

The parable of the Good Samaritan, which we heard preached on the first Sunday of Lent, is one of my favorite of Jesus' parables, and I know that I am not alone. It has become such a part of our culture that the phrase "Good Samaritan" means someone who helps a stranger in trouble without thought of compensation. We even have Good Samaritan laws to protect people who help from being sued by the one in trouble, a sign of how much we love to sue people!

Other cultures don't always share these values, know this story. Take China, for instance. In an article posted on *Global Times* website, author Charles Liu notes that Chinese people are hesitant to reach out and help another Chinese person in distress. Apparently, there were several instances of people pretending to need help who would accuse the helpers of harm in order to extort them. After several of these were reported, people became hesitant to get involved.

However, that hesitancy does not extend to Westerners. When a foreigner needs help, the Chinese are quick to rush in. For example, a Western man in his 50s collapsed on a train platform and numerous Chinese people rushed to help. One woman called emergency services. Another got him some water. A man covered him with his jacket. Another woman began to massage him at key acupuncture points in his arms to improve his circulation. The man is expected to make a full recovery.

Why would these folks assume that the Westerner would be less likely to try to scam them than their countrymen? Why do others help people who look like themselves but hesitate when someone is different?

Jesus' parable reminds us that the people who should have stopped and helped, the priest and the Levite, could not be bothered, but the one who was considered a foreigner and held in contempt showed mercy. As familiar as this story is to us, it's message is as current as the headlines in the paper today.

After he finishes telling the parable, Jesus asks, "Who acts as a neighbor to the man in need?" The answer is the one who showed him mercy. Let us go and do likewise.