# Generous Life Project – Shower YOUR Blesssings

**Session 3**

**Theme**: In the Kingdom of God, we are all neighbors. Being a neighbor means using all

of your resources, especially your mercy**.**

**Hook: Who is my neighbor?**

**Text:** Ezekiel 34:23-31, Luke10:25-37

**Video:** Congregations Working Ecumenically(no title on the video)

**Learning Goal:** To determine the cost and risk your congregation is willing to take to

become neighbor

**Learning Activity:** Compare/Contrast chart, Think, Pair, Share questions,analysis.

**Sending:** Whip Around

**Preparation/Need**

1. Copies of the Compare and Contrast chart on the last page of the session guide
2. Congregation and neighborhood analysis from the last session
3. “Images of the Kingdom of God” newsprint from the last session
4. New pieces of newsprint
5. Markers

## Welcome

**Hook: Who is my neighbor?**

**Theme:** Today will focus on the assertion that in the Kingdom of God, we are all neighbors. In that truth, being a neighbor means using all of your resources, especially your mercy.

**Prayer:** God of the Promise, you shower us with blessings. All that we have, all that we are, is provided in your covenant of peace. Your mercy is never-ending, and it is our gift from you, freely given. Show us how to share with our neighbor when the cost is great. **Amen.**

## Video

No Title

## Relevant Quotes

Voiceover (VO): (Ezekiel 34:26) God promises showers. God promises a shower of blessings for all saying, “I will send down the **showers** in their season; they shall be **showers** **of** **blessing**.”

Pastor Ron Cox: It’s a congregation that’s small and cares a lot about the community. So how do we get out to the community? That’s where the idea of…okay …mobile showers!

VO: Caring for homeless people is not a single church’s responsibility and no single group or person can address the whole problem. And since no one person can care for this community, everyone is responsible, every Christian, every member of the community, regardless of faith tradition.

Linda McDaid: And I can help. I mean, it’s God driven. I prayed a lot about how to give back to the people I used to live out with, you know, in the streets. And now, I can give back and show them that it can be done.

VO: Pastor Ron Cox from Christ Lutheran shares the true objective of the ministry often – it’s to change community attitudes, help the people with, and to end the scourge of homelessness. The issue of hygiene speaks to their perception of self-worth, being able to look for work, and community public health.

## Biblical Foundation

## Have someone read Ezekiel 34:23-31.

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**23I will set up over them one shepherd, my servant David, and he shall feed them: he shall feed them and be their shepherd. 24And I, the Lord, will be their God, and my servant David shall be prince among them; I, the Lord, have spoken.**

**25I will make with them a covenant of peace and banish wild animals from the land, so that they may live in the wild and sleep in the woods securely. 26I will make them and the region around my hill a blessing; and I will send down the showers in their season; they shall be showers of blessing. 27The trees of the field shall yield their fruit, and the earth shall yield its increase. They shall be secure on their soil; and they shall know that I am the Lord, when I break the bars of their yoke, and save them from the hands of those who enslaved them.28They shall no more be plunder for the nations, nor shall the animals of the land devour them; they shall live in safety, and no one shall make them afraid. 29I will provide for them a splendid vegetation so that they shall no more be consumed with hunger in the land, and no longer suffer the insults of the nations. 30They shall know that I, the Lord their God, am with them, and that they, the house of Israel, are my people, says the Lord God. 31You are my sheep, the sheep of my pastureand I am your God, says the Lord God.**

Commentary

Walter Zimmerli defines covenant as “the establishment of a relationship of well-being between the partners of the covenant.” When YHWH is the covenant partner, well-being will extend over the whole sphere of life in the nation. To remove the wild animals, eliminates a source of anxiety for the people who live there. This creates a safe and peaceful environment (Zimmerli 1983, 220).

## Conversation Starters

**Large Group**

What does Ezekiel’s vision add to our conversation about the Kingdom of God?

Reminder: Throughout this lesson, add relevant ideas to the “Images of the Kingdom of God” paper.

This vision of a peaceful wilderness is offered to those for whom the wilds of the desert were a life threatening place. It was in Ezekiel’s day, and remained so in Jesus day, though the fear was of more than just wild beasts.

## Biblical Foundation

Have someone read Luke 10:25-32 – The Parable of the Good Samaritan.

**25Just then a lawyer stood up to test Jesus. “Teacher,” he said, “what must I do to inherit eternal life?” 26He said to him, “What is written in the law? What do you read there?” 27He answered, “You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, and with all your soul, and with all your strength, and with all your mind; and your neighbor as yourself.” 28And he said to him, “You have given the right answer; do this, and you will live.”**

**29But wanting to justify himself, he asked Jesus, “And who is my neighbor?” 30Jesus replied, “A man was going down from Jerusalem to Jericho, and fell into the hands of robbers, who stripped him, beat him, and went away, leaving him half dead.**

**31Now by chance a priest was going down that road; and when he saw him, he passed by on the other side**. **32So likewise a Levite, when he came to the place and saw him, passed by on the other side.**

## Commentary

Kenneth Bailey argues that since clothing defines ethnicity and class, especially in the Middle East, “a naked man is an unknown” (Bailey 2008, 292). Further, he points out that being an unknown makes the issue of how to respond to his dire situation confusing to passersby. A priest would be obliged to help him, if he were Jewish. But since he is unconscious and naked, the priest is off the hook. Bailey points out that the priest’s decision is “freighted with danger.” If he helps, he becomes ceremonially unclean especially if the man is dead. The priest would have to perform a week long purification ritual and would be unable to collect the tithes and offerings of the people. Since his family is dependent on him having access to the food/tithes, there are consequences for them too. If he became defiled but didn’t tell anyone, so that he could keep doing his job, he runs the risk of being discovered. According to Bailey, he could “suffer the following fate: ‘his brethren the priests did not bring him to the court, but the young men among the priests took him outside the Temple Court and split open his brain with clubs” (Bailey 2008, 292).

Further, Bailey suggests that the Levite could have been following the priest. He knew the priest was ahead of him and would have also come across the man. If the priest didn’t think it appropriate to help, the Levite would not disagree with that verdict (Bailey 2008, 293).

## Conversation Starter

**Large Group**

This is a familiar parable. What do you think of the reasons the priest and the Levite might have for not helping? Has Bailey added anything to your understanding?

Have someone read Luke 10:33-35.

**33But a Samaritan while traveling came near him; and when he saw him, he was moved with pity.34He went to him and bandaged his wounds, having poured oil and wine on them. Then he put him on his own animal, brought him to an inn, and took care of him. 35The next day he took out two denarii, gave them to the innkeeper, and said, ‘Take care of him; and when I come back, I will repay you whatever more you spend.’**

## Commentary

Bailey points out that given the competing religious views of the Jews and the Samaritans, the Samaritan puts himself at great risk by entering a Jewish town with a wounded, perhaps dead Jewish man slung over the back of his animal. Who’s to say he didn’t attack the man himself? Why would anyone in the town listen to him? Bailey puts this into the early American context of 1850 suggesting the Samaritan is the equivalent of an Indian bringing a cowboy into the Dodge City with an arrow in his back. Even if the townsfolk did let him care for the man through the night, his chances of getting out alive in the morning would be slim to none. Bailey suggests that the original listener of this story would want to know if the Samaritan survived!

Further Bailey notes that the Samaritan used all of his available resources (oil, wine, a cloth wrapping, riding animal, time, energy and money) to care for the wounded man (Bailey 2008, 294).

## Conversation Starters

**Large Group**

Have you ever thought of the risk to the Samaritan in this parable? What does this insight from Bailey add to your understanding of what Jesus is saying?

Have someone read verses 36- 37.

**36Which of these three, do you think, was a neighbor to the man who fell into the hands of the robbers?” 37He said, “The one who showed him mercy.” Jesus said to him, “Go and do likewise.**

## Commentary

Bailey notes that the Greek is not in the past tense and should be translated: “which of these *became* a neighbor (Bailey 2008, 296)?”

## Conversation Starters

**Large Group**

How does the idea that one “becomes” a neighbor change your understanding of Jesus’ answer to the lawyer’s question: Who is my neighbor?

Bailey suggests the answer to the question that Jesus offers is: “Anyone in need, and at great cost.” Have you ever thought of how much it costs to become a neighbor?

### Learning Activity

**Small Groups (3-5)**

Compare and Contrast Chart:

Compare the story of the Good Samaritan to the story of Christ Lutheran Church, Goleta: to whom did God call them to become neighbor? At what risk?

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
|  | Good Samaritan | Christ, Goleta |
| Became neighbor to… |  |  |
| At what cost? |  |  |
| At what risk? |  |  |
| Cross religious barriers? |  |  |
| Cross racial barriers? |  |  |
| Cross socio-economic barriers? |  |  |
|  |  |  |

### Think, Pair, Share

At what cost? The Samaritan used all his resources, including his mercy.

Christ, Goleta worked ecumenically. Who can you partner with to become a neighbor?

To whom is your congregation already a neighbor? How is that relationship going?

To whom is your congregation being called to become neighbor? What is the risk? What is the cost? Are there religious, ethnic/racial, socio-economic barriers to cross?

The priest has really good reasons for not helping. What are some of the reasons you hear around your congregation for not doing things you are pretty sure you should be doing?

## Learning Activity

Reflecting on your congregation and neighborhood analysis, what can you add to the middle Venn section where the resources of the congregation and the needs of the neighbor overlap? Let’s pull the circles apart a bit wider so that the center area becomes its own circle. We’ll call it your Circle of Opportunity.

Based on your conversation during “Think, Pair, Share” and elsewhere in this lesson, where do you see new opportunities for your congregation? Where do you see the chance to expand opportunities already in place?

As you talk about the risks involved in becoming neighbor, put some of these concerns in your circle of obstacles from last week.

At this point you should have something that looks a bit like this:

## Sending

**Whip Around**: Stand in a circle. Ask each person to share one moment of learning from today, or even some other point in the series.

### Dismissal

**Leader: Go in Peace. Love your neighbor.**

People: Thanks be to God! [[1]](#endnote-1)

1. Kenneth Bailey. 2008. “Jesus through Middle Eastern Eyes” Downers Grove: InterVarsity Press

   Walter Zimmerli. 1983. “Ezekiel 2” Hermeneia. Philidelphia: Fortress Press [↑](#endnote-ref-1)