

## **Bad Times Reveal Good Samaritans**

### **In the News**

Good Samaritans don't set out to be heroes. Usually, they're simply involved in the business of everyday living when they encounter someone in need, and in response, they do their best to help using whatever resources are on hand. And, sometimes they pay a heavy price for being a true neighbor.

On May 22, a suicide terrorist exploded a bomb at an arena in Manchester, England, moments after U.S. singer Ariana Grande finished performing. The bomb killed 22 people, including children, and wounded 59 others, some of whom have life-threatening injuries. On May 26, a man spewing hate speech at two teenage girls on board a Portland train stabbed three men who put themselves between him and the girls and tried to calm him.

At Manchester, the good Samaritans included at least two homeless men. Chris Parker, 33, had been begging in the arena foyer where the suicide bomber detonated his device. Amid the carnage and chaos, Parker rushed to help victims. He comforted a girl who had lost her legs, wrapping her in a T-shirt, and cradled a dying woman in his arms.

Stephen Jones, 35, who had been sleeping outdoors near the arena, also ran to help. He pulled nails out of children's arms and faces.

Both men were left shaken by the event, and Parker, interviewed by a reporter afterward, said he hadn't stopped crying.

On the Portland train, Taliesin Myrddin Namkai-Meche, 23, Rick Best, 53, and Micah Fletcher, 21, were all stabbed by a raging man as they attempted to defuse the situation and protect the two teenage girls he was threatening. Namkai-Meche and Best died from their wounds and Fletcher is hospitalized with serious injuries.

There were other people who became good Samaritans in the aftermath of both situations, some of whom have not been identified.

In the Portland train slayings, other passengers rushed to help the stabbed men. Passenger Michael Kennedy and two other men started CPR chest compressions on Best until emergency medics arrived. Rachel Macy, 45, along with another passenger she described as a veteran, knelt beside Namkai-Meche as he lay bleeding on the train car floor.

Macy pulled off her tank top and pressed it against the deep slash on his neck. She spoke words of comfort to the dying man and prayed with him. Other passengers chased after the assailant, who fled as the train doors opened. They called 911 and directed officers to his location.

When medics arrived, they put Namkai-Meche on a stretcher. Macy, now clad only in a slip on top, as she had used her shirt in an attempt to staunch Namkai-Meche's wound, stayed by his side.

Macy reported that before Namkai-Meche was carried away, he had a last message: "Tell everyone on this train I love them. "

Indeed.

**Many of the people entering the concert in Manchester would have moved to the other side of the street to walk past where Jones was sleeping, and looked the other way as they passed Parker. Most of the people on the Portland train would have been texting or reading the paper, not noticing those around them. How would our lives be different if we treated everyone as if someday they would help us in our time of need?**

Here are some Bible verses to guide your discussion:

**Luke 10:25-29**

*Just then a lawyer stood up to test Jesus. "Teacher," he said, "what must I do to inherit eternal life?" [Jesus] said to him, "What is written in the law? What do you read there?" He 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." And [Jesus] said to him, "You have given the right answer; do this, and you will live." But wanting to justify himself, he asked Jesus, "And who is my neighbor?" (For context, read 10:25-37.)*

This is the conversation that launched Jesus into telling the parable of the good Samaritan.

**Questions:** How would you like "neighbor" to be defined for you? How do you treat those that you consider "neighbors" differently from everyone else?

### **Proverbs 24:11-12**

*... if you hold back from rescuing those taken away to death, those who go staggering to the slaughter; if you say, "Look, we did not know this" -- does not he who weighs the heart perceive it? Does not he who keeps watch over your soul know it? And will he not repay all according to their deeds?*

The protagonist in Jesus' parable is a Samaritan, someone many in Jesus' audience would have considered an outsider or even an adversary, and certainly not someone they would normally use the word "good" to describe. In the case of the Manchester bombing, the good Samaritans were homeless -- a group we often blame for their condition and consider outsiders, people who have something wrong with them. So they make *good* good Samaritans.

In the Portland train incident, at least one of the girls being harassed was a Muslim, and some people view Muslims as, in some sense, "Samaritans" in U.S. culture.

**Questions:** How do you relate the selection from Proverbs above to what you know of the parable of the Good Samaritan? In what ways do we say "Look, we did not know this" when it comes to today's tragedies?

### **Proverbs 3:27**

*Do not withhold good from those to whom it is due, when it is in your power to do it.*

Some of the book of Proverbs seems like a big list of what not to do. The verse above is less about not withholding, and more about placing your energies, or "power" into the right things.

**Questions:** In what ways do we hide behind a lack of "power?" In what ways do we fall into the trap of investing our energies into the wrong things?

### **More verses**

Lest you think the parable of the good Samaritan is unique in the point it makes, we offer a sampling of verses from other places in scripture:

- *You shall not see your neighbor's donkey or ox fallen on the road and ignore it; you shall help to lift it up. Deuteronomy 22:4*

- *Give justice to the weak and the orphan; maintain the right of the lowly and the destitute. Rescue the weak and the needy; deliver them from the hand of the wicked. Psalm 82:3-4*
- *Cure the sick, raise the dead, cleanse the lepers, cast out demons. You received without payment; give without payment. Matthew 10:8*
- *[Jesus] sat down opposite the treasury, and watched the crowd putting money into the treasury. Many rich people put in large sums. A poor widow came and put in two small copper coins, which are worth a penny. Then he called his disciples and said to them, "Truly I tell you, this poor widow has put in more than all those who are contributing to the treasury. For all of them have contributed out of their abundance; but she out of her poverty has put in everything she had, all she had to live on." Mark 12:41-44*
- *Do not neglect to do good and to share what you have, for such sacrifices are pleasing to God. Hebrews 13:16*
- *Let each of you look not to your own interests, but to the interests of others. Philippians 2:4*
- *How does God's love abide in anyone who has the world's goods and sees a brother or sister in need and yet refuses help? 1 John 3:17*

### **Prayer for Our Enemies**(BCP p. 816)

O God, the Father of all, whose Son commanded us to love our enemies: Lead them and us from prejudice to truth: deliver them and us from hatred, cruelty, and revenge; and in your good time enable us all to stand reconciled before you, through Jesus Christ our Lord. *Amen.*