



One Verb: Tipping

In an online sermon, Jason Micheli points out that Jesus utilized fourteen verbs (in an English translation) to sum up the Good Samaritan's actions in helping "a man who gets mule-jacked making the 17-mile-trek from Jerusalem down to Jericho and who's left for dead, naked, in a ditch on the side of the road."

Here is the passage. Count the verbs.

He comes near the man, sees him, is moved by him, goes to him, bandages him, pours oil and wine on him. Puts the man on his animal, brings him to an inn, takes care of him, takes out his money, gives it, asks the innkeeper to take care of him, says he will return and repay anything else.

I hesitate to even ask myself if, by this standard, I have ever actually been a Good Samaritan. How many verbs have I employed helping strangers? I can actually think of a few times when I've used up perhaps a half dozen, maybe more. But fourteen? I cannot recall even one incident. So I utilize one verb to *feel* guilty, maybe another to *berate* myself.

But maybe there is another way to chalk up verbs—less than fourteen at a time—in ministering to strangers. I'm reminded of an incident in the life of South African Archbishop Desmond Tutu.

We know that apartheid had a stranglehold on his country when he was growing up. Racism was a way of life. As a small child, he quickly became aware of how badly his people were treated based solely on the color of their skin.

Educational opportunities were severely limited for black children from elementary school to college. And even when they excelled in spite of their deficient education, they were not permitted to even interview with what was then known as the Academy of Achievement.

Employment was also painfully restrictive. His mother was a cook and housekeeper at a school

for the blind; his father was a teacher but, of course, only in a poor black segregated school.

Despite this blatant discrimination, however, his family was not sullen or angry. Indeed, there was both hope and happiness in his home. And there were infinite opportunities to help families who were worse off than they were. In fact, we should not assume that Good-Samaritan verbs are utilized only by those who can financially afford them.

But there was an incident in Tutu's childhood that cost a single verb and not a penny more—one so minute it might have been missed.

Tutu recalls one day when he was out walking with his mother when a white man, a priest named Trevor Huddleston, tipped his hat to her—the first time he had ever seen a white man pay this respect to a black woman. ...It is difficult to imagine what that one verb *tipped* meant in South Africa in the 1930s.

Tutu recalls one day when he was out walking with his mother when a white man, a priest named Trevor Huddleston, tipped his hat to her—the first time he had ever seen a white man pay this respect to a black woman. The incident made a profound impression on Tutu, teaching him that he need not accept discrimination and that religion could be a powerful tool for advocating racial equality.

It is difficult today to imagine what that one verb *tipped* meant in South Africa in the 1930s. It was particularly a British tradition involving men expressing respect or recognition, perhaps gratitude. A man of lower social class was to take his hat off when greeting a man of higher class, the upper-class man merely touching his hat in return. And, of course, polite men tipped their hats to ladies. But to tip a hat to a black cleaning woman in Apartheid South Africa? Such a courtesy was unheard of. So it was that the boy Desmond never forgot that a white man of status tipped his hat to his own beloved black mother.

One verb: *tipping* a tender mercy. □

—Ruth Tucker