



The Good Samaritan

The Good Samaritan has been represented many times throughout art history; but as I was taught this story as a child, I never realized until recently just how powerful the message of loving your neighbor is or how difficult, in modern times, it has become. Inspiration arose from contemporary news events and I saw an opportunity to expose the meaning with contrasting imagery showing a message of love where one would expect animosity. This prompts inspection of the image, leaving the viewer seeking the familiar story, as opposed to the message of Christ.

During the story of the Good Samaritan, Christ explains that a man is robbed and left—for dead and a priest and a Levite, those who would have been most likely to render aid, do nothing and pass him by. Then a Samaritan man, who in Hebrew culture was despised, stops, and tends to the man.

In my interpretation, I chose an unlikely Samaritan, separated by cultures and reviled in the media, to bring the message of neighbor. Clearly, those who had responsibility to help and even those with the desire to help are justifiably frightened and look upon the scene as they have been taught, self-preservation first. The piece shows a scene that should be easy. As children, we are taught, to “love thy neighbor” and help; but we are also taught to flee from danger. Modern times have made our intentions and our actions diametrically opposed.

In many historical images of the Good Samaritan, the thieves and robbers responsible for the crimes against the innocent are usually depicted as fleeing the scene. In my depiction, you the viewers become the robbers, standing outside the piece represented by the shadowy figures in the foreground, possibly hopeful of benefiting from the misfortune. It is designed to have you ask yourself, how would you profit? Will you take the last bit of money spilled onto the street by the innocent man or will you choose to help? The piece suggests, by the streetlight shining on the graffiti, that you choose to avail, or be of help or service.

- Christopher Ruane
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