

The Parable of a(n) “(un)Certain Samaritan”

by Baruch

Luke 10:30-36 (with a dash of Matt 6:22 and Luke 11:34 thrown in), retold with some literary license by your Uncle Baruch (of whom it is often said, 'He should have his license revoked'):

"A certain man went down from the old city of Jerusalem to Jericho (which everyone knows, is a dangerous route to take in a car with an Israeli registration plate), and fell among terrorists, who, having forgotten to bring their guns and pipe bombs, settled for simply stripping him of his raiment (and the car of useful parts), and wounded him, and departed, leaving him half dead.

And by chance there came down that way a certain American minister with a number of his parishioners on a 'visit-Israel' tour. The minister spake unto his parishioners and expounded unto them that which is written in Luke 11: 33-36, which verily were the words of Jesus when he was nigh unto that very spot.

'The eye,' spake he, 'is the lamp of the whole body. As our Good Lord said, 'If the eye be whole, the body is full of light!'

Then asked one of his parishioners unto him saying, 'What is meant by the saying 'If the eye be whole'?'

'Verily, it meaneth that one has discernment of spiritual things,' spake the minister. 'One is hitherto led of the Holy Spirit, who is the giver of light unto our path.'

And when he saw the 'certain man' lying there, he said, 'For instance, I verily feel the leading that we must pass by on the other side.'

'But, shouldn't we stop to help this man?' said one of the parishioners.

The minister rebuked him, saying, 'My brother! Where is thy discernment? For verily, I say unto you, of this man's foolish deeds came this misfortune upon him. For this is surely a drug addict, and in a gang fight got he these wounds. If we help him, surely, he will act unwisely yet again because of the foolishness of his heart. Therefore, wouldst we not have really helped him. And furthermore, have we not other priorities? Surely this would undermine our ministry unto which we are truly called, and we shall be found bad stewards of God's grace!'

And they passed by on the other side.

And likewise a German theologian, who was a visiting lecturer at a local seminary, when he was at the place with some of his pupils was expounding unto them the 'sermon on the mount.' He had quoted unto them the passage of Matthew 6:22,23.

Said one of his pupils, 'Professor, whence is it said, 'a good eye?'

The theologian answered and said unto him, 'One with a good eye is he who is enlightened. He knoweth that there is more than the eye beholdeth. He verily knoweth how to discern both the old wisdom and the new.'

'What new wisdom doeth he discern?' asked the second pupil.

'He discerneth the wisdom of the politically correct,' saith he, 'For verily, I say unto you, political correctness is derived from modern enlightenment.'

'And what of the old,' asked another.

'Behold, that is the ancient wisdom of 'common sense,' which when married to political correctness is verily the epitome of modern thought.'

Then came they unto where the 'certain man' lay, and looked on him.

'For instance,' said the theologian, 'Both common sense and political correctness would compel us that we should pass by on the other side.'

'Wherefore shouldest we not help this man who lieth here half dead?' asked the first pupil.

The theologian rebuked him, saying, 'Where is thy common sense? For it is not right that we, being foreigners here, shouldest involve ourselves in this, a local affair. For surely, this is a trap to draw us into an ambush. And where is thy political correctness? For verily he was a mad settler of occupied territories here to gun down innocent Palestinian women and children. If we, being foreigners befriend such a one, though he was attacked first, it would create an international incident that would verily shed bad light on the poor Palestinians in their fight for justice!'

And they passed by on the other side.

And behold, there was no certain Samaritan, because one part of the Samaritans were parishioners of the American minister, and the other part were pupils of the German theologian, and behold, they had become exceedingly 'uncertain' as to what they shouldest have done. Likewise, the 'certain man' was exceedingly 'uncertain' whether he would survive the ordeal.

And surely he would not have survived, but that there also came that way a plain old Jewish rabbi who followed close on by the American minister and the German theologian.

And behold, he was down-wind from both, and the day was quiet, and he had heard both the American minister and the German theologian and their 'uncertain Samaritans'.

And as he journeyed, he came where the man was: and when he saw him, said, 'Oi veh! These Christians! For surely, if they knew that this Yeshua of theirs was a Jew, and spoke in the Hebrew tongue, they would verily know that 'good eye' is but a Hebrew idiom, and that moreover, their eye is bad, bad, BAD!'

Then proceeded the rabbi to show that his eye was better than theirs, and had compassion on him, and went to him, and bound up his wounds, pouring in oil and wine (cursing himself for not bringing a proper first-aid kit), and brought him to a - well, you know the rest of the story."

Perhaps not exactly the way Yeshua told the story 2000 years ago - although maybe if he had told it today instead ...?

The point is, by missing the vital importance of the statement Yeshua made in Luke 11:35 and Matthew 6:22, we may find ourselves on the wrong side in the story of the good Samaritan. But to understand the statement to begin with, we must know that 'good eye' is simply a Hebrew idiom that means a generous heart, and 'bad eye' means a stingy, or greedy heart.

Yeshua was fond of the pun. Unfortunately, puns don't translate very well, which is why many of us missed it, but he never the less told it as a pun:

"How is the eye the lamp of the body?" he would have asked.

"Cause you see light with it?" Peter would have ventured.

"Right! If the eye is good (generous), the body is full of light!"

"Oh! I get it!" Peter would have went on. "Spiritual light, right? A man with a good (generous) eye walks in the light! It's a lamp! Get it, Andrew? Get it, John?"

"Yeah, yeah..."

"And," Peter goes on, "A man with a bad (stingy) eye, that means his lamp is out right? That's a good one, Yeshua. You're funny! Tell us another pun!"

What Yeshua told as a pun 2000 years ago is vitally important to us today. Why?

Because that is the secret to walking in light.

We talk so much about light, the Word of God being a light to our path, walking in the light, and letting our light so shine before men, but half of us don't even know how to turn the light on! We're always preoccupied with the question, "What's God's will for my life?", but it seems like we're feeling our way around in the dark, listening for a still small voice, groping for the switch.

Yeshua tells us how to turn it on. To turn on the light, first we must know where the lamp is located - that's our eyes. Now, we know that a good eye is a generous heart, so we know even more clearly where the lamp is.

This meaning fits perfectly into the context of both passages. The "good eye" passage in Matthew 6:22 follows right on the heel of Yeshua's comments on "laying up treasures in heaven," and just before where he says, "no one can serve two masters." The whole section is about generosity, and the value of possessions versus people and relationships.

Now did you really think the Gospel writers were so scatter-brain they couldn't stick to the same subject very long? All of Yeshua's sayings fit in their context. Sometimes you just have to know what he has been talking about to begin with. Sometimes you have to retrace backwards a whole chapter or two to pick up his train of thought.

In the case of the "good eye" passage in Luke 11:34, you have to back up to Luke 10, where we find the parable of the good Samaritan, which we just looked at. We will examine the context of the Luke account in the final chapter, when we see how having a good eye, and seeing people as Yeshua saw them, is the key to understanding the whole purpose of God.

Mind you, we are not talking about giving offerings and donations. Lack of giving is only a symptom of a deeper problem - suffered also by some who do give good offerings. We're not even talking about the "prosperity message" - although if we all had a "good eye" there would be no trouble on either side of that argument. That is, there would be neither the over balance on the part of a few on one side, nor the controversy about it on the other. What exactly, then, is the "good eye" that Yeshua is speaking of? Just what is the generous spirit Yeshua means?

A good eye is one that sees as Yeshua sees, and places value where Yeshua places value - on people.

People are of far more value to Yeshua than resources, than assets, than time, even than reputation. For Yeshua, people were even more valuable than his life! A truly generous person willingly gives all of those things out of love for people.

We're not talking about people who have generous moods, people who give just to feel good. We're talking about those who recognize the value of people over all those other things. You can tell which ones those are because their love for people expresses itself in relationship.

One with a good eye is one who values relationships for their own sake. Anything less is only lip service to some abstract ideal. Anything less, and we end up emulating that great child philosopher, Linus Van Pelt, who said, "I love mankind. It's just people I can't stand!"

To love mankind, we must relate to people.

God's covenant with man isn't a sales contract; it's a relationship. God didn't simply promise to Abraham that He would deliver the goods (though He did that too) - He instituted a covenant whereby man would be God's friend. That's why breaking bread around the table together and drinking wine is a part of both the Old and the New Covenant. You eat and drink with friends. It's relationship! "Greater love has no man than he who gives his life for his friends!"

Some people give their life for a cause, or some abstract concept of 'mankind.' Yeshua didn't. He gave his life so that man could enter into an intimate relationship with Him.

Yeshua is the Son of God. He was in the beginning with God. He was God! He had everything people consider valuable: assets, resources, time and reputation. Yeshua had assets. He had power to create assets in case any were lacking! He had time. He filled all time. He was the beginning and the end. He had reputation. He was God! What better reputation could you ask for?

Yet, Yeshua valued man that He had made far more than assets, resources, time and reputation. He gave that all up to be born as a man.

Even a man, he could have easily accumulated assets and resources. He could have used the twenty-four hours a day he was allotted to his best advantage for his own welfare and comfort. He could have maintained a reputation as a great man simply by agreeing to reign as Messiah on the people's terms.

After all, he had already given up so much just in becoming a man! Why give up more? But even as a man, he valued his fellow man so much he gave that all up.

He was moved with compassion. Sometimes he didn't even have time to eat because of his compassion. His mother and brothers thought he had lost his head because he was spending so much time helping people. He hadn't lost his head. He just had a good eye!

Some of us do lose our head, but that isn't due to a good eye. We're not being moved with compassion - we're being moved by our guilt complex, by our sense of duty, by our desire for success, so as to gain a sense of accomplishment or by our obsession on 'being in God's perfect will'. Yeshua was moved by none of those things. He was moved with compassion, so he didn't suffer a nervous breakdown even though his mother and brothers thought he surely would.

Yeshua had a good eye. He loved mankind, but, unlike Linus, he also had compassion on people. He built relationships with people.

He visited them in their homes. He ate with them. He worshipped with them. He talked with them as he went down the road. He told jokes to them, and laughed at their jokes. He wept with them. He got angry at them. He hugged them. Finally, he gathered his closest ones together and had a covenant meal with them.

It was actually the Passover Seder, the covenant meal Moses commanded the people of Israel to eat when God delivered them out of Egypt. It's the meal where they don't eat regular bread. They have to eat matzah instead - that is, unleavened bread. When it was time to take a particular piece of matzah that had been broken off of the middle piece (the afikomen), he said, "This is my body that is to be broken for you."

Then it was time to pour the cup of wine for the fourth and final time in the seder. He did so, and said, "This is my blood I'm about to shed for you."

Shortly afterwards, his body was indeed broken. It was whipped and mistreated in every way. He was falsely accused. His words were taken out of context and made to sound like something he

had never meant to say. His reputation was ruined, but he just kept his mouth shut. People's souls were more important to him than that.

He was beaten until he was unrecognizable. His back was cut open with a whip that had bits of sharp bone tied to the ends. Then, he was administered a very torturous slow death that was normally prescribed only for convicted terrorists.

Most pictures of Yeshua on the cross look so dignified compared to how he really looked. If I had a picture of how he probably really looked printed on this page, you'd keep this book on the very top shelf where your children can't reach it. He looked like something that wasn't even human!

He allowed all that to happen to him because he valued people. It was that important to him to bring people back into intimate relationship with God.

To have a good eye is to see people as Yeshua saw them - to put the same value on them as Yeshua did-to... *let your attitude towards one another be governed by your being in union with the Messiah Yeshua: Though he was in the form of God, he did not regard equality with God something to be possessed by force. On the contrary, he emptied himself, in that he took the form of a slave by becoming like human beings are. And when he appeared a human being, he humbled himself still more by becoming obedient even to death - death on a stake as a criminal! Therefore God raised him to the highest place and gave him the name above every name; that in honour of the name given Yeshua, every knee will bow - in heaven, on earth and under the earth - and every tongue will acknowledge that Yeshua the Messiah is ADONAI - to the glory of God the Father.* (Phillipians 2:5-11 CJB).

The only way to have light is to have a good eye - to value people and relationships with people the same way as Yeshua did. When we see things as Yeshua sees them, are motivated by the same things that motivated Yeshua, when we are moved with compassion, as Yeshua was - that, by the very definition, is being in the light.

It's automatic.

C. Baruch is the pseudonym for the author of Culture Shock, a World Christian's Manifesto.

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