



An Interreligious Hermeneutic of Lk 10:25–37 (Parable of the Good Samaritan) in the African Context

Abstract

This paper examined Luke 10:25–37, the Parable of the Good Samaritan, from an interreligious hermeneutical lens, with particular attention paid to its implications for pluralistic African societies. Africa being a continent shaped by vibrant religious diversity but challenged by interreligious and intercultural tensions presents a fertile ground for interpretive frameworks that encourage inclusive praxis. The study investigated how the Samaritan, depicted as a religious outsider yet a moral exemplar, can model compassion, solidarity, and inclusive community-building across religious divides. Driven by an interreligious exegetical approach that takes a departure point from historical-critical exegesis and African contextual hermeneutics, the study interpreted the parable within both its original first-century context and contemporary African realities. It argued that Luke's use of literary inversion and narrative perspective invites a radical redefinition of neighbourliness that transcends religious and cultural confessional boundaries. Traditional Christian interpretations that limit the parable's reach to internal faith communities are critiqued in favour of readings that emphasize risk-taking compassion, cross-boundary care, and values that are comparatively present in other world religions such as Islam, Bahai, ATR, and Hinduism. It is expected that an interreligious reading of the Good Samaritan parable would inform efforts to counter exclusion, reduce religious and cultural conflict, and inspire cooperation rooted in shared moral commitments among Africa's religious and ethnic communities.

Keywords: Luke 10:25–37, Interreligious Hermeneutic, Neighbourliness, African Plurality, Dialogue.

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Introduction

The Parable of the Good Samaritan (Luke 10:25–37) is among the most powerful moral narratives in the New Testament. Its core message is a call to mercy beyond the boundaries of ethnicity and religion and this has made

it a central text in Christian ethics. Yet, in the contemporary African context, marked by plurality, postcolonial memory, and interreligious tension, this parable takes on a renewed significance. Africa's socio-religious landscape, comprising Christianity, Islam,

An Interreligious Hermeneutic of Lk 10:25–37 (Parable of the Good Samaritan) in the African Context

traditional African religions, and emerging charismatic movements, demands interpretive frameworks that transcend doctrinal exclusivism and ethnocentric moral boundaries. An interreligious hermeneutic of Luke 10:25–37 as an interpretive strategy becomes useful for fostering inclusive ethical praxis in Africa. Such an approach reinterprets “neighbourliness” not merely as interpersonal charity but as a communal ethic that affirms human dignity across religious and ethnic affiliations. The figure of the Samaritan, which is an outsider and yet the bearer of divine-like compassion, serves as a subversive symbol within the narrative, disrupting expectations and redefining moral community.

Scholarship in Luke’s Gospel increasingly recognizes the parable’s potential for ethical transformation. Keddie (2020) contends that Luke’s narrative critiques ethnocentric identity and models relational openness through the Samaritan figure, portraying him as a “proximate other” who challenges and reshapes moral expectations (p.246). In parallel, Howe and Sweetser (2021) emphasize Luke’s rhetorical techniques, particularly shifts in narrative viewpoint, which guide readers to empathize with the Samaritan and, by extension, religious and cultural outsiders. These literary strategies function as ethical invitations, calling readers to adopt moral perspectives that affirm the outsider. African theological voices have also contributed significantly to this conversation. Nyiawung (2018) emphasizes the parable’s relevance to African socio-political contexts, where risk-taking compassion can challenge systemic injustice and religious division. His work highlights the alignment

between the parable’s moral logic and African communal ethics, suggesting that Luke 10:25–37 can catalyse pan-religious moral engagement. These views lay a groundwork for proposing an interreligious reading of the parable. It is preceded by historical-critical analysis to understand the first-century context of Luke’s Gospel; narrative-rhetorical interpretation to unpack its literary and theological structure; and African contextual hermeneutics to apply the parable meaningfully to interreligious realities on the continent. In doing so, it articulates a vision of “neighbor” that transcends religious and cultural boundaries, rooting it in an ethic of shared vulnerability and mutual care.

Theoretical Background

i. Lukan Parables

Parables in the Gospel of Luke have attracted sustained scholarly attention for their literary depth, theological complexity, and social implications. As a distinct component of Luke’s narrative, parables serve not merely as teaching tools, but as strategic narrative interventions that challenge prevailing norms and extend the reach of Jesus’ message to diverse audiences. A foundational voice in Lukan parable studies is Joachim Jeremias (1963), who argued that the parables of Jesus—including those found in Luke—originate within the socio-cultural and religious milieu of first-century Palestine. Jeremias emphasized the parables’ radical simplicity and capacity to communicate divine truth through familiar human situations. He viewed them as expressions of the inbreaking kingdom of God designed to elicit existential responses from hearers. More

An Interreligious Hermeneutic of Lk 10:25–37 (Parable of the Good Samaritan) in the African Context

recent scholarship has moved beyond Jeremias's historical focus to examine parables through literary and rhetorical frameworks. Culpepper (1995) emphasizes the narrative artistry of the Lukan parables, identifying their use of irony, reversal, and symbolic character construction. Culpepper's work underscores Luke's role as a theologian-storyteller who uses parables to shape the moral and theological vision of the early Christian community. Snodgrass (2008), in his comprehensive volume *Stories with Intent*, argues that the Lukan parables, including the Good Samaritan, must be understood within their narrative context, where they function to subvert expectations and redefine key theological concepts such as neighbour, grace, and inclusion. His work pays close attention to the socio-political edge of many Lukan parables, noting how they engage questions of justice, mercy, and religious authority. Levine (2014) brings a provocative perspective to Lukan parables by interrogating Christian interpretations that domesticate their meaning. She insists that Jesus' parables were meant to "provoke, challenge, and disturb" rather than merely comfort. Her analysis of the Good Samaritan in particular underscores the parable's ethical disorientation and rhetorical brilliance. Other scholars, such as Craig Blomberg (2012) and John Dominic Crossan (2012), explore how parables function as theological micro-narratives with eschatological import. Blomberg categorizes many of Luke's parables as "three-point" stories with moral conclusions, while Crossan views them as acts of resistance literature, a subversive fictions that question institutional religion and promote social

reversal. Finally, African biblical scholars such as Ukpong (2000) and Gerald West (1995) began rereading Lukan parables from a contextual perspective, highlighting their liberative potential for oppressed communities. These readings often emphasize communal ethics, inclusion of the marginalized, and the transformative power of storytelling in African religious life.

The study of Lukan parables reflects a rich interdisciplinary field that spans historical, literary, theological, and contextual methodologies. This literature provides the foundation for a nuanced reading of Luke 10:25–37 and situates it within the broader trajectory of Luke's narrative strategy and ethical vision.

ii. Interreligious Hermeneutics

Interreligious hermeneutics is an interpretive practice that seeks to understand sacred texts through a dialogical engagement with multiple religious perspectives. Rather than confining interpretation within a single theological tradition, it opens scripture to insights from other faiths, thereby fostering mutual understanding and ethical solidarity. This approach is particularly relevant in multi-religious and cultural societies such as Africa, where Christian, Islamic, traditional and several other religious worldviews coexist and intersect. Theologically, interreligious hermeneutics draws from the premise that sacred texts have ethical and spiritual meanings that can resonate across religious boundaries. Cornille (2008) suggests that such hermeneutics "presuppose a willingness to enter into the worldview of the other, not to refute it, but to be transformed by it" (p.32). This process requires humility,

An Interreligious Hermeneutic of Lk 10:25–37 (Parable of the Good Samaritan) in the African Context

empathy, and a shared commitment to truth-seeking. Knitter (2002) advances this conversation by arguing that an interreligious approach to interpretation must be grounded in praxis. For Knitter, “doing theology with the other” involves reading one’s scriptures in the presence—symbolically or literally—of the religious other, allowing new meanings to emerge that speak to shared human concerns (p.204). This resonates deeply with African communal values, where knowledge and meaning are often co-constructed through dialogue. Interreligious hermeneutics also involves a critique of exclusivist readings that have historically justified violence and division. While reflecting on African biblical scholarship, West (1995) underscores the importance of “reading the Bible with the margins,” including those of other faiths, to recover liberative meanings often suppressed by dominant interpretations (p.22). This aligns with the ethos of the Parable of the Good Samaritan, which elevates the outsider as the ethical subject and thus invites a radical reimagining of religious belonging. In practice, interreligious hermeneutics encourages comparative scriptural study, shared liturgical moments, and dialogical ethics. It is not a call to theological homogenization, but to ethical co-responsibility. In the African context, it has the potential to transform sacred texts into bridges of peace and tools for justice by recognizing the common values inherent in other religions.

An Interreligious reading of any parable, however, takes a departure point from the historical-critical analysis, an approach that interprets texts by examining their historical origins,

literary composition, and socio-cultural context. It is grounded in the assumption that understanding the world behind the text, that is, the time, location, authorial intent, and audience, is essential for interpreting its meaning accurately. It is especially valuable in interpreting parables like the Good Samaritan, which are deeply embedded in the socio-political realities of first-century Judea. The historical-critical method involves several sub-disciplines: textual criticism (recovering the most original text), source criticism (identifying underlying sources), form criticism (analysing literary forms), redaction criticism (studying how authors edited their materials), and socio-historical analysis (reconstructing the world of the text). When applied to Luke 10:25–37, these tools allow scholars to understand how the parable would have functioned within the religious and ethnic tensions between Jews and Samaritans of the time. In the African context, historical-critical exegesis would be helpful in providing tools to deconstruct colonial and missionary interpretations of the Bible that may have reinforced exclusivist theology. African theologians have made great efforts to reclaim the Bible as a source of empowerment and social transformation by reconstructing the original liberative message of biblical texts, and the Good Samaritan is good example. Equally, the narrative-rhetorical exegesis resonates deeply with oral traditions and storytelling cultures. African theologians such as Maluleke (2000) argue that the narrative form of scripture must be reclaimed as a site of communal meaning-making, where moral lessons are embedded in stories that are remembered, retold, and

An Interreligious Hermeneutic of Lk 10:25–37 (Parable of the Good Samaritan) in the African Context

re-enacted. In this light, the Parable of the Good Samaritan becomes not only a literary masterpiece but a living narrative that can shape ethical behaviour in interreligious and intercultural encounters.

i. Interreligious Dynamics in African Societies

African societies are characterized by profound religious diversity. Christianity, Islam, traditional African religions and multiple spiritual movements coexist across the continent, often within the same communities or even families. While this plurality provides mutual enrichment, it has also been a source of friction, exacerbated by historical injustices, colonial legacies, and contemporary socio-political challenges. Thus, interreligious dynamics in Africa are shaped by both cooperation and conflict. In countries like Nigeria, religious affiliation is deeply intertwined with regional, ethnic, and political identities. The Middle Belt region, for instance, has experienced cycles of violence involving Christian and Muslim communities, driven as much by competition over land and governance as by theological disputes (Paden, 2005). Similarly, in the Central African Republic, religion has been co-opted into broader political struggles, resulting in severe sectarian violence between Christian and Muslim militias (Lombard, 2016). However, these tensions are counterbalanced by extensive histories of peaceful coexistence and interreligious solidarity. In Senegal, where Islam is the majority religion, Christian-Muslim relations have often been characterized by mutual respect and collaboration, particularly in national festivals, education, and political discourse (Sanneh, 1996).

Uganda and Tanzania also offer examples where interreligious councils have played significant roles in peacebuilding and national reconciliation efforts. In Ghana, Christian-Muslim relations are widely considered a model of peaceful coexistence in West Africa. Interfaith harmony is actively promoted through educational policies, shared community development projects, and the Ghana Conference of Religions for Peace. In South Africa, the post-apartheid constitution guarantees religious freedom, allowing a wide range of interfaith collaboration in the public sphere. Notably, during the COVID-19 pandemic, multi-religious coalitions coordinated responses to health and welfare needs across urban and rural communities. Interfaith dialogue in Africa is further supported by pan-African initiatives such as the African Council of Religious Leaders and the Program for Christian-Muslim Relations in Africa (PROCMURA), which work across the continent to foster understanding, prevent conflict, and promote shared ethical action. These organizations demonstrate that interreligious engagement is not only possible but vital for social cohesion and sustainable peace.

Furthermore, African interreligious dynamics are increasingly being shaped by youth-led movements and digital platforms. Interfaith youth networks in Kenya and Nigeria, for example, use social media to promote peace narratives and counteract extremist propaganda (Udo and Akpan, 2022). These new modalities of engagement reflect a generational shift toward more fluid, dialogical forms of religious identity. In this light, biblical texts like

An Interreligious Hermeneutic of Lk 10:25–37 (Parable of the Good Samaritan) in the African Context

the Parable of the Good Samaritan can become potent tools for reimagining interreligious ethics. When interpreted contextually, they affirm that compassion and justice transcend confessional lines, offering African societies a moral vision for co-existence rooted in shared humanity.

An Exegetical Analysis of Luke 10:25–37

a. The Text in Greek

25 Καὶ ἰδοὺ νομικὸς τις ἀνέστη ἐκπειράζων Ἦ αὐτὸν λέγων· Διδάσκαλε, τί ποιήσας ζωὴν αἰώνιον κληρονομήσω; **26** ὁ δὲ εἶπεν πρὸς αὐτόν· Ἐν τῷ νόμῳ τί γέγραπται; πῶς ἀναγινώσκεις; **27** ὁ δὲ ἀποκριθεὶς εἶπεν· Ἀγαπήσεις κύριον τὸν θεὸν σου ἐξ ὅλης Ἦ τῆς καρδίας σου καὶ Ἦ ἐν ὅλῃ τῇ ψυχῇ Ἦ σου καὶ Ἦ ἐν ὅλῃ τῇ ἰσχυρί Ἦ σου καὶ Ἦ ἐν ὅλῃ τῇ διανοίᾳ Ἦ σου, καὶ τὸν πλησίον σου ὡς σεαυτὸν. **28** εἶπεν δὲ αὐτῷ· Ὁρθῶς ἀπεκρίθης· τοῦτο ποιεῖ καὶ ζήσῃ. **29** Ὁ δὲ θέλων Ἦ δικαιοῦσαι ἑαυτὸν εἶπεν πρὸς τὸν Ἰησοῦν· Καὶ τίς ἐστὶν μου πλησίον; **30** ὑπολαβὼν Ἦ δὲ ὁ Ἰησοῦς εἶπεν· Ἄνθρωπος τις κατέβαινεν ἀπὸ Ἰερουσαλήμ εἰς Ἰεριχὼ καὶ λησταῖς περιέπεσαν, οἱ καὶ ἐκδύσαντες αὐτὸν καὶ πληγὰς ἐπιθέντες ἀπήλθον ἀφέντες Ἦ ἡμιθανῆ. **31** κατὰ συγκυρίαν δὲ ἱερεὺς τις κατέβαινεν ἐν τῇ ὁδῷ ἐκείνῃ, καὶ ἰδὼν αὐτὸν ἀντιπαρήλθεν· **32** ὁμοίως δὲ καὶ Ἦ Λευίτης κατὰ τὸν τόπον ἐλθὼν καὶ ἰδὼν ἀντιπαρήλθεν. **33** Σαμαρίτης δὲ τις ὁδεύων ἦλθεν κατ' αὐτὸν καὶ Ἦ ἰδὼν ἐσπλαγχνίσθη, **34** καὶ προσελθὼν κατέδησεν τὰ τραύματα αὐτοῦ ἐπιχέων ἔλαιον καὶ οἶνον, ἐπιβιάσας δὲ αὐτὸν ἐπὶ τὸ ἴδιον κτῆνος ἤγαγεν αὐτὸν εἰς πανδοχεῖον καὶ ἐπεμελήθη αὐτοῦ. **35** καὶ

ἐπὶ τὴν Ἦ αὐρίον ἐκβαλὼν Ἦ δύο δηνάρια ἔδωκεν Ἦ τῷ πανδοχεῖ καὶ Ἦ εἶπεν· Ἐπιμελήθητι αὐτοῦ, καὶ ὁ Ἦ τι ἂν προσδαπανήσῃς ἐγὼ ἐν τῷ ἐπανέρχεσθαι με ἀποδώσω σοι. **36** Ἦ τις τούτων τῶν τριῶν πλησίον δοκεῖ σοι γεγονέναι τοῦ ἐμπεσόντος εἰς τοὺς ληστὰς; **37** ὁ δὲ εἶπεν· Ὁ ποιήσας τὸ ἔλεος μετ' αὐτοῦ. εἶπεν Ἦ δὲ αὐτῷ ὁ Ἰησοῦς· Πορεύου καὶ σὺ ποιεῖ ὁμοίως (<https://sblgnt.com/Luke>).

b. The Text in English Translation

25] And behold, a lawyer stood up to put him to the test, saying, "Teacher, what shall I do to inherit eternal life?" **[26]** He said to him, "What is written in the law? How do you read?" **[27]** And 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 neighbour as yourself." **[28]** And he said to him, "You have answered right; do this, and you will live." **[29]** But he, desiring to justify himself, said to Jesus, "And who is my neighbour?" **[30]** Jesus replied, "A man was going down from Jerusalem to Jericho, and he fell among robbers, who stripped him and beat him, and departed, leaving him half dead. **[31]** Now by chance a priest was going down that road; and when he saw him he passed by on the other side. **[32]** So likewise a Levite, when he came to the place and saw him, passed by on the other side. **[33]** But a Samaritan, as he journeyed, came to where he was; and when he saw him, he had compassion, **[34]** and went to him and bound up his wounds, pouring on oil and wine; then he set him on his own beast and brought him to an inn, and took care of him. **[35]**

An Interreligious Hermeneutic of Lk 10:25–37 (Parable of the Good Samaritan) in the African Context

interreligious or intercultural solidarity. However, in recent decades, especially within liberationist, feminist, and postcolonial theological circles, there has been a significant reappraisal of the parable's ethical thrust. Scholars now highlight its capacity to disrupt religious boundaries and elevate the ethical significance of marginalized voices. Ryan (2021) critiques the dominant Christian interpretation for its role in perpetuating exclusionary logic, stating that it represents a stumbling block in relations between Christians and Jews. His observation underscores the need for more inclusive and dialogical readings. Despite growing academic awareness, popular ecclesial readings often remain domesticated. The Samaritan is praised for his charity, yet the narrative's challenge to theological gatekeeping is seldom explored. For a transformative reading to take root, it must go beyond individual moralism and engage the parable's radical social implications—especially its subversion of insider-outsider dichotomies.

Toward an Interreligious Hermeneutic of the Parable

Contemporary biblical scholarship has increasingly recognized the interpretive potential of sacred texts for promoting interreligious empathy and ethical praxis. This parable, when viewed through interdisciplinary lenses—especially cognitive linguistics, postcolonial hermeneutics, and African contextual theology—can serve as a critical resource for reshaping interfaith relationships. Howe and Sweetser's cognitive linguistic approach (2021), demonstrates how Luke's narrative employs dynamic viewpoint shifts to cultivate ethical identification with the

Samaritan. Through these rhetorical mechanisms, readers are encouraged to move beyond cultural and theological presuppositions, engaging instead in a transformative moral imagination that views compassion as a universal calling. This embodied reading experience challenges readers to identify not only with the victim but with the outsider who acts with moral courage. Keddie, in his socio-historical analysis, critiques how Luke's narrative, while inclusive in intent, still constructs the Samaritan as a "proximate other" within a broader Jewish-Christian discourse (2020, p.246). This invites a deeper consideration of how even well-meaning texts can perpetuate boundary-making unless reinterpreted through a lens sensitive to contemporary pluralism. Postcolonial readings align with this critique, urging interpreters to resist theological narratives that consolidate power or exclude difference. Ottenheim (2020) furthers this conversation by analysing how the parable's symbolic impact evolves in public memory and sacred geography, particularly through the commemorated site of the "Inn of the Good Samaritan." He argues that sacred texts create "trajectories of explanation" that shape both theology and praxis, underscoring the need for reinterpretation as social contexts change. This insight reinforces the parable's enduring relevance: its meaning is not static but activated through dialogue and ethical engagement. For African contexts, these insights are invaluable. The interreligious hermeneutic proposed here recognizes that ethical readings must be both contextually grounded and dialogically open. In regions where Christianity, Islam, and traditional

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An Interreligious Hermeneutic of Lk 10:25–37 (Parable of the Good Samaritan) in the African Context

religions intersect, the parable offers a common narrative through which shared moral values such as compassion, justice, and responsibility can be nurtured. As such, Luke 10:25–37 becomes a bridge for collaborative ethics, enabling faith communities to imagine and enact solidarity across religious divides.

i. Ethical Responsibility in Non-Christian Religions

The ethical core of this parable which has to do with compassion across social and religious boundaries resonates deeply within multiple world religions. A comparative interpretation reveals striking parallels in African Traditional Religion, Islam, the Bahá'í Faith, and Hinduism, all of which uphold principles of hospitality, altruism, and ethical responsibility to others. In African Traditional Religion (ATR), moral responsibility and compassion are deeply embedded in communal values and kinship networks. The principle of *Ubuntu* summarised as "I am because we are" captures the idea that humanity is defined by mutual care and interdependence. Acts of kindness toward strangers, especially the vulnerable, are viewed as a sacred duty (Udo, 2020). As Magesa affirms, "morality in African religion is primarily a matter of communal well-being and justice" (1997, p.76). The Samaritan's behaviour in the parable mirrors the ATR ethic of extended communal responsibility, where help is given not because of shared identity but because of shared humanity. Furthermore, ATR often expresses these values through symbolic rituals, storytelling, and ancestral codes of conduct, which emphasize care for others as a way of maintaining cosmic

harmony. In many African communities, assistance to a stranger is not only morally upright but believed to invite blessings from ancestors and deities. Ethnographic accounts from Yoruba and Akan traditions demonstrate that generosity toward outsiders reflects the ethical expectations of the spirits and ancestors who demand social justice and harmonious coexistence (Mbiti, 1990). In this context, the Samaritan's unreciprocated act of compassion would be seen as morally praiseworthy and spiritually significant.

In Islam, the Qur'an and Hadith emphasize mercy (*rahma*), neighbourliness, and the duty to help others, especially those in distress. Surah An-Nisa (4:36) commands believers to "do good to parents, kinsfolk, orphans, the needy, the neighbour who is near of kin, the neighbour who is a stranger, the companion by your side..." The Prophet Muhammad's teachings frequently highlight helping others as a manifestation of true faith. According to the Hadith: "He is not a believer whose stomach is filled while the neighbour to his side goes hungry" (Sahih al-Bukhari, Hadith 6010; see also Qur'an 4:36). The Samaritan's compassion thus aligns closely with Islamic ethics of charity (*sadaqah*) and universal brotherhood (*ummah*). Moreover, Islamic tradition emphasizes the concept of *ihsan* (doing what is beautiful or excellent) which includes going beyond obligatory duties to embody divine attributes such as mercy and generosity. Al-Ghazali (1993) has argued that assisting those in need, even at personal cost, reflects the highest moral character. In Islamic jurisprudence (*fiqh*), the duty to assist a person in peril is not just a

An Interreligious Hermeneutic of Lk 10:25–37 (Parable of the Good Samaritan) in the African Context

recommendation but an obligation under certain conditions, illustrating the seriousness with which Islamic law treats ethical intervention. The Samaritan's act, seen through this lens, would be considered *fard kifayah* (a communal obligation), a duty that, if unfulfilled by the community, becomes incumbent upon individuals. The Bahá'í Faith, grounded in principles of unity and universal compassion, explicitly teaches the spiritual imperative to aid and uplift all people regardless of religious or social identity. In *Gleanings from the Writings of Bahá'u'lláh*, Bahá'u'lláh, the founder of the faith, instructs: "Be generous in prosperity, and thankful in adversity... Be a haven for the distressed, an upholder and defender of the victim" (1994, p.285). This ethic is not simply idealistic but is institutionalized within Bahá'í practice through structures such as Local Spiritual Assemblies, which are tasked with caring for the vulnerable and promoting justice within communities. Furthermore, the Bahá'í concept of *service to humanity* is seen as worship itself. 'Abdu'l-Bahá, a central figure in the Bahá'í Faith, stated: "To be a Bahá'í means to love all the world; to love humanity and to try to serve it." This theological imperative renders the Samaritan's actions emblematic of spiritual maturity, wherein serving the stranger is indistinguishable from honouring the divine. The parable, when interpreted through Bahá'í ethics, becomes a call to eliminate prejudice and practice love without condition. In Hindu ethics, the concept of *dharma*—righteous duty—extends to compassion for all living beings. The *Bhagavad Gita* advocates selfless action (*karma yoga*) performed without attachment,

especially in the service of others. The idea of *seva* (service) is central in Hindu spirituality, often expressed in caring for the poor, the sick, and strangers (2007, p.102). The Samaritan's conduct illustrates this ethos of *seva*: compassionate action undertaken not for recognition but as a duty to the divine present in all beings. In addition, Hindu traditions emphasize the interconnectedness of all life (*advaita*), suggesting that aiding another being is a form of honouring the self within. This metaphysical unity underpins moral obligations to all, not just to kin or caste. Scriptural teachings from texts like the *Manusmriti* and Upanishads promote *ahimsa* (non-harming) and compassion as universal virtues (2004, p.122). In this framework, the Samaritan's behaviour exemplifies the highest form of *dharma*, transcending ego and tribal identity.

This comparative study demonstrates that the Parable of the Good Samaritan articulates a moral impulse that is neither uniquely Christian nor culturally bounded. Rather, its message finds theological and ethical resonance across distinct religious traditions that, while differing in metaphysical beliefs, converge on a shared ethic of compassion, service, and dignity. The concept of radical neighbourliness embodied by the Samaritan, a stranger aiding another outside his community, aligns with the African Traditional emphasis on *Ubuntu*, the Islamic principle of *ihsan*, the Bahá'í commitment to the oneness of humanity, and the Hindu ideal of *seva*. These commonalities suggest that sacred narratives like the Good Samaritan can serve as interreligious resources for moral dialogue, especially in pluralistic societies like those across Africa. More

An Interreligious Hermeneutic of Lk 10:25–37 (Parable of the Good Samaritan) in the African Context

significantly, the parable functions as what Ricoeur might call a “limit expression”—a text that not only conveys meaning within one tradition, but invites reinterpretation across boundaries (1995, p.292). It opens space for shared reflection on what it means to be human, ethical, and responsible to others in a fractured world. Thus, rather than functioning solely as a Christian moral tale, the Parable of the Good Samaritan may be viewed as a theological bridge text, a parable whose ethic transcends confessional lines and offers a vocabulary for global solidarity.

ii. **Implications for Interfaith Dialogue and Praxis in Africa**

Given Africa’s extensive religious diversity which ranges from Christianity and Islam to traditional African religions and newer religious movements, and the recurring tensions that emerge from theological exclusivism, religious insularity, and sociopolitical conflict, the parable provides an ethical model for cooperation, reconciliation, and sustained solidarity. As earlier indicated, Africa’s religious landscape is characterized by both vibrant coexistence and episodic volatility. Nigeria, for example, is almost evenly split between Muslims and Christians, with Islam dominant in the north and Christianity prevalent in the south. This demographic reality, compounded by political competition and resource inequality, has contributed to recurrent sectarian violence. States like Kaduna and Plateau have seen cycles of intercommunal clashes, often fuelled by religious rhetoric and perceived marginalization. There are longstanding tensions between Muslim Séléka rebels and Christian anti-Balaka militias have

resulted in mass displacement and communal breakdown in the Central African Republic. In Kenya, while interfaith relations have been largely peaceful, sporadic episodes such as the 2015 Garissa University attack and the 2013 Westgate Mall siege highlight how theological extremism can be manipulated to incite fear and fragmentation.

Amidst these challenges, the Samaritan’s ethic of vulnerability and responsive action offers a powerful counter-narrative. His care for the wounded stranger is not mediated by shared religious or ethnic identity, but by an unconditioned sense of compassion. This disinterested love, or *agape*, is critical for fostering inclusive relationships in contexts where religious identities are often politicized. The parable invites readers to recognize their own ethical resistance and to imagine new forms of relational responsibility. This call to reflexivity is crucial in interfaith settings, where mutual suspicion can undermine cooperation. Practical expressions of this ethic have already emerged in various African contexts. Interfaith platforms such as the Nigerian Inter-Religious Council (NIREC) and the Interfaith Mediation Centre (IMC) in Kaduna have played pivotal roles in mediating conflict and promoting peace between Christian and Muslim communities (Udo, 2025). These initiatives draw upon shared scriptural and ethical values, including those reflected in the Good Samaritan narrative, to facilitate dialogue, communal service, and trauma healing.

Conclusion

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An Interreligious Hermeneutic of Lk 10:25–37 (Parable of the Good Samaritan) in the African Context

The Parable of the Good Samaritan remains one of the most theologically provocative and ethically resonant narratives in Christian scripture. In the context of Africa's religiously plural and often politically charged societies, the parable invites a reimagining of neighbourliness that transcends doctrinal affiliation and ethnic allegiance. This study has shown that through an interreligious hermeneutic, Luke 10:30–37 can be reclaimed as a resource for inclusive ethical praxis—one grounded in compassion, solidarity, and the affirmation of shared humanity. The paper has explored how the Samaritan functions not simply as a figure of moral virtue, but as a symbol of boundary-breaking love and social transformation. His actions critique systems of exclusion and call faith communities to a higher ethical standard—one that prioritizes human need over religious orthodoxy. Concrete examples of "risk-taking compassion" across religious divides in Nigeria, Kenya, and the Central African Republic demonstrate that this ethic is not merely abstract but actionable. These stories of interfaith solidarity embody the spirit of the Samaritan and provide practical models for how religious communities can collaborate to address shared challenges such as violence, poverty, and marginalization. A comparative interfaith analysis further reveals that the moral vision of the Samaritan resonates deeply with core ethical values in African Traditional Religion (*ubuntu*), Islam (*ihsan*), the Bahá'í Faith (service to humanity), and Hinduism (*seva* and *dharma*). This convergence suggests that the parable functions as a theological bridge text, what Paul Ricoeur calls a "limit expression" that

invites shared reflection across religious boundaries. As such, it holds enormous potential to foster interfaith cooperation and inspire community healing in fragmented societies.

Recommendations

1. Religious institutions and schools should incorporate joint scriptural studies that include the Parable of the Good Samaritan as a core text for interfaith reflection. Such engagement should emphasize empathy, shared values, and ethical responsibility.
2. Governments and faith-based organizations should invest in platforms like NIREC and IMC to facilitate dialogue and conflict resolution. Expanding such initiatives can help prevent violence and build social cohesion.
3. Communities should prioritize interfaith collaboration in responding to public health crises, natural disasters, and poverty reduction. Such efforts not only address material needs but also build trust across religious lines.
4. African theologians should continue to develop frameworks that affirm religious diversity as a site of ethical enrichment rather than threat. The parable provides a scriptural basis for affirming moral agency across religious identities.
5. Educational institutions can also serve as catalysts for interfaith praxis. Integrating the parable into comparative religious curricula can foster shared reflection and ethical learning. Scripture-based interfaith study groups would provide safe spaces for religious communities to grapple with theological differences.

An Interreligious Hermeneutic of Lk 10:25–37 (Parable of the Good Samaritan) in the African Context

while building empathetic bonds rooted in common moral teachings.

6. Finally, humanitarian cooperation rooted in the Samaritan ethic, such as joint responses to disasters, public health crises, and poverty alleviation, can become powerful testimonies of interreligious neighbourliness. When faith communities focus on shared human needs rather than theological divisions, such partnerships model the parable's vision of compassion across boundaries. In this way, Luke 10:25–37 offers more than a theological statement but also a scriptural prompt for real-world transformation., urging faith communities to move beyond confessional silos and embody neighbourliness as an interreligious commitment to dignity, justice, and peace

In all, the Parable of the Good Samaritan challenges us to transcend boundaries of beliefs in pursuit of a common ethic of care. In Africa and beyond, this vision offers a timely and urgent invitation to practice interreligious neighbourliness, not as idealism, but as faithful action in a fractured world.

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