

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

Today our message centers around our Gospel reading for today and the parable of the Good Samaritan.

- It is an account that we are probably all very familiar with and have heard many times.
- But this morning I would invite you to take a fresh look at this parable by putting yourself in the story.
- We have on occasion done this before with other accounts.

I invite you this morning to look at the parable of the Good Samaritan from 2 perspectives.

- Who are you in this account?
- And.....who do you want to be in this account?
- They may not be the same person.

As we look at this parable of the Good Samaritan, I think it is both good and important that we first look at what was the dialogue, what was taking place that led Jesus to tell this parable.

- And as we do that, we actually introduce the first person in the account for you to consider.

Our account begins as we are told.....

- A lawyer, that would be one of the Pharisees, stood up to “put Jesus to the test.”
- The only other time we hear that language, that phrase, “put Jesus to the test,” is in the devil’s temptation of Jesus in the wilderness.

He, the lawyer, asked Jesus this question.....

- “Teacher, what must I do to inherit eternal life?”

Notice the emphasis here.....

- Focused on himself.
-What must I DO?
- The focus is shifted from the inheritance God gives to us to the deeds we do.
- It really becomes a focus on righteousness through the law as compared to a proper interpretation of righteousness through faith.
- A focus away from Jesus to self and earning salvation.

Jesus answered the man with a question.

- “What is written in the Law?”

And the man gives us a good and right answer.

- “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 neighbor as yourself.”
- Good words. Jesus even affirms this to be the right answer.

Jesus said, “You answered correctly. Do this and you will live.”

- The debate should be over.
- Good discussion.....good conclusion.....move on.

But the lawyer is not content with Jesus’ answer of love.

- He wants to assert his own righteousness and his claim that he deserves eternal life.

The lawyer now becomes defensive.

- He wants to justify himself.
- But he also realizes he has put himself in a corner.
- An unsupportable position.

So he tries to deflect the focus away from himself.

He asks, “Who is my neighbor?”

- And Jesus tells him this parable of the Good Samaritan.

So, in accordance with our focus this morning, I stop and ask.....

- Are you this man in this account?
- Do you want to be this man in this account?

The answer to the second question, I think is a quick “no.”

- We don’t want to be that guy!

But what about the first question.....are you that guy?

- The quick answer to that one also is probably a “no.”

But, let's look a little closer.

- The man was putting Jesus to the test.
- Do you ever put Jesus to the test?
- “Jesus, if you will do this for me, I will follow You. I will give more of my time and money to the church.”
- Jesus.....”Just help me through this and I will be your’s.”
- All of this versus following Jesus in all circumstances and trusting in His love and wisdom.....
- And in all the troubles and trials.....seeing Jesus, even when we don't understand it or it doesn't make sense.

The man also considered himself wise—and was confident in his own point of view.

- He focused in on himself.
- Do we ever have things going our way and think we have it all together? We are in control.
- Even putting ourselves on a pedestal of doing better than others.
- Even being selective in who our neighbor is?
- Thinking it, and acting it, without saying it.....”I'm a better Christian than you.”

And the man even thought he could earn salvation.

- Do we sometimes do that?
- I am in church today.....so everything should go my way this week.
- Or, at the other extreme, as we think about end of life.....not certain that salvation is ours; because we think we have to earn it or haven't done enough.
- Or, at the other end of the spectrum to this.....I'll be okay.....I have lived a good life.

Even thinking or saying, “I deserve eternal life.”

- As the lawyer did, trying to justify himself.

Unfortunately, there are a lot of traits that we see in the lawyer that can creep into our lives also.

- Jesus, understanding all this, went on then to tell the lawyer, and us, the parable of the Good Samaritan.

Let's continue on with the parable itself.

- There is much we can learn and other characters to consider.
- But as we do, please keep the lawyer in mind as we consider our identity to all the people in our Gospel reading.

Next, I would not like to focus in on the victim found along the road, but rather look at the first 2 that passed by the victim.

- I group them together as one person to consider.
- Their actions are very similar.

First, we are told a priest was going down the road and when he saw the hurt man.....passed by on the other side.

- Likewise, a Levite, when he came to the place and saw the man, passed by on the other side.
- Could you be, are you, the priest or the Levite?

Let's consider who these men are.

- They are both church attendees, worshippers in the church.
- They would have been coming back from serving in the temple.
- The priest.....equivalent to a pastor.
- The Levite.....a laborer with duties to perform in the temple. A lay person.

They both passed by on the other side.

- They did not want to get involved.
- They were afraid they might get caught up in what happened to the other man.

They looked the part.

- They should have known better. They had been in church.
- They were even from the right family.
- They were born into it. They were Jews. Even from the tribe of Levi.
- But these 2 are models of the indifferent, unmerciful, and loveless.

Could you be either of these 2 people?

- Look the part.
- Put on a good front.
- But step to the other side of the road and keep going.
- Come to church, but then be silent, moving to the other side of the road, so to speak.

Unfortunately, there are also a lot of the traits in these 2 men that can creep into our lives also.

- Please keep them in mind, but, again, let's move on.

Now we consider the injured man left for dead along the road.

- Interesting that in the original Greek this man is not ethnically defined.
- He could be anyone.

We are told the man fell to robbers.

- They stripped him of his clothes and took all he had.
- Beat him and departed.
- Left him with nothing and defenseless.
- We are told he was “half dead.”

Could you be this man?

- Does this represent each of us spiritually?
- Robbed of life.
- Stripped of everything that we have.
- Nothing to offer. Nothing to show for ourselves.
- Quite the opposite of looking good on the outside and justifying ourselves.

And laying there along the road.

- Unable to do anything on our own and being dependent on someone else for rescue and life.

Yes, in fact, I would argue that is us.

- And I would also argue, we could be any of the people we have considered in the story so far.....
- This man represents all of who we are and what we do on our own. And as a result, we are the man laying, helpless along the road.
- In our fallen, sinful, broken, helpless state this is us.
- It is a cumulation of who we are, and what we spiritually represent on our own.

But I have good news for you.

- There is one more person in the parable.
- The Good Samaritan. And this is Jesus.

Look at the cover of your bulletin.

- We are told that when He saw him, He had compassion on him.
- He went to him and bound up his wounds.

- And then He put the man on his own animal and brought him to the inn and took care of him.
- It is Jesus who picks you up and cares for you. He even carries you.

And the Good Samaritan paid the price in full for him.

- And even made provisions for the future and said He would come back.

Do you see Jesus in this?

- Do you see yourself as the fallen man along the road, having done one way or another, at one time or another, all the things that we have talked about and even shook our heads at.
- But also, do you see what Jesus has all done for you?

Probably at first glance, considering all the people in this account, we would not want to be the fallen man.

- But we are.
- And what happened, how he was cared for, turns out to be very good.
- Jesus has come, cared for you, brought you back to life, and continues to show you mercy, love, and life.

You know, we have many, many members hurting in many ways.

- Physically for sure, but not just physically.
- Each of our circumstances may not be the same, or exactly like any of the characters in the story.
- But we can picture ourselves as desolate along the road.

But rejoice. Yes, rejoice even in your brokenness and hurting.

- Jesus comes and takes full care of you.
- Turn to Him. Allow Him to help and care for you.
- He will. He wants to.

Resist the temptation to turn in on yourself, justify yourself, and wallow in your pity and suffering.

- You can be certain that Christ sees you, He hears you, He cares for you, and He stops and He helps.
- He doesn't go to the other side of the road, He crosses the road to be your Good Shepherd.

So, I come back to where we started in this parable.

- Who are you?
- I think we have established that you are the fallen one, left for dead.
- Which is really all the characters in the story, with the exception of the Good Samaritan, all summarized together.

But then we see the great reversal that life and salvation can come to us no matter who we are.

- Without Christ woe to that man left for dead.
- But in Christ, we are totally lifted and made whole.

Which then leaves, the only other question we asked this morning to answer.

- Who do you want to be?
- In the end, I suspect, the man lifted up and cared for?

And perhaps, if you are allowed, the Good Samaritan.

- We, of course, can not be Jesus; but we can be like Jesus.
- For the fallen man, he was made whole when Christ became part of him.
- When Christ dwells in us.

And then we can go into the world and do likewise.

- We are the man left for dead; but because of Christ, in Christ, we can be like Christ.
- We can help others that are hurting, physically and spiritually.

In fact, that is how our account ends.

- Jesus asked the man, who proved to be the neighbor?
- The lawyer said, the one who showed mercy.
- And Jesus said to him, “You go and do likewise.”

True compassion knows no bounds.

- Jesus for you and you likewise for others.
- Receiving and giving love.
- Amen.

(Please stand) And now, may the peace of God, which passes all understanding, keep your hearts and minds in Christ Jesus. Amen.

Having heard the Word of God we now prepare our hearts and minds to confess together the words of the Nicene Creed as found on page 206 in your hymnal.