**The innkeeper, my teacher**

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I invite you to open you Bibles in Luke 10:31-35. I will read this time from *The Message* version.

“Jesus answered by telling a story. “There was once a man traveling from Jerusalem to Jericho. On the way, he was attacked by robbers. They took his clothes, beat him up, and went off leaving him half-dead. Luckily, a priest was on his way down the same road, but when he saw him he angled across to the other side. Then a Levite religious man showed up; he also avoided the injured man.

“A Samaritan traveling the road came on him. When he saw the man’s condition, his heart went out to him. He gave him first aid, disinfecting and bandaging his wounds. Then he lifted him onto his donkey, led him to an inn, and made him comfortable. In the morning, he took out two silver coins and gave them to the innkeeper, saying, ‘Take good care of him. If it costs any more, put it on my bill—I’ll pay you on my way back.’

“What do you think? Which of the three became a neighbor to the man attacked by robbers?” “The one who treated him kindly,” the religion scholar responded. Jesus said, “Go and do the same.”” Luke‬

This parable was told to answer the question, “Who is my neighbor?” asked by the teacher of the law. When we come to the end of the story, Jesus asks, “Which of the three became a neighbor to the man attacked by robbers?” The perspectives of each are different: the scribe thought of a neighbor as him who receives another man’s mercy, while Jesus thought of a neighbor as him who shows mercy to another man.

The objective of this parable is to emphasize the active role of believers in providing for the needs of those who suffer. To be someone’s neighbor is to be the helper of anyone who needs our support. The noun “neighbor” comes from the Greek \*\*plesion\*\* which means one who is near, who is at hand or close by.

If you observe Jesus’ question to the scribe, he said “Which of these three?” referring to the priest, the Levite and the Samaritan. However, there is a fourth character in this story about whom nothing is said. He remains there without saying anything. I am talking about the innkeeper.

The innkeeper most surely was the owner of the inn. This \*\*pandoqueion\*\* or inn was the lodge or hotel for the wayfarers. So, according to the story, the Samaritan comes to the village with the victim, checks in a room for him and the victim, takes care of the victim that night and, before departing the next day, the Samaritan says to the innkeeper:  ‘I am giving you two silver coins. Please, take good care of him. If it costs any more, put it on my bill—I’ll pay you on my way back.’

So, what did the innkeeper do with the victim? Did he take care of the man? Was the money enough? Did the Samaritan come back, as he promised? We don’t know. The story leaves us with some spaces to fill out ourselves.

There is a difference between the characters of this story. The priest, the Levite and the Samaritan saw the victim lying on the ground; nobody told them what to do but they were expected to respond by showing mercy. On the other hand, the innkeeper was not in the crime scene; actually, the victim was brought to him and he was asked to do something: to show mercy to the victim. The innkeeper was given the responsibility to care for someone in need. The Samaritan came to the innkeeper after helping the victim asking now the innkeeper to continue helping the victim to recover. In other words, the innkeeper will be an extension of the Samaritan.

So, what will the innkeeper do?

To appreciate the possibilities, let us explore the mission of the innkeeper. His job was to help the victim to recover. The victim was half-dead due to the violence he suffered. He had to recover his health. In other words, he had to come back to his original condition, a task that demanded time and special attentions.

In a sense, all educators are like that innkeeper of the story since we all have been charged with the task of caring for someone else: the youth of this world. Jesus, the Good Samaritan, has already saved them from condemnation and death; Jesus lifted them up from the road of perdition and put them in our hands. Most likely these youth were not beaten up like the victim of the story, but they need to recover, they need to go back to their original state, which is to reflect the image of God. And such turning back to God’s original condition, such redemption, is precisely the fundamental goal of Christian education.

So, you and I are the innkeeper. Now, where will these youth be placed for them to recover? We need an inn, a hotel. The Christian idea of education occurs in three settings: the home, the church, and the school. These three settings share the responsibility of seeing to the redemption of the youth, the acquisition of the Christian traits and the resemblance to God. If you are a parent, a pastor or a teacher you are to make use of your inn for the salvation and retention of children and teens.

Please, remember that the Samaritan gave some money to the innkeeper: two silver coins. That means two days’ wages. How long will those two silver coins last? Two days? Was the Samaritan implying that he would return in the third day? He did not say. What was clear, though, was that the innkeeper was not only given a task, a ministry of education, but the means to carry out such a ministry.

You too have received your two silver coins: your gifts and talents, the knowledge you have learned, the experience you have obtained through life, the tools and materials you have in hand. Use wisely these resources for the mission for they were given to you by the Good Samaritan.

Were those two coins too much? Was it enough? Also, please, note that the Samaritan thought that perhaps the resources will not be enough. There would be further expenses which called for additional investment from the innkeeper wherever the resources could be found. The story didn’t say where the extra money would come from. Jesus left that for us to figure out. We must use our ingenuity here.

The point is that this ministry of education calls for a degree of selflessness. Every innkeeper needs to be mindful of the additional costs of education and be willing to pay the extra price.

As a parent, it is not only tuition you are paying, it’s also books and uniforms; it is that second language she wants to master; it is that extra music class he wants to enroll in, that extra sport your child wants to participate in. But, more than that, it is your time when he needs to write that paper or when she wants to talk about life. They need you right there. It is easier to be like the Levite or the priest and pass by when the victim is there waiting to be helped. The Samaritan stopped to help, deferred his appointments and spent time and resources in the ministry. Remember, you are an extension of the Samaritan.

Now it may look like too much to be entrusted such a ministry without a reward in sight, but this is not the case. The Samaritan said, “If it costs any more, put it on my bill—I’ll pay you on my way back.”

This truth is self-evident throughout the Bible. Every investment made in the heavenly kingdom will have its reward. The Apostle Paul said, “And let us not grow weary while doing good, for in due season we shall reap if we do not lose heart.” Galatians‬

Every dollar, every peso, every bhat, every kina you spent in the ministry of education, since it means investment in the treasury of heaven, will surely have its compensation. When you and your entrusted youth cross those eternal gates, the treasures of heaven that you so diligently laid up will be yours forever.

So, what was the innkeeper’s response to the call. We don’t know. What you and I do know is what our response to our own call will be. Do you want to invest what you have been given and give continuation to the Good Samaritan’s ministry of education? Do you want to become a faithful innkeeper?

May God bless you.