

## Bad Religion-Week 2: Broken Relationships

Give a brief context for the video:

Watch Video: The Chosen season 2 episode 1

This video we just watched, was a depiction of what it may have been like when Jesus and his disciples were traveling through Samaria on their way to Jerusalem.

We are in week 2 of a series we have titled Bad Religion. And we are looking at how religion, if we are not careful, can actually get in the way of our relationship with God and the calling He has for us as His followers.

Let me read our text for today:

### Luke 9:51-56

<sup>51</sup> As the time approached for him to be taken up to heaven, Jesus resolutely set out for Jerusalem. <sup>52</sup> And he sent messengers on ahead, who went into a Samaritan village to get things ready for him; <sup>53</sup> but the people there did not welcome him, because he was heading for Jerusalem. <sup>54</sup> When the disciples James and John saw this, they asked, "Lord, do you want us to call fire down from heaven to destroy them?" <sup>55</sup> But Jesus turned and rebuked them. <sup>56</sup> Then he and his disciples went to another village.

So, the premise for today's sermon is this. Religion, if we are not careful, can bring about judgement and self-righteousness. And this can get in the way of our forming relationships with the very people Jesus is asking us to reach out to.

This story that we just read in Luke's gospel is a great depiction of this. James and John, so dislike the Samaritans that they are ready to call down fire to destroy them because the Samaritans don't understand who Jesus is and the don't welcome Him.

So, what is going on here? Why is this hatred toward the Samaritans so intense?

We must go back to when the northern tribes of Israel fell into captivity to Assyria.

(Show map)

At this time, the king of Assyria, who was now in control of the northern tribes of Israel sent people to inhabit Samaria and the surrounding area. These foreigners intermarried with the Israelite population that was still in and around Samaria. These "Samaritans" began adopting their idolatrous religion and blending it with their Jewish faith. So, Samaritans were generally considered impure by the Jews, and they were universally despised.

700 plus years later, when Jesus was ministering on earth, things had not gotten any better. The Jews still hated and despised the Samaritans and vis versa.

But Jesus clearly sees the Samaritans very differently than James and John and the rest of his disciples. By now Jesus has met the Samaritan woman at the well, she and many in her village have come to saving faith in Jesus. Samaritans, of all people, were coming to faith in Jesus!

Yet despite seeing this, James and John want to call down fire from heaven and destroy these Samaritans who don't understand who Jesus truly is.

And there is an important warning for us in this story. Just because we follow Jesus, that does not protect us from forming and following some very bad religion.

Message notes:

- 1) Bad religion **fuels** our desire to **form walls** to keep people who are different than us out.

For the Jews, they wanted to ignore the Samaritans and let them get what they deserved. They didn't want them to experience the love and hope of Jesus, they wanted them to experience the

wrath of God. Jesus rebukes James and John because they still wanted the Samaritans to receive God's judgment verses God's mercy and grace.

I love in the movie clip when James and John say to Jesus, they (the Samaritans) don't deserve you. And Jesus, looks them in the eye and says "do you really think you're any better than them? Because you're not! That's the whole point, that's why I am here!" "These people you hate are believing in me. They are believing the message we are giving them..."

"Do not judge, or you too will be judged. <sup>2</sup> For in the same way you judge others, you will be judged, and with the measure you use, it will be measured to you." (Matthew 7:1-2)

Bad religion fuels are selfish desire to judge and withhold God's love and mercy from people that we don't agree with or like. For the Jew's, it was the Samaritan's, but who is it for you and me? Is it people with different political beliefs, those Republicans, those Democrats? Is it people who view vaccination different than you, pro-vacs, anti-vacs, People with a different skin color? Different culture? Different values...Bad religion helps us feel justified in building walls to keep "those people," whoever they are for you and me, at arms distance.

2) Relationships help **tear down** walls and earn the right to share our hope in Jesus.

Before I came to faith in Jesus...I had a picture in my mind of what Christian's and church would be like... for me, those people, Christian's who go to church...

3) Bad religion **fuels fear.**

For over 700 years, stories about "those people" whether that be the Jew's telling stories about the Samaritans or the Samaritans telling stories about the Jews had not only fueled judgement and a desire to keep one another at arm's length, but it also fueled fear.

When we don't like a person or a people group, every story that supports our bias fuels our fear and desire to build walls and keep them out of our lives.

This is why the story of the Good Samaritan is such a radical story...a man gets robbed and beaten... and the priest, and the Levite, who have the "right religion"...ignore the man, the Samaritan, who the Jewish audience would believe has their religion all wrong...is the good neighbor to this man.

4) Relationships help **cast out** fear and broaden our understanding of the true calling of Jesus to reach people of every tribe and nation.

There is a beautiful, true story that was made into a book and a movie titled, "Same kind of different as me." A wealthy white man named Ron Hall begrudgingly agrees to serve meals at a soup kitchen to honor his wife...but he does not like it, his bias fuels his fear of "those people." And one of those people that Ron is skeptical and fearful of is a black man named Denver Moore...

With God's help, relationships cast out fear...we are all made in the image of God...we all sin and fall short of the glory of God, and we all need the love and hope that comes from a relationship with Jesus Christ.