

TO WHAT LENGTH?

-Ryan Parsons-

In the early scenes of the movie *Forrest Gump*, Forrest, an awkward kid with leg braces, walks onto the bus. He was denied each open seat he passed. During his journey down the aisle, one kid looks at him with contempt and says, "Taken," to signal that young Forrest was unwelcome to share his seat. It is a pointed illustration. Likewise, it is quite biblical.

Matthew 19:13-15

13 Then children were brought to him that he might lay his hands on them and pray. The disciples rebuked the people, 14 but Jesus said, "Let the little children come to me and do not hinder them, for to such belongs the kingdom of heaven." 15 And he laid his hands on them and went away.

Luke 15:1-2

1 Now the tax collectors and sinners were all drawing near to hear him. 2 And the Pharisees and the scribes grumbled, saying, "This man receives sinners and eats with them."

These passages convict my soul. The disciples of Jesus were telling the kids to "get lost," but Jesus welcomed them. So likewise, the Pharisees and scribes wanted Jesus to get away from the table at which sat sinners and tax collectors, but Jesus pulled up a chair and said with his actions, "I am needed here!"

On the other hand, Jesus tells a story about a Good Samaritan. When confronted with a deep need, he crossed all the norms to help a man on death's doorstep. In this simple act, love in its purest form was demonstrated by a kind passerby.

Luke 10:33-34

33 But a Samaritan, as he journeyed, came to where he was, and when he saw him, he had compassion. 34 He went to him and bound up his wounds, pouring on oil and wine. Then he set him on his own animal and brought him to an inn and took care of him.

A question recently challenged me. When it comes to God's kingdom, would I say "welcome" or "taken!"? When the inconvenience of an injured man in my path came, would I walk away or say, "I am needed here!" My neighbors need the Gospel. Will I prevent or facilitate their invitation to the King? When the wounded come near, will I carry them to the Great Physician or deny them that grace?

To what length, what pain, and what cost are we willing to introduce, carry, and welcome "our neighbor" to the love of Jesus?

Hesed,
Ryan