

Christians' Response to the COVID-19 Pandemic in Light of the Parable of the Good Samaritan (Luke 10:25-35)

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ABSTRACT

The outbreak of covid-19 in 2019 through 2021 distorted many human activities in Nigeria just like in many other countries around the world. As the cases of the virus increased, the Nigerian Government shut down the country to curb the spread of the deadly virus. Businesses, therefore, were closed for a long time. This affected many families negatively. In some parts of the country, vehicular movement was restricted. The predominant mentality during this time had shifted toward **personal safety**, with the belief that the best way to handle the spread of the virus was avoidance of human contact. This made some Christians neglect the work of charity and mercy. This article, therefore, explores how committed Christians, amid the Covid-19 confusion and sometimes inconsistent government advice, could build upon extraordinary evidence of neighbourliness during a crisis like the covid-19. This research uses a qualitative method based on library research to explore Jesus' teaching on Christians' response amid crisis, using the parable of the Good Samaritan in Luke 10:25-35 as a model. Adopting the social context of the parable, this article reflects on the moral lessons from the parable of Good Samaritan in Luke 10:25-35, to examine God's recommendation in situations where assistance would naturally mean endangering one's life. The moral lesson from the parable also confirms the implications for Christians today in responding to the economic and health crises caused by the ongoing Covid-19 pandemic in Nigeria. The conclusion drawn from this study

reveals that Christians should have faith in God who sustains their lives during the pandemic and take actions that are in line with their faith. Prosperous Christians should be willing and ready to bless other Christians who are suffering more. The Good Samaritan parable becomes a model of such priority of values

Key Words: Mercy, Grace and Love.

INTRODUCTION

All over the globe, 2020 and 2021 will be remembered in the annals of world history as the year's covid-19 and its variants, Delta and Omicron viruses, distorted all human plans and programs, making useless the wisdom of scientists, and challenging the faith of Christians. The pandemic caused social disruption by limiting social relations. This negated the regular social interaction, which is the bedrock of human society, especially in Africa.¹ According to World Health Organization, between February 2020 and May 2021, about 3,148 people died of covid-19 in Nigeria.² Social activities were grounded in most of 2020, and it was almost suicidal to visit homes and exchange social pleasantries in the traditional way of handshake and hugging. The economic sector was badly affected as the daily income earners could not continue with their businesses. Families across the country were faced not only with the health issue of Covid-19 but with how to survive during the lockdown as their businesses were closed. Many people sunk deeper into poverty.³ The super powers who naturally would have sent relief aid to Nigeria in the such event were humbled by the high mortality rate in their countries. As usually happens during moments of crisis, people do turn to religion for guidance and spiritual comfort during the pandemic,⁴ it was difficult this time as social gathering was a ban in most states of the Country. The predominant mentality during this time had shifted toward **personal safety**, with the belief that the best way to handle the spread of the virus was avoidance of human contact.⁵ Everybody during this

time remain almost indoors throughout the day, yet the vulnerable were dying of severe hunger. The fear of contracting the virus gradually gave way to indifference,⁶ where some Christians would not reach out to the poor, who were starving in their various houses. Being afraid of facing up to the reality of the disease, some Christians were paralyzed by the enormity of the pandemic. Seeing little point in implementing mitigation measures, there was submission with an inert passivity concerning biblical teaching on caring for one's neighbour.⁷ At most, when the big churches came out to assist, only members of their different congregations were assisted. Was that covid-19 another opportunity for churches to display the divisive spirit of Christianity? This article, therefore, explores how committed Christians, amid the Covid-19 confusion and sometimes inconsistent government advice, could build upon extraordinary evidence of neighbourliness during a crisis like the covid-19. This comes from the belief that both Christian theology and pastoral care complement medical science in providing useful contributions to those caught up in such crises. From an integrative approach of parable interpretation that combines ethical, historical, and psychological perspectives, the current research examines the response of Christians to the needy during the covid-19 pandemic with a typological reflection of the behaviours of the priest, Levite, and Samaritan in the good Samaritan parable (Luke 10:25-37). This work hinges on the theory of priority of value,⁸ which believes that when a behaviour has consequences promotive of one value but opposed to others that are also cherished by the person, then value priority is activated. It is in the presence of conflict that values are likely to be activated, to enter awareness, and to be used as guiding principles.⁹

Ever since the spread of covid-19 spread in the world, the pandemic has had a devastating impact on the functioning of societies, many sectors of economic life, as well as religious life and activities have been altered. Some of the attempted public responses to the pandemic have been humanitarian services and only a few of a religious nature or faith-based groups, as the Nigerian government plays politics with

human life. Different interest groups have then attempted to respond to the menace in their way, but the persistence and contagious nature of covid-19 has affected some Christians' understanding of the mission of the church in the world, and its contextual expressions and responses, especially in the face of the spread of covid-19. Historically speaking, the pandemic has almost permanently inserted itself into how the Christian life is lived and expressed in social settings. The covid-19 virus has altered all-together the traditional way of Christians' fellowship, from even the sitting arrangement in the church to how they respond to people who are in need. Thus, making it difficult to assist people in real need. Not only coronavirus patients, but vulnerable people most especially are now neglected. This is because a person may not feel sick, yet he/she can still be infected with covid-19. And when he/she is infected, even without knowing it, such a person can infect others. Therefore, as advised by the medical people, one of the ways one can love and protect his/her neighbour as he loves himself is by keeping physical distance from each other. Even when somebody is sick, it is not recommended that anyone should visit him or her, except if it is proven that the case is not of covid-19. In most cases, before a such proof is obtained, the damage is done. The social distance is now creating emotional distance, as the warmth of each other is now a threat to one another.

During the peak of the crisis across the world in 2020, meeting in groups was suicidal, except for those living together in the same house. Worship places were closed, and visitation to neighbours was strongly warned against. Therefore, making it is even more difficult for the church community, especially in Africa, who live as a community with no other meaningful way of caregiving than visitation, to rise to the needs of the covid-19 patients and other needy people in their communities. Social distance is still recommended as one of the safety measures to avoid spreading or contracting the deadly virus. Such a measure is not strange to biblical history. In the Jewish ceremonial law, social distance from persons with infectious diseases was recommended (Lev. 13:45-46). For priests, they were not to touch any

dead or ceremonial unclean person before entering the temple (Lev. 21:1-5; Hag. 2:13). In Haggai 2:13, the prophet asks a question if one touches a dead body, he stands defiled if his answer is in the affirmative. Yet the parable of Good Samaritan, describing the attitude of a priest and a Levite who passed by a robbery victim, whose state of living was not ascertained, describes them as uncaring. Despite the risk of touching an unclean person by priests and Levites, who were returning from Jerusalem after conducting a sacrifice to God, Jesus' conclusion in the parable shows that the religious functionaries failed to show mercy and love to the victim.

The global attack caused by the Covid-19 pandemic is such that requires Christians to reassess their faith in Jesus and obedience to his teaching of love, grace and mercy. It is an opportunity for churches to carry out the integral mission to which God has called them, the proclamation and demonstration of the gospel as seen in the practical life and work of Jesus. This time of fear and uncertainty is an opportunity to emulate the mercy and grace of the Good Samaritan towards the victim of a robbery in the parable. This paper seeks to explain the nature of the covid-19 pandemic and use the parable of Good Samaritan (Luke 10:25-35), as a model of mercy and sacrifice, to design appropriate Christian responses to the menace of the covid-19 pandemic. In addition to explaining the nature of the covid-19, this article also seeks to explore lessons that can be learnt and how the Christian community can most likely emerge resilient from the worst effects of this pandemic.

The choice of the parable as a model in this study arises from how the parable highlights the practical meaning of love, grace and mercy, portrayed in the attitude of the Samaritan, called by the Gospel writer of Luke "Good Samaritan." Love provides one with the power to place others' needs above one's life. Grace thus ignores the qualification of the person in need, and causes the helper to seek the highest good for the one who does not deserve anything good. And mercy sympathizes with the situation and is moved by compassion to do something to

alleviate the suffering of the person. This parable has a decisive contemporary resonance,¹⁰ especially at this time, covid-19 is still ravaging the lives of people. This, therefore, invites Christians to the moral demand of showing mercy instead of looking the other way.

Historical Context of Luke 10.25-35

In the remote context, the parable is situated within what is called the travel narrative, in which Jesus sets his focus towards Jerusalem (Luke 9:51). Throughout these chapters Jesus is moving from place to place while teaching. The divine intention of Jesus' mission is to go toward suffering; the demand for discipleship is to follow.¹¹ This is the trip that will finally end with his triumphal entry and crucifixion, marking the crescendo of Jesus' preaching.¹² The location of the parable is the road between Jerusalem and Jericho. Jerusalem was known as the city of worship with its magnificent temple, while Jericho was the residence of many people including priests and Levites. Therefore, it was expected that priests and Levites would travel regularly to Jerusalem to perform their temple duties. The 43.5 km road that connects these two cities descends some 3,300 feet through the desert and rocky country that could easily hide robbers or bandits.¹³ This made the road a great hideout for robbers. R. T. Kendall stresses that it was a treacherous journey,¹⁴ maybe because of the nature of the road. Lincoln Blumell notes that banditry was thoroughly entrenched in the Roman world, as it appeared at different times and in varying locations affecting both the rich and poor alike.¹⁵ According to B. C. Stiller, 'the road was notorious for its robberies and became more dangerous when Herod laid off forty thousand construction workers, leaving plenty of unemployed, some of whom turned thievery'.¹⁶ But Solomon M. Jacob observes that social banditry in the Roman Empire at that time was a primitive response to the social injustices the people faced since they tend to be located among the economically vulnerable and exploited.¹⁷ This to some extent reflects the situation of insecurity in some parts of Nigeria. According to Jacob, social bandits were peasants who, upon losing their ancestral land due to debt and taxation, joined local bands

who raid and steal for the sake of survival.¹⁸ Hence, due to the loss of ancestral land and homelessness, many people took on the criminal activities of banditry as the only option for seeking some justice against the Judean and Galilean elite.¹⁹

Therefore, the bandits were desperate, maybe because of the difficult economic situation of the time. Even if a man had little value, they would attack him for the value of his clothing alone.²⁰ This is similar to the situation in Nigeria where even common farmers are kidnapped for ransom. The man in the parable was beaten and his cloth collected from him (Luke 10:30), maybe he did not have any valuables, the robbers were therefore angered to strip him of his cloth. Alternatively, the robbers took all his valuables in addition to his clothes because of the value of cloth at that time. That would then place him among the rich. But since no mention is made of his chariot or donkey, it is possible that he was a poor man. Though the story does not state the season this happened, mentioning his cloth taken could suggest that the man was exposed also to the mercy of the weather. "A priest happened to be going down the same road, and when he saw the man, he passed by on the other side. So too, a Levite, when he came to the place and saw him, passed by on the other side" (10:31-32). C. L. Blomberg is the view that Levites and priests share one role as the negative model in contrast to the Samaritan providing the shocking counter-example.²¹

Jesus places in his story two well-known figures in society, a priest and a Levite. The priest possible was returning from Jerusalem to Jericho after performing his service in the temple at Jerusalem as earlier mentioned. In New Testament times, Levites were an order of cultic officials, inferior to the priests, but still a privileged group in society, responsible for the liturgy in the Temple and for policing the Temple.²² While both priests and Levites were from the tribe of Levi, the priests were also descendants of Aaron, the first High Priest. In Jesus' story, both the priest and Levite see the wounded man and passed by on the other side of the road. They see the man's need but choose not to help, which may be because of varying reasons mentioned later in the article.

Contextual Analysis of the Luke 10:25-35

The parable of the Good Samaritan points the moral finger to Jesus' teaching on mercy, grace and love. And nearly everything that the Bible and theology stand for is condensed in this story.²³ In the view of P. Vonck,²⁴ the parable of the Good Samaritan in Luke 10:25-37 is a single unit even though it was developed in two stages 10:25-28 and 29-37.7. But John Crossan holds that Luke 10:25-28 is not the original framework for the parable.²⁵ A. I. Ezeogameba sees the question of the lawyer and the parable of the Good Samaritan as belonging together in the mind of Luke, although the latter appears to follow as a kind of appendix, it is integral to the periscope and forms the climax.²⁶ In Luke 9:51-56, Jesus sends his disciples into the Samaritan region and the response was negative as the disciples were not allowed entry.²⁷ They were angry and wanted Jesus to call fire upon them. Additionally, this parable appears in the context of what Jesus has already said in Luke 10:21. The parable of the Good Samaritan, therefore, draws its contextual strength from this verse as it presents itself in two movements tied to questions: "What shall I do to inherit eternal life?" and "Who is my neighbour?" The Lukan account places the parable in the context of the debate between a lawyer and Jesus over inheriting eternal life.²⁸

Personalities and Situational Variables Relevant To Helping in the Parable

Priests serve as mediators between humans and God and perform sacrifices and other rituals. Levites assist the priests with these duties (Num. 3:6ff.). In Temple times, priests and Levites were assumed to be different from each other regarding ritual cleanness and uncleanness (Lev. 10:10).²⁹ More precisely, they were urged to maintain the natural state and to keep away from impurity, both of which belong, of any kind, to the disintegration of the body. As one of the central religious concerns and awareness in Judaism, impurity is a specifically nonstandard status to the extent to which a person loses his or her

status of ritual purity because of inappropriate bodily processes or sins.³⁰ Ordinarily, one would expect compassion from clergy and assume that the priest and Levite will help, but they passed by on the other side. Jesus does not tell why they failed to stop, because there was no justification for their lack of mercy. However, the priest and the Levites might have had reasons like:

Firstly, being tired. Perhaps they were on their way from performing their services. Jesus says that the priest is "going down that way" (verse 31) – "down" being in the direction of Jericho rather than Jerusalem. Priests conduct their duties at the temple for a while and then return home. Being tired is associated with a diffusion of responsibility or even a lack of willingness to help. They believed that since the victim was on the road where others pass, he will get help from another person. Secondly, perhaps they were disgusted by the gore and prefer not to dirty their hands and clothes. In that case, they are influenced by pluralistic ignorance. To practice Christianity, love, mercy, and grace must overshadow every other thing. Thirdly, perhaps they feared that the victim is dead. Touching a dead human body will render them unclean for seven days (Num. 19:11), and must go through a cleansing ceremony on the third and seventh days lest they be cut off from the assembly (Num. 19:13, 20). The law prohibiting a priest from touching a dead body is expressed in unequivocal terms - the priest "shall not go where there is a dead body; he shall not defile himself even for his father or mother" (Lev. 21:11). According to Leviticus 15 and Deuteronomy 23:11-12, the impurity can be imparted by certain sources of pollution, such as direct or indirect contact with a dead human body, blood (menstruation), sweat, scale diseases (i.e., leprosy), or any discharges from privy parts or sexual organs (e.g., excrement or urine). Importantly, the impurity can be even transmitted through the air from corpse contamination in certain extreme circumstances (Exo. 19:14-22).³¹

However, human impurity was not regarded as a sin but simply a natural phenomenon that was often related to the natural functioning of the body. Yet, if priests and Levites defiled themselves (e.g., contact with a dead body), they could neither enter the Temple's territory (courtyards) nor receive, give, and consume tithes. Specifically, even though priests had a responsibility to bury abandoned corpses, the defilement contaminated by corpses was still seen as the strongest impurity.³² Qumran records that death pollution makes impure the entire inner space of the house, i.e., whatever and whoever is in the house, and they shall maintain unclean for 7 days.³³ Hence, an unclean priest was prohibited from conducting temple duties until cleansed - although the law specifies certain priestly responsibilities that render the priest and his assistant temporarily unclean - so unclean priests and Levites were not uncommon (Num. 19:1-10a, esp. verse 7). Since the priest and the Levites lived by the temple, they had to consider the economic implication for their families. The difficulty feeding their family during the period of ceremonial uncleanliness, as they cannot receive any gift from anyone not collect tithe.

Fourthly, it is also possible that they were afraid, fearing that the man has been placed there to lure them into an ambush. The fallen man's wounds testify to the presence of brigands in the area, so an ambush is a very real possibility. The priest, Levite and Samaritan have reason to be concerned for their safety. This is associated with helping is problematic from a sociological perspective. They could be trapped by the bandits who believed that they saw in them things they can live on if caught. The Priest and Levite on the other hand are considering their safety and life more important than the victim on the road. Fifthly, perhaps they were overwhelmed at the prospect of transporting an injured man through the mountains and finding assistance for him in the next town. Many people would be walking on this kind of journey, which would make it difficult for them to transport the man. However, the priest, as a member of the upper classes, is almost certainly

mounted and therefore has the means to transport the man.³⁴ Jesus in the story says that the Samaritan puts him on his animal, which means that he too has the means to transport him. It is not clear from the story if the priest or the Levite were mounted or not. The cost of transporting the victim will be more if they had to carry him. Their reason therefore might be associated with economic scarcity. Applying the principle of moral disengagement, each of them was not feeling any sympathy for the victim. They might have even blamed him for suffering a just cause or being careless. Whatever their reasons were, Jesus' story highlights that observing the letter of the law falls short of loving God and neighbour, which was the standard that the lawyer outlined to qualify for salvation.

The Samaritan was Moved with Compassion (Luke 10: 33-35)

The Samaritans were descendants of Assyrians who settled in the former kingdoms of the land of Northern Israel in the Sargon time (cf., 2 Chro. 28, Ezra, 2 Kings 17, Neh.).³⁵ The Samaritans lived in an area south of Galilee and north of Judea, part of the old Northern Kingdom of Israel.³⁶ Jews considered Samaritans to be heretics, half-breeds, who got intermarried with pagans, ceremonially unclean people, unfit for God's service.³⁷ Jews hated them and avoided contact with Samaritans whenever possible, and consider them worse than pagans. After all, Samaritans were people of the promise who did not value the promise enough to keep themselves pure. Furthermore, Samaritans opposed the rebuilding of the temple (Ezra 4:2-5 and Neh. 2:19), and established a rival temple on Mount Gerizim instead of worshipping in Jerusalem (John 4:20-22). Around AD 6 and 9 at midnight during a Passover, some Samaritans had deliberately scattered bones in the Jerusalem Temple to desecrate it.³⁸ Hence, they were known for immoral behaviours. This shows the height of the Jews and Samaritans' hatred towards each other. While scholars have written in an attempt to delineate the circumstances of the Jews and Samaritans' "parting of the ways," some scholars now believe that this development was not the

result of a single occurrence, but rather a gradual historical process extending over several centuries.³⁹

However, according to the parable, “when he saw him” (verse 33b), he (Samaritan) had compassion for the victim. The Greek word for compassion is *splanchnizomai*, which means “to feel deeply or viscerally, to yearn, or have pity.”⁴⁰ According to Köster, *splanchnizomai* denotes human attitudes in three parables, as also shown in Matthew 18:27, where the lord pitied the servant. In Luke 15:20 the father has compassion on the prodigal, and in Luke 10:33, a passage under consideration, the Samaritan had compassion on the man who was beaten by robbers.⁴¹ In all these instances the term *splanchnizomai* reflects the totality of the divine mercy to which human compassion is a proper response.⁴² This is the first of this Samaritan's redemptive actions, he saw the wounded man. He did not avert his eyes. He did not see the wounded man as some sort of hopeless person, nor as his enemy. He sees a human in need and, he felt his pain. This is contrary to the attitude of the priest and Levite, who rather passed by the other side so that they would even see the situation of the wounded man. The stark contrast between characters (Jewish leaders versus Samaritans) points to the social and religious divisions of the time.

Moral Lesson of Luke 10:25-37 in the Context of Christian's Response to the Covid-19 Pandemic in Nigeria.

The parable exposes some facts about outward show of religion that the lawyer even became ashamed of his religious leaders. When Jesus allowed him to evaluate the attitude of the three characters in the story when he asked, "which of the three is the victim's neighbour?" (10:36), he said it was the one who helped, without mentioning that he was a Samaritan. The fact that a priest and a Levite went around the victim was a strong indictment against the indifference and hypocrisy of religious leaders. Donahue observes that the priest and the Levite are caught in a moral dilemma – to observe the Torah on cleanness or the

Torah on loving the neighbour.⁴³ Blomberg suggests three lessons that can be drawn from the parable:⁴⁴

First, Jesus through the parable of the Good Samaritan expands the lawyer's understanding of the noun "neighbour." He goes beyond land, race, social, cultural, and religious differences, and this perspective is new in Luke 10:25-37. The term "neighbour" is used twice by both the lawyer (verse 29) and Jesus (verse 36). For each of them, the comprehension of neighbour is different; the enormous distance between the lawyer's and Jesus' understanding of it becomes clear. Hence, in Luke 10:29 the question is focused on the object of love, the one who needs to be loved, while Luke 10:36 focuses on the subject of love, the one who loves. In this sense, it must be noted that more important than "Who is my neighbour?" are the questions "What does love mean to Christians?" and "What does neighbour mean to Christians today?" For Jesus, "love your neighbour" means loving even enemies (through merciful actions) and those who hate us (Luke 6:27-28; 33-36; 14:12-14), while to the lawyer love means loving someone who can become his neighbour. In this sense, according to Howard Marshall, the lawyer's question was not "'Who is my neighbour?'" but rather who belongs to the concept of "neighbour"?⁴⁵ Jesus rather shows in practice what neighbourliness means. That means, if one cannot respond kindly to the cries of people around him irrespective of whom they are, then he should forget about being a good neighbour or good follower of Christ.⁴⁶ Michael P. Knowles writes that the parable of the Good Samaritan concerns 'mercy' as the true measure of faithful conduct.⁴⁷

Second, from the example of the priest and Levite comes the principle that religious status or legalistic casuistry does not excuse love, grace and mercy. The priest and the Levite might have placed their religious purity over helping a person who was perhaps still alive. This to Jesus was gross hard-heartedness and selfishness. And walking on the other side of the road displays a deliberate intention not get involved attitude. The less they saw the man's condition, the less they would feel

obligated to help him. After all, he might be dead and then there would be nothing they could be obligated to do. The modern-day equivalent of this attitude is, "I do not want to get involved." The refusal of Christians to get involved in the life of the needy, the sick people or even to condole with the deceased families in the name of prevention from contracting covid-19 calls for a rethink. If Christians must live the teaching of showing love and mercy as shown in the parable of Good Samaritan, the attitude of not getting involved is under serious question.

Third, from the Samaritan, one learns that one must show compassion to those in dire need regardless of the social barriers that divide people and the risk of being attacked by desperate bandits. The Samaritan did not allow legalism to limit his love. He did not allow race or religious differences to cloud his heart of compassion. He did not allow inconvenience or risk to his safety to limit his sacrifice.

Fourth, from the man who was a victim of robbery emerges the lesson that even one's enemy is one's neighbour.⁴⁸ In Nigerian society, there are such factions, which range from religious factions to ethnic or cultural factions. Even among people of the same religious groups, there are also discriminations of one kind or the other.⁴⁹ Neighbourly care depends on which faction one belongs. Jesus in his teaching suggests that he is proclaiming a kingdom that embraces men and women rather than Jew and Gentile, Hausa or Yoruba, Igbo or Ibibio, Fulani or Tiv, etc, (Mark 11:15, Luke 10:30-35).

Fifth, social distancing does not mean Christians should not do what they should do to assist those who have been stricken with poverty arising from the impact of covid-19. The Good Samaritan sure was not a medical person. He did what he could by taking care of the immediate needs and handing over the victim to professionals. Instead of "looking the other way," Empathic concern for others and a focus on common humanity rather than the differences of victims is recommended by A. Bandura, C. Barbaranelli., G. V. Caprara, and C.

Pastorelli.⁵⁰ Matt Mathew adds that Jesus is not interested in ritual so much as praxis, not talking the law but walking the law. Stopping to help the man, for Jesus, was essential if one wants to follow the law, to "love your neighbour as yourself." Jesus' message here is clear: Christianity requires getting one's hands dirty, and some laws on the books undo the essential laws at the heart of the book.⁵¹ Christianity was born out of sacrifice and will also be lived by sacrifice.

Sixth, Christians need to empathize with those who are victims of covid-19 either directly or indirectly. But raising a good level of moral judgment in the hearts of some people given the nature of the current societies in Nigeria and the nature of covid-19 may be difficult. However, inducing empathy, and promoting perspective-taking,⁵² can improve moral judgment⁵³ and motivate people to act morally.⁵⁴

Conclusion

The influence of some situational and personality variables on helping behaviour in the context of the persistence of covid-19 was examined in an emergency suggested by the parable of the Good Samaritan. From a behavioural decision-making perspective, it is convincing to argue that the priest, Levite, and Samaritan in the parable took actions of either neglecting or helping the victim in a "completely" uncertain situation, where they could perceive the set of possible outcomes for each action, but had no information about the probabilities of these outcomes. Consequently, each of the actions was related to an undetermined expected value represented by the set of possible outcomes corresponding to that action. The decisions were influenced by their motivations and perceptions.⁵⁵ The rather disappointing attitude of the priest and the Levite, depicting some Christians' attitude towards the needy and sick people in the emergencies of covid19 pandemic suggests the need for a fresh perspective on possible predictors of helping. Therefore, the classical helping story in the

Judeo-Christian tradition, the parable of the Good Samaritan gives a good insight into Jesus's teaching on mercy, grace and love. Thus, inviting Christians to learn from the Samaritan. The paradigm of the Good Samaritan parable serves to demonstrate that the demand to love God has to be complemented by what God demands of the love of the neighbour.

The Samaritan is interpreted as responding with mercy, grace, and love to the situation, not as being preoccupied with the abstract ethical or organizational do's and don'ts of religion as the priest and Levite would seem to be.⁵⁶ A major intent of the parable presents the Samaritan as a religious and ethical example, but at the same time contrasts his type of religiosity with the more common conception of religiosity that the priest and Levite represent. Christians in Nigeria, therefore, are called to define their religiosity based on Jesus' teaching on mercy, grace and love modelled by the Good Samaritan as they relate to suffering from covid-19 and other related issues. The conclusion drawn from this study reveals that Christians should have faith in God who sustains their lives during the pandemic and take actions that are in line with their faith. Prosperous Christians should be willing and ready to bless other Christians who are suffering more.

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