

Sermon Pentecost 5C 10 July 2022
Luke 10:25-37
St Peter's Lutheran Church, Elizabeth
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Grace and peace to you from God: Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, one God, now and forever. Amen.

Saints, today we're blessed to revisit *The Parable of the Good Samaritan* and hear Jesus' closing words, 'Go and do likewise.' Let's pray:

This parable challenges pastors to delicately balance and distinguish law and gospel. Pastors can be accused of being legalistic and reducing everything to moralism, if they talk about practical expressions of grace. Yet, Jesus is a great practical preacher. He frequently gives direction to seekers, rebukes offenders, and highlights practical truths. Jesus repeatedly tells us how critical it is for love to shine in the Christian's character. In the parable of the good Samaritan, Jesus presents a practical scenario in response to the question, "What must I do to inherit eternal life?"

It's important to remember that what the law demands of us the gospel produces in us. The law tells us what we ought to be and the gospel enables us to live accordingly. Hence, although our Saviour's teaching is eminently practical, it's always evangelical. Jesus expounds the law to protect us, guide us, and direct us to his gospel of love. This achieves two things simultaneously. On the one hand, Jesus slays the notion of self-righteousness or salvation based on our works; and, on the other hand, he encourages Christians to strive for holiness - that character which only his grace can shape. The love of our neighbour isn't a condition of salvation; rather, a fruit of it. I dare not speak of obedience to the law as the road to heaven, but faith working in love as the way to follow Jesus.

One simple observation to make is that **THE WORLD IS FULL OF AFFLICTION.**

And it's often the case that the sufferer isn't at fault. No-one could blame the poor victim in today's parable. He was going about his business as we do day by day, when he was mugged, fleeced, and beaten near to death. The man isn't to blame for lying on the roadside beaten and bruised. He suffers from no fault of his own and should expect compassion from his fellow countrymen. Yet, his distress is increased by the wickedness of others.

The poor bloke on the road to Jericho was the victim of the thieves who attacked him and left him to die. Man is man's worst enemy. If all people sought peace, the wildest beast in the world would be tamed. If evil were to be extinguished from our hearts, most of the ills of life would cease. But the drunkard's wastefulness and brutality, the proud man's scorn, the oppressor's cruelty, the slanderer's lie, the scam artist's con, the heartless man's grinding of the poor into the dirt, indeed, the dictator's hardened heart (think of the current conflict in Ukraine)— are the roots of the weeds which threaten to choke out life on earth. If sin could be vanquished, as it shall be when Christ returns, much of human sorrow would be softened.

Another observation worth considering is that **THERE ARE MANY WHO NEVER RELIEVE AFFLICTION**. Jesus tells us of two men who “passed by on the other side.” Both should have felt compelled to help the man because they were men of the cloth. One was a priest, likely on his way home from Jerusalem down to Jericho, after completing his month's service in the temple. He'd been leading the worship of the Most High God, serving amidst sacrifices, psalms and prayers, and yet, he'd not learnt how to sacrifice himself. He'd often proclaimed, “You shall love your neighbour as yourself,” but failed when tested himself.

The Levite had also participated in holy work, and yet, his heart was hardened. Sadly, these men had been near to God, but weren't like him.

Furthermore, these two men were bound by their profession to help this man. All rabbis, priests, pastors, nuns, are called to care for God's lambs and show compassion for all people in their struggles. If there should be compassion towards people found anywhere, it should be in the heart of those called and ordained to the office of the ministry. The priest and the Levite seemed to think that it only pertained to them when they were “clocked on.”

Dear Saints, we must all guard ourselves against such separation. We spend Sunday after Sunday worshipping God, hearing of God's love for us in the ultimate sacrifice of his only Son, Jesus, partaking of his precious Body and Blood, all of which brings Jesus closer to us. God offers himself to us that our hearts of stone might soften, fill with love and compassion to overflowing, and our lives transform and be energised for service to our neighbours whomever they might be. All Christians are called into the priesthood of all believers.

Thirdly, we see that **THE SAMARITAN IS A MODEL FOR THOSE WHO DO HELP THE AFFLICTED**. To us, it may seem unremarkable that the helper was a Samaritan. The parable doesn't say that the man attacked was a Jew but it's a safe assumption to infer. Jews and Samaritans hated each other. Most Jews would strive to avoid having any contact with Samaritans. Last week we heard the apostle, Paul say, 'So then, whenever we have an opportunity, let us work for the good of all, and especially for those of the family of faith' (Galatians 6:10). This injured man wasn't of the household of faith as far as the Samaritan was concerned, but he was one of the "all." The Jew was a man - a wounded, bleeding, dying man, and the Samaritan acted for his good. We all breathe the same air and we all bleed the same, irrespective of culture, colour, or creed.

So, the Samaritan exists as a mirror and model to us all. He didn't cease caring until his charge recovered. He followed through with his kindness. The Samaritan, 'came near him; and when he saw him, he was moved with pity. He went to him and bandaged his wounds, having poured oil and wine on them. Then he put him on his own animal, brought him to an inn, and took care of him. The next day he took out two denarii, gave them to the innkeeper, and said, "Take care of him; and when I come back, I will repay you whatever more you spend"' (Luke 10:33-35).

The Samaritan helped his poor neighbour with great tenderness and care. He was like a loving mother to her sick child. He gave all that he possessed and saw it through to the end. He did the best he could. Saints, let everything we do for others always be done nobly. Let's imitate this good Samaritan and treat the poor, the sick, the homeless with sweet, loving, and personally costly, tenderness. But we know it takes more than just our kindness, don't we.

The final thing to say is, **JESUS IS THE ANSWER TO ALL AFFLICTION**. The parable of the good Samaritan is a picture of a kind-hearted man who cared for his neighbour in need. But the most loving, generous, kind-hearted man who ever lived (and still lives) is the Son of Man, Jesus Christ, and no-one ever cares for sick and suffering souls as much as he. Therefore, if we celebrate the good Samaritan's deed, how much more should we extol and revere our blessed Saviour, Jesus.

Our Lord Jesus Christ suffered the worst thing imaginable. He became sin for us. Why? Because, '[We] were dead through the trespasses and sins in which [we] once lived, following the course of this world, following the ruler of the power of the air, the spirit that is now at work among those who are disobedient. All of us once lived among them in the passions of our flesh, following the desires of flesh and senses, and we were by nature children of wrath, like everyone else' (Ephesians 2:1-3). Out of overwhelming compassion and his infinite love, Jesus brought us into his Body, the Church, to find rest and healing, to feed on his bounty. It was wondrous love which moved Jesus' heart when he found us drowning in sin, and bent over us to lift us out of it.

Jesus came down from heaven, via Bethlehem's manger, down to the place of our sin and misery. He took on our flesh to sympathise with us. His infinite compassion drove him to earth with no other intention than that of saving humanity.

In the man, Jesus, we see the noblest form of compassion manifested. Jesus was attacked by thieves: he was wounded, he was stripped, not half dead but crucified and laid in the grave. He was slain for our sake because it wasn't possible for him to rescue us from the misery of sin that beset us, except by suffering that misery himself; and he suffered it that we might live.

Now, Jesus walks with us and remains with us even to the end of the age. He's with us now, blessing us, giving his blood to heal our wounds. You, Christ's people, are saved; not because of anything you've done; rather, the Great Samaritan, Jesus Christ, has seen you, rescued you, redeemed you, and brought you into his Church, because he loves you. JESUS LOVES YOU! Jesus' love - real love, shows no partiality, knows no fear, sees everyone as a neighbour, and expects nothing in return. Divine Spirit, God everlasting, help us all to be like Jesus, that we may, 'Go and do likewise.' Amen.

And the peace of God, which surpasses all understanding, will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus. Amen.