

Luke 10:36

Authorized King James Version (KJV)

Which now of these three, thinkest thou, was neighbour unto him that fell among the thieves?

Analysis

Jesus reverses the lawyer's question: 'Which now of these three, thinkest thou, was neighbour unto him that fell among the thieves?' (τίς τούτων τῶν τριῶν πλησίον δοκεῖ σοι γεγονέναι τοῦ ἐμπεσόντος εἰς τοὺς ληστάς;). The lawyer had asked 'Who is my neighbor?' (v.29), seeking to limit obligation. Jesus asks 'Who proved neighbor?' shifting focus from receiving to giving, from rights to responsibilities. The perfect infinitive 'gegonenai' (γεγονέναι, to have become) emphasizes completed action—which one became a neighbor through his actions? This reframes ethics from minimalist compliance ('How little must I do?') to maximalist love ('How can I most fully love?').

Historical Context

Jesus' question forces the lawyer to acknowledge that the despised Samaritan fulfilled the law's love command better than Jewish religious leaders. This was deeply humbling—he must praise the enemy and condemn his own people. Some manuscripts suggest the lawyer could not bring himself to say 'the Samaritan,' instead answering 'he that shewed mercy on him' (v.37). The parable exposes hypocrisy in religion that maintains theological correctness while lacking compassionate action (James 2:14-17).

Related Passages

Romans 1:17 — The righteous shall live by faith

Study Questions

1. How does shifting from asking who deserves our help to asking whom we can help transform Christian ethics?
2. What forms of religious correctness without compassionate action does this parable challenge in your own life?

Interlinear Text

τίς	οὐν	τούτων	τῶν	τριῶν	δοκεῖ	σοι	πλησίον
Which	now	of these	G3588	three	thinkest	thou	neighbour
G5101	G3767	G5130		G5140	G1380	G4671	G4139
γεγονέναι	τοῦ	ἐμπεσόντος	εἰς	τοὺς	ληστάς		
was	G3588	unto him that fell	among	G3588	the thieves		
G1096		G1706	G1519		G3027		

Additional Cross-References

Luke 7:42 (Parallel theme): And when they had nothing to pay, he frankly forgave them both. Tell me therefore, which of them will love him most?

Matthew 17:25 (Parallel theme): He saith, Yes. And when he was come into the house, Jesus prevented him, saying, What thinkest thou, Simon? of whom do the kings of the earth take custom or tribute? of their own children, or of strangers?

Matthew 22:42 (Parallel theme): Saying, What think ye of Christ? whose son is he? They say unto him, The Son of David.