest going the other direction.}*

**Priest**      Greetings! Are you going into the city today?

**Phillip**     Yes, is that where you're coming from? How was the road behind you? We've heard this can be a dangerous area.

**Priest**      I must confess you heard right. But the road is generally safe during the day. It's after dark that the robbers come out. I did see a homeless man sleeping by the road, which was disturbing because you usually only see them closer to the city.

**Jesus**       How did he become homeless?

**Priest** *[a little confused by the question out of nowhere]* I - um - I wouldn't know. I never saw him before.

**Jesus** Didn't you speak with him?

**Priest** Heavens no! *[sees that this answer raises some eyebrows]* Listen, perhaps you're from the country and aren't used to life as it is in the cities. Let me give you some advice. You'll see men like that everywhere, but half of them are simply crazy and you'll be very sorry if you try to engage them. The rest are either con men who'll take you for whatever they can get with some sad story, or robbers who won't waste time spinning you any tale at all.

**Joanna** Are there no genuinely needy men who could benefit from some assistance?

**Priest** There are, but here's the real tragedy: there's nothing you can do to help them! Their needs are an ocean you'll never fill. They may be alcoholics who'll drink up all the money you give them, or indolent wretches who will never stand on their own two feet no matter how often you pick them up. And worse: there are the blind and the deaf and the lame, whose lives you'll never really change unless you're willing to become full time nurses and parents and friends to them. I don't say this with any gladness! As a priest, I mourn the sad state of this broken world, and pray fervently for the coming of that Day when the blind will see, the lame will walk, and the brokenhearted be healed.

**Jesus** Until that day, then.

**Priest** Amen. And may God keep you safe on your road in the meantime.

*{The Priest goes his way, and the disciples resume theirs.}*

**Joanna** What an awful man. And he calls himself a priest!

**Phillip** What was wrong with him? He seemed nice enough, and he gave us some good advice.

**Joanna** Good advice? Heartless rationalizations, I would say.

**Judas** Rabbi, you seemed to like that priest well enough. Do you think his advice was sound?

**Jesus** Every word he spoke was true.

**Phillip** *[to Joanna]* See?

**Judas**     *[shrewdly]* Hold on, Phillip. I'm not sure you should claim the victory just yet. He didn't actually answer the question!

**Phillip**    Didn't he?

**Joanna**    Every word he spoke was true...but what?

**Jesus**      But nothing. It's hard to argue about words. Let's wait until we ourselves are put to the test, and then we can discuss it truly.

**Phillip**    Put to the test? Put to what test?

**Judas**      *[guessing what Jesus meant]* The priest said he passed by the homeless man on the road - the road we're walking. We'll come to him soon enough ourselves!

**Joanna**    And what will we do then?

## Scene 2

Jesus , Joanna , Judas , Levite , Phillip

*{An hour passes without encountering the homeless man. They meet a Levite coming down the road.}*

**Phillip**    Excuse me sir, but we heard there was a homeless man sleeping by this road, but we haven't come upon him yet. Did you see anyone like that on your way here?

**Levite**     No, but I did see a man who'd been robbed and beaten. He was definitely not a homeless man, to judge by his clothing, or what clothing they'd left him.

**Joanna**    That's terrible! Is he all right?

**Levite**     He didn't look good. It's a terrible time when something like that can happen to a respectable citizen.

**Joanna**    You didn't help him?

**Levite**     Heavens no!

*{The disciples wait to see if he'll elaborate on his reasons why, but he's done.}*

**Judas**      Why not? I mean no offense. We were just discussing situations like this, and we'd be interested in hearing your reasoning.

**Levite**      Well, I know something of the law, as you might imagine, and I can

tell you that entering into any unknown situation can involve you in all kinds of liabilities. It's best not to get entangled in any stranger's troubles. Not to mention, the robbers might still have been lurking nearby. Or *he* might have been the robber! The thing to do in a case like this is to simply inform the authorities as soon as you can, which I absolutely plan to do when I reach the next village.

**Phillip** Thanks. We got pretty much the same advice from a priest earlier today.

**Levite** Then I'd say that was a priest who knew his law.

**Jesus** Speaking of the Law, what would you say is the greatest commandment?

**Levite** Well, there are hundreds. Thousands, even. And just as many opinions about which ones are the most important!

**Jesus** I wish you godspeed sorting them out.

**Levite** Thank you. And I wish you a good journey.

### Scene 3

**Innkeeper , Jesus , Joanna , Judas , Man , Phillip**

*{Another hour later, they reach their destination, not having seen any man by the side of the road.}*

**Phillip** Well, here we are, and we didn't see either of them.

**Judas** Either of them?

**Phillip** Yeah, either the homeless man or the guy who got robbed.

**Judas** They're one and the same. It's clear the priest saw the same man, and mistakenly thought he was a homeless beggar.

**Joanna** *[scornfully]* That's easy enough to do when you never really look at anybody.

**Phillip** Well, whether it was two men or one, it looks like we missed him.

*{They enter the inn and Judas approaches the innkeeper.}*

**Judas** My name is Judas Iscariot. An associate of ours made arrangements for us to stay here tonight.

**Innkeeper** Yes, yes, a group of 15, right? Welcome to our town!

**Phillip** Sir, we were wondering. We heard a story on the road about a man being robbed around here. Would you know anything about it?

**Innkeeper** *[pointing to the Common Room]* He's right in there. A terrible thing, though I must say, it *could* have happened to a nicer person.

**Judas** So here's our chance to decide whether to help the guy out or not. What do you say?

*{In response, Joanna leads the group into the Common Room.}*

**Joanna** *[to the robbed man]* Sir? We heard a man was robbed on the road today. Was that you?

**Man** *[angrily]* Of course it was me! Do you think I walk around all day black and blue and bleeding? *[muttering to himself]* Idiot woman!

**Judas** Take it easy. We're sorry you were attacked, and would like to help if we can.

**Man** You help me? I could buy and sell you. My people are on the way, and then I'm going to shake the dust of your dirty little town off my feet. You obviously have no one of any wealth or importance here, or you'd know better how to keep them safe!

**Innkeeper** *[pointedly]* Sir? If you're that well off, perhaps you could pay your way, after all. The man who brought you here said he'd pay all your bills, but he didn't look like he could afford it nearly as well as you could. He was from the poor district just across the border.

**Man** He was a Samaritan? That figures. The pig was probably in cahoots with the thieves. This whole thing is probably a scam to milk more money out of me, and you're in on it! Well it won't work. You can tell them! Tell them I'll be back with the authorities, and even some centurions! I'm a close personal friend of King Herod, and I'm going to have him level this dirt scrabble town.

**Joanna** *[indignantly]* You're a close friend of Herod's? That's odd. My husband is the steward of Herod's house, and I don't believe I've ever seen you before. But the next time I see Herod, I'll be happy to pass on your regards. Your name was...?

**Man** Get this...woman out of my sight. Take me to my room! Now!

**Innkeeper**     *[wearily]* Right away, sir.

*{The Man is helped out of the parlor and up to his room.}*

**Judas**             What a jerk!

**Innkeeper**     I apologize for his behavior. I'll see he doesn't disturb you again.

**Joanna**            The man who helped him. You say he was a Samaritan?

**Innkeeper**     He was. I don't normally think any higher of them than our rude friend does, living as near them as I do, but this man was amazing. He bound up his wounds pretty well, and practically carried him here on his back. He left me all the money he had to pay for his care, and promised to come back in a few days to pay for any overages. And you know what? I believe him.

**Man**                *[from a distance]* You call that a pillow? Keeper!

**Innkeeper**     Excuse me, I'd better go see to this.

*{The Innkeeper exits.}*

**Phillip**            *[to Joanna]* Well, I guess you were right.

**Joanna**            About what?

**Phillip**            The advice from the priest and the lawyer. They were wrong. Here was a man who really needed help.

**Judas**            They may have been wrong, but I'm not so sure the Samaritan was right. Our victim might not have been a robber or a con artist, but he's pretty irredeemable as he is.

**Joanna**            What does that matter? Doesn't the rabbi command us to love our neighbors whoever they are?

**Judas**            Yes, but in what sense is that rich jerk my neighbor? He certainly doesn't live in my neighborhood, and I'd probably be arrested if I ever wandered into his. He certainly doesn't care about the things I care about: he probably loves the Roman occupation because he's profiting just fine under it.

**Phillip**            Rabbi? What's the answer? Who was right?

**Jesus**             Once upon a time, before any of you joined me, a lawyer asked me what he had to do to inherit eternal life, and I asked him, "What does the Law say?" Unlike our friend on the road earlier

today, his man truly knew the Law, not just the letter of it but the spirit, and answered correctly, "To love God with all your heart, soul, and strength, and to love your neighbor as yourself." Then he asked me, "Who is my neighbor?"

**Judas** Uh oh.

**Phillip** *[to Judas]* Dude, you're busted!

**Jesus** *[to Judas]* Don't worry! He didn't ask honestly like you did, but because he didn't really want to help *anybody*. He was seeking to hide from his responsibilities behind a facade of academic questions.

**Joanna** Is that what you told him?

**Jesus** I told him a story: about a man who was robbed and beaten and left for dead on the road, and how first a priest and then a lawyer walked right by him without helping, but then a Samaritan came and bound his wounds and brought him to an inn and paid for his care. And I asked him, "Which of these three men was a neighbor to the robbed man?" And so his question was answered.

**Phillip** *[with deep satisfaction]* Ah! That's a great story.

**Judas** *[sarcastically]* Yes. And oddly familiar.

**Joanna** But you don't really answer his question, do you? To say that the Samaritan was a neighbor to the robbed man still doesn't say anything about who my neighbor is.

**Phillip** Isn't the moral of the story that everybody is your neighbor?

**Judas** How do you get that from a story where you're asked to decide which of three men were neighbors, and the answer is clearly: one of them, but not the other two?

**Joanna** Maybe the parable is not really about who your neighbor is.

**Judas** *[more comic sarcasm]* Are you suggesting the rabbi dodged the question? Unthinkable!

**Joanna** *[to Jesus]* I meant no disrespect! But is it possible you were actually changing the question? That the story isn't so much about *who* our neighbors are as what a good neighbor *does*?

*{A silence while they wait for Jesus to answer.}*

**Phillip**      Well, rabbi? What do you say?

**Jesus**      Go and do likewise!

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*You can read my thoughts about this play and respond with your own at  
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