

**Text:** [Luke 10:25-37](#)  
**Date:** February 2, 2020  
**Title:** Love and Fear 4: “Risking Ourselves for Love”  
**Theme:** Loving the other always involves some kind of risk.

## Intro

We’ve been talking about Love and Fear  
And today I want to wrap up that series with a message about how the two  
naturally travel together – about the risk that’s always inherent in love

### 1

Love always carries with it the risk of rejection  
You probably learned that lesson quite young – most of us do  
When you finally gathered the courage to tell your crush – or maybe  
someone else slipped and told them – that you liked them  
And you learned the hard way that they had approximately zero interest in  
you

Though it feels like a big deal at the time,  
the stakes get a lot higher the older we get  
When we’re looking at the breakup of a long-term relationship or a  
marriage

There is no such thing as love without risk  
To love is to put yourself into someone else’s hands

### 2

There’s a phenomenon that happens in ERs across the country  
Where a patient, on seeing the race or ethnicity of the doctor who is going  
to be treating them, will sometimes say:  
“Don’t you have a white doctor available?”  
As one ER doc in Oregon put it on Twitter a few years ago:  
“The conversation usually goes like this. [I say]: You are welcome to refuse  
care under my hands, but I feel confident that I am the most qualified  
to care for you. Especially since the alternative is an intern. And they  
invariably pick the intern, as long as they are white.”<sup>1</sup>

Can you imagine what that must feel like?

To train and study for years to become expert in your field, so that you can  
HELP someone else

And to be rejected not because of your qualifications or experience

But simply because of your accent or the color of your skin?

### 3

This is a dimension of the story of the Good Samaritan that we seldom talk  
about

We will talk about the Samaritan's generosity, or his kindness,  
or his willing to risk his physical safety to help, not knowing whether the  
bandits are still around

We seldom talk about the very distinct possibility that the man will look up,  
see who is helping him, and say,

"Leave me alone. I'd rather die than be saved by you."

We seldom talk about the risk to his heart – the real possibility of rejection

We can't appreciate how bad things were between Jews and Samaritans  
The animosity between the two groups was ancient – many centuries old  
by Jesus' time

The result of a forced resettlement of various ethnic and religious groups in  
central Israel when the Assyrians were the imperial power in the 8<sup>th</sup>  
century BC

The Assyrians loved to move people around as a way of sowing mistrust  
among their subjects

Samaritans lived in between the area where Jesus grew up in the north – in  
Galilee – and Jerusalem to the south

And in Jesus' time, it was the custom, several times a year, for pious Jews  
to travel to Jerusalem for religious festivals

Most of them would NOT travel through Samaria if they could help it  
– instead they would choose to take the long way around, crossing over to  
the east side of the Jordan River rather than passing through any  
town of the Samaritans

That's just what you did

In John's gospel, after a particularly sharp conflict with the Jewish authorities, they insult Jesus by calling him a demon-possessed Samaritan (John 8:48)

And even in today's scripture reading, when the lawyer is asked by Jesus, "so who in the story was a neighbor to the man who was robbed on the road?"

The lawyer can't bring himself to say, "The Samaritan."  
Instead he says, "the one who showed him mercy."

Do you get the picture?

Jesus is telling a story here that's deeply and profoundly offensive to a lot of the people who are hearing it

Because they just can't imagine such a person as a "good" Samaritan

They can't imagine either:

- 1) A Samaritan being a good neighbor to them
- 2) Or themselves wanting to be ANY kind of neighbor to a Samaritan

#### 4

What's interesting about the lawyer's question to Jesus

When he asks, "And who is my neighbor?"

Is that there's an assumption implied that the first part of what he said – the loving part – was easy

He doesn't ask for clarification on what it means to love God with all you've got or to love your neighbor as yourself

He asks his follow-up question as if the LOVE part is easy

That it's only WHO the love is directed toward that makes love hard –

And if Jesus doesn't burden him with too many people to try and love, maybe it's possible do it well?

But I think all of us have probably learned

That loving people is not an easy thing to do well

no matter who we're talking about

In marriage,

in raising kids

In friendships, it's hard

And it's scary, because to love is always to risk yourself  
To risk hurt and rejection  
When we reveal ourselves to someone else as we are  
We are never certain what kind of response we'll get  
Loving is putting ourselves into someone else's hands

We always run the risk of having the door slammed in our faces  
And the more that happens, the less and less likely we are to bother at all

## 5

We began this series with the idea that the God who saves us is completely  
other –  
so unlike us in capacity to love that we have a hard time comprehending it  
Let alone imitating it  
The Good Samaritan story drives that point home yet again

The story Jesus tells is a story about neighbors, yes  
It's a story about people who are different and unexpected Saviors, yes

It's also a story Jesus could tell about himself  
Jesus wasn't a Samaritan, but he was the Savior no one expected  
Nathanael, one of the 12 disciples, when he heard where Jesus was from,  
said "Nazareth? Can anything good come from there?" (John 1:46)

Those words have a familiar ring to anyone who's ever been rejected out of  
hand because of who they are, their background, or their history  
You don't have to be a Samaritan to be an outsider  
You don't have to be a Samaritan to know rejection

Still, the Samaritan in Jesus' story doesn't allow his fear of being judged or  
rejected to stop him from trying to help  
It doesn't stop him from loving  
That's what's important

We can't do the things Jesus calls us to do 100% safely  
We always run the risk of being hurt, being rejected, or being criticized –  
sometimes for the simple fact that we care or want to help  
There are people who see our caring as weakness  
Our desire to help as something useless and futile, a waste of time

This shouldn't surprise us  
We follow a Savior whose whole story is about loving us THROUGH and  
DESPITE our rejection  
Who holds onto us even when we're like kids having a tantrum and just  
want to squirm away

This is who our God is  
Those who want to be like God  
I'm sorry to say – cannot take the safe path

Because love means risking ourselves  
And mastering our fear of placing ourselves in the hands of the other

This is what we learn from Jesus' life – and his death

Amen.

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<sup>1</sup> <https://twitter.com/LeahBecerra/timelines/897853928402014208>