

The Thirteenth Sunday after Trinity Sunday
St. Luke 10:23-37
August 26th, 2018
Sts. Peter & Paul Evangelical Lutheran Church, UAC
Simpsonville, SC
Pastor Jerald Dulas

Who Is My Neighbor?

In Nomine Iesu!

In the Name of the Father and of the + Son and of the Holy Ghost. Amen.

Prayer in Pulpit before Sermon:

O Lord, send out Thy Light and Thy Truth, let them lead us. O Lord, open Thou my lips, that my mouth may show forth Thy praise. O Lord, graciously preserve me, lest that by any means, when I have preached to others, I myself should be rejected. Amen.

Grace, mercy, and peace be to you from God our Father and from our Lord and Savior + Jesus Christ. Amen.

The beginning of the Gospel from the Evangelist St. Luke, at first glance, seems to be just background information before we get into the heart of the text. But as is usually the case, the introduction of the Gospel clarifies the rest of the Gospel. The Lord + Jesus tells His disciples that they are blessed because they have seen the things that the prophets and kings of the past had longed to see while they were alive, but they could only see them by faith. Whereas, the disciples, and all those who lived at the time of our Lord + Jesus, saw those things with their very own eyes, and believed on the Lord + Jesus. It is important to remember, contextually, that the seventy disciples had just returned from the work that the Lord sent them to do; to cast out demons, heal the sick and preach the Gospel of our Lord + Jesus Christ. Many had believed on the Lord + Jesus because of their work, and they rejoiced because of it.

The certain lawyer from the rest of the Gospel is not like these other people who saw and believed. He sees the signs and wonders, and does not believe. We are told that by St. Luke that he desired to test the Lord. He needed more proof. What the Lord + Jesus was preaching, did not register with him. The biggest problem was that he refused to see his sin. The people that the disciples, and our Lord + Jesus, had been preaching to felt the sting of the Law, and repented and believed on the Lord + Jesus for forgiveness. This certain lawyer believed himself to be righteous according to the Ten Commandments. As a lawyer—someone who studied the Law of God—he thought he knew the Law well enough. Therefore, he thought he could test the Lord with questions about the Law. Which one was the greatest? A tricky question if ever there was one.

But, our Lord answers the question with a question; seeing the deception hidden within the lawyer's query. He asks, "What does all your studying of the Law tell you?" Well, it told him the right answer if one was to be saved by the Law. But it did not tell him who his neighbor was. The certain lawyer thought he knew the answer; he thought he knew who his neighbor was, and wanted to justify himself. What that means is that because he thought he knew who his neighbor was—the people that he liked and got along with, which is what we often think about who our neighbor is—he would be right in his assessment of his keeping the Law.

Who was his neighbor? Who was he to treat as his neighbor? Not just the people he liked and got along with, but also the people who he hated, and hated him. We learn this in catechesis, "Who is

my neighbor?" Your neighbor is everybody, whether they are good or evil, whether they like you or dislike you, whether you like them or not. The Law of God to love our neighbor as ourselves applies to everyone. We do not get to pick and choose who our neighbor is; who we love as ourselves. The Law requires us to love all mankind. Which reminds me of a bumper sticker I saw this past week: it was a quote by the Dalai Lama which said, "My religion is simple; it is kindness." To which I turned to Tanya and said, "My religion is kindness, too. It's just that sometimes kindness requires a swift kick to the pants." My point being that love sometimes requires speaking out against evil and corruption. It requires speaking out against sin and sinful behaviors.

Love desires that all men be saved. People cannot be saved if they do not believe on the Lord + Jesus. But, people cannot believe on the Lord + Jesus as their Savior if they believe that they can save themselves by their doing and striving. They cannot be saved if they believe that their own keeping of the Law is sufficient enough, just like this certain lawyer from the Gospel. These people must be shown their error. And, this is not done by ignoring them, or letting them continue in their sin. We love them enough to guard and protect them from the false lies of the devil, the world and their flesh. Just as we love ourselves enough to not listen to the enemies lies, but listen to our Lord + Jesus and His holy Word alone. Therefore, our Lord loves this certain lawyer enough to tell him a parable; a parable that would show him that he does not love his neighbor as himself.

Now, this parable is full of spiritual meanings. It short the parable is about how the only truly Good Samaritan is the Lord + Jesus. This is what the disciples and all those who believed the Lord's Word had already seen and believed. They believed that righteousness enough to be saved was found only in the Lord + Jesus. And this parable is a picture in words of our Lord's plan of salvation.

The man in the parable was going from Jerusalem to Jericho. Jerusalem is always associated with the place where God dwells. It is associated with paradise. Jericho, on the other hand, is associated with the world and the place of evil. It was the first city that the Israelites encountered when they began their conquest of Canaan. It was the embodiment of the power and corruption that the land of Canaan possessed. It was the stronghold of Canaan. Nobody could defeat it. So, this man in the parable is a depiction of Adam, who through sin chose to leave the paradise of the Garden of Eden, and being continually in God's presence to dwell in the place of sin and corruption.

In this place of sin and corruption the man is attacked by thieves who take his clothes and all his possession and leave him for dead. The thieves are the devil, the world, and our corrupt sinful flesh. On account of sin, we have lost the garment of God's perfect image. We were left for dead and naked by our enemies; wounded and bloodied by the consequences of our sin and sin in this life.

Both a priest and a Levite see the wounded man and pass by on the other side. These men represent the Law of God and our good works. We will get no salvation through them. The Law and works leave us just as bruised and battered and half dead as we were from when we first knew the consequences of sin. There is no salvation in our works. The certain lawyer thought his salvation was in his keeping of the law, but our Lord roots out this notion and shows him just how perfect his keeping of the Law must be in order for him to be saved by his works. Unfortunately for him, there is no salvation to be found in our keeping of the Law and our good works. They just leave us still dead.

But, this is where our Lord + Jesus finds us. He finds us, through the preaching of the Gospel, beaten and left for dead by our sins. He pours onto our wounds wine and oil, that is, He preaches into our ears the Gospel of salvation in His works and merits alone, and gives us the Blessed sacraments to create faith in us through the work of the Holy Ghost. The Word and the Sacraments bandages our wounds caused by sin, and heals us of our infirmities and gives us forgiveness, life and salvation.

He sets us on His own animal and brings us to the inn, that is, the Church. Here in this inn of the Church, we are cared for by the Innkeeper, the man of God who has been called and ordained by the Lord to watch over our souls and give an account of his ministering on the Last Day. The Innkeeper, that is, the pastor cares for our souls until the Lord returns again on the Last Day. The pastor is even given two coins—denarii—to care for us. The pastor is given the means of grace to continue to give you healing and strength through God's Word. Through the means of grace, the pastor forgives you of your sins, and reminds you of the promises of God. He leads you out of trusting in your works, to believing on and trusting in the Lord + Jesus for your salvation.

From the pastor, in the Church of God, we learn to not look at our keeping of the Law, but to our Lord's perfect keeping of the Law for us. And we learn to look to the sacrifice that our Lord made for us on the tree of the holy cross, where He took our place and our punishment. He was beaten and scourged and stripped naked and hung on the tree of the cross until He was dead, so that we might have life and salvation.

We certainly fail miserably in treating everyone as our neighbor. We fail daily in loving our neighbor as ourselves seeking to bring people into the Church through the Law and the Gospel. But, our Lord + Jesus Christ reminds us that we have seen the things that the prophets and kings of old wished to see. We see them by faith through believing in the testimony of Holy Scripture. When He returns on the Last Day, we will see Him face to face and rejoice and give thanks that our Lord has rescued us from sin, death, and the power of the devil, so that we can live with Him and all the saints in Heaven for all eternity. For our true Neighbor, our Lord + Jesus Christ, has had mercy on us, and has given us forgiveness and salvation, who were left for dead by our sins and trespasses. In the Name of our Lord + Jesus Christ. Amen.

Prayer in Pulpit after Sermon:

Not unto us, O Lord, not unto us, but unto Thy Name give glory! I will extol Thee, O Lord, and I will praise Thy Name forever and ever. Amen.

The Votum:

The peace of God, which passeth all understanding, keep your hearts and minds through Christ Jesus. Amen.

Soli Deo Gloria!