

## "The first Good Samaritans" 2 Chronicles 28:8-15 Trinity 13 2022

Dear brothers and sisters in Christ,

In Second Chronicles, we see the example of some good Samaritans, literally. They were from the city of Samaria, from which the name Samaritan comes. They also most certainly displayed loving actions.

Now, let's back up a bit. The nation of God's chosen people had been split in two during the time of King David's grandson, King Rehoboam, who was a foolish jerk. He threatened to increase the already harsh conditions of taxation and labour for the northern tribes. So they said, "What portion have we in David? We have no inheritance in the son of Jesse. Each of you to your tents, O Israel! Look now to your own house, David." With this speech, they announced their secession from the united kingdom. The kingdom was split, and not in a nice, friendly fashion.

King Rehoboam, the foolish jerk, intended to win back the northern kingdom in a civil war. So he mobilized 180,000 troops. Another of God's prophets put a stop to that. But you see how great the hostility was.

From time to time, hostilities flared up between the northern kingdom of Israel and the southern kingdom of Judah. Judah struggled against idolatry, sometimes doing better, sometimes worse. The

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northern kingdom, on the other hand, seemed to recklessly embrace idolatry.

Years later, Athaliah, the wicked daughter of wicked Ahab and Jezebel from the northern kingdom, seized the throne in Judah and killed the royal family. She almost succeeded in destroying the line of David, except that one little baby was hidden away, later put on the throne when Athaliah was killed.

The hostility did not end there. Another time, the kings of the north and south went to war, and the north won. A portion of the wall of Jerusalem was broken down, and they seized the gold of the Temple as well as other treasures and hostages.

You get the idea. Hostility of various degrees continued to the time of Jesus, when He told the parable in the holy Gospel. Samaritans and Jews hated each other for various reasons, including the intermarriage of Samaritans with gentiles, and the competing claims of their religions.

At the beginning of Second Chronicles 28, the King of the southern kingdom of Judah was wicked Ahaz, who made metal images of Baal and burned his sons as sacrifices, and other abominations.

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Therefore the Lord God sent punishment upon Ahaz and Judah. The Lord's hope is always that people repent, so He was not simply punishing to be a wrathful brute and smite sinners. For His purpose, the Lord raised up two enemies, the gentile Syrians and the Israelites of the northern kingdom. The Syrians struck Judah severely, killing 120,000 men in one day, including one of King Ahaz's sons and two of his chief officers. Israel also dealt Judah a savage blow, described as killing them in a rage that reached up to heaven.

This left Judah crippled and helpless before the invaders. Syria carried off many captives, but also the men of the northern kingdom carried off 200,000 captives: women and children, as well as much spoils. Here we are at the beginning of the Reading.

Before they get the captives back to Samaria, the prophet Oded gives his speech. Although we know nothing else about this man of God, he did very well in the one instance about which we know. He said, "The Lord indeed gave the men of Judah into your hands. But you have gone too far! You have not only been completely ruthless and merciless, but now you intend to take your own brothers and sisters into slavery! So send these people back, or the Lord's wrath will fall on you."

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Notice how God, speaking through the prophet, does not respect the hostilities of the people. Hundreds of years of fighting and hatred meant nothing to Him. You people are brothers and sisters! Whatever bad blood is between you, you must be compassionate. Even if God used you to punish a wicked people gone astray, you must soften your cruelty with mercy.

Princes of the people also stood up to support the message of Oded. They said, "Don't you bring those people in here! We have plenty of guilt already. You will not add to it by making slaves of our brothers and sisters from Judah."

Perhaps what is most amazing about this story is that the soldiers who were taking the captives to Samaria actually listened and let the people go! The kindness of the Samaritans began with Oded and the princes, and it continued in the people who were humble enough to be swayed by the words of the wise men in their midst.

The Samaritans clothed the captives who were naked, fed them, and anointed them with oil, perhaps for cleansing or tending their wounds or to help them be cheerful. They put the weakest captives on donkeys. They brought all 200,000 women and children to Jericho, near Jerusalem in Judah. They were set free by the people who had been their enemies.

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Those are good Samaritans.

Notice how similar the story is to our Lord's parable. The actions of caring for them, anointing them with oil, and putting them on their animals. This was at great expense to them, since the spoils were theirs by right of conquest. But no, they sacrificed much for thousands. All this for the people who had been their national enemies for centuries, and would be for centuries to come.

Christ likely based His parable on this story from Israel's history, but put His own spin on it. You Jews think that you are so good. You're the religious people, or so you say. Yet the Samaritans have outshined you in showing kindness and mercy. They treated you as brothers and sisters when they were your enemies.

So who are your enemies? Perhaps people close to you have gotten on your nerves and you really don't want to deal with them. Perhaps it is a family member with whom there is a past event that drives a wedge between you. Perhaps someone in the wrong political party, or someone who seems so foolish or immoral to you that you can't imagine helping them.

Are you willing to give up much for them? Are you willing to give up your advantage over someone who is helpless in order to lift him up as if he was your brother, when really he drives you crazy?

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Imagine that you were the most pure, religious person ever. You saw people who were helpless before you. You could destroy them, and they deserve it. But instead you show them mercy. At the greatest possible cost to yourself, you care for their needs, feed them and give them to drink, anoint them. All this because you decide to treat people as brothers and sisters who do not deserve to be so. They forfeited their right to be your brothers, because they turned away from the true God in rampant wickedness. But you show them a heart of mercy by paying everything. You set the lost back to the right path to home. You strengthen the weak. If need be, you spend your very last bit of life for them.

This is what Christ did, when we were wretched, wicked, and helpless. Why should we do less for those who are equals with us? If He even shed His life blood to show His mercy, should we not spend our earthly goods which are here today and gone tomorrow?

Our compassion is so weak at times. If we have trouble remembering the examples of the good Samaritans in the Old Testament Reading, then at least let us remember the example of Christ. He saved our lives for eternity. Out of gratefulness, out of a desire to be like our dear Lord, surely we can do the small works of mercy He sets before us.

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The Lord lead us in His ways to His glory. Amen.