

February 21 2021

The Good Samaritan?

Luke 10: 25-42

The First Sunday of Lent

Children's Message: This morning Jesus tells the story of the Good Samaritan. If you and I were there as Jesus told this story, we would most likely shake our heads and say WHAT. A good Samaritan was a hard thing to believe back then. Especially if you were Jewish. That would be like me telling you about Sasquatch riding a unicorn to church last Sunday. Too bad you missed it.

Jews and Samaritan did not get along in Jesus's day. They hated each other. So for Jesus to tell a story about a Samaritan saving a Jew would be unheard of. Jesus tells the story to teach a lesson. Most of His stories do contain a deep lesson. Not all Samaritans are bad and not all Jews are good. The priest and Levite, who were Jewish, did not help this injured person. Yet his sworn enemy had mercy and compassion on him and saved him. It is always best not to judge people. God can use anyone to let His grace shine in our world.

The Samaritan looked at the man in need as a person. He did not look upon him as a Jew or as his enemy. The Samaritan connected with the injured man at a deeper human level. As another human being and one in great need of help. This is the example that Jesus is trying to teach those listening to His story. We are all human beings. We are all created by the same God and we are all His children.

The Good Samaritan parable is beautifully explained in another story told by Jesus in Mathew 5-44, "But I say to you, love your enemies, bless those who curse you, do good to those who hate you and pray for those who spitefully use you and persecute you." This good advice. I am not saying it is easy. If it was everyone would be doing it and not just a few. Jesus is telling us to look at everyone with new eyes. See all people as your neighbor. Try to love everyone and make no enemies. We can do this with God's help, we just need to ask for it when we speak to Him in prayer. Remember that we are all the children of the same heavenly Father.

Adult's Message: This is a beautiful story that we have all heard many times. It has many layers of meaning and allegory that were important at the time of its telling. Yet it is one of those stories that cuts across time and space and still speaks to us today.

Most of the time we ignore the lawyer in this story and his question. Most of the time we jump right into the story. However we should stop and reflect on his question. He is asking the perfect question to the only One who has the answer. That being Jesus. The same Jesus who is the door and the narrow path. The story that follows is about love for others and God's love for us. The story reminds us that people are more important than ideas or concepts of love. The virtue of mercy and compassion in the story are actions. The Samaritan was the only one who acted. Not the priest and Levite. Their hearts may also have been filled with love, but it stayed there.

The story works on three levels. The story of the Good Samaritan tells our salvation history as God's people, our own individual salvation story and the Lord's return.

To understand how the story explains our salvation history we need to understand some geography. To someone listening as Jesus tells the story it made more sense. Jerusalem in Hebrew means the city of peace. It is built on a high hill. Jerusalem would be seen as paradise or heaven. Jericho on the other hand is the lowest city on earth. It is one thousand meters below sea level. Jericho would be seen as hell. The story tells of our journey from paradise to hell. Some scholars contend that the attackers in the story represent temptation and demons. However, Jesus is the Good Samaritan who saves us from sin and our fall from paradise. The Inn is the church and our place to recover and regain our strength to heal. Jesus saved this poor traveler who represents you and I. In the story the Samaritan plans to return to the Inn and settle the traveler's debts. Our Lord's resurrection paid our debts and settled our accounts. Our sins were wiped clean on Easter Sunday morning. Some have said that the oil and wine used to heal the traveler's wounds have dual meanings. There are antiseptic chemicals in wine including the pigments malvoside and oenoside. They are more plentiful in red wine. Over time, the oil and wine have come to represent the Holy Spirit and the blood of Christ in the Eucharist. The practical meaning always comes first and then later we create the spiritual meaning.

Another element I found interesting was that Jesus is represented as the Good Samaritan. Samaritans were the hated enemy of the Jews. Jesus is the hated enemy of the Sadducees and Pharisees. They would

later crucify Him on the cross. Yet He still offered them salvation through His resurrection.

For us individually, the story also speaks of our own individual struggles with temptation and sin. There will be times when we will need to rely on Jesus to pick us up and dust us off and send us back out there into the game of life. Remember that we always have Jesus as a traveling companion on our journeys in life. We are not alone. Also take comfort in knowing that our debts have been paid. Sin does not have control or the final say in the matter. Our God is a forgiving One. That is grace at work.

Let's take the story closer to home. In the story Jesus is a caregiver. He is gravely concerned about the physical health of the injured man. God is still concerned about our physical well-being. We are spirits having an earthly experience in a human body. We have just come through and are still in the year of the Good Samaritans or caregivers. Those who work the front lines of health care have been our Good Samaritans. We are living the Good Samaritan story right now in this very moment. They are graces provided to us by God. So support our caregivers and pray for them and encourage them whenever you can. They do what they do out of love and commitment. Most importantly they are fearless as the Samaritan was in the story. Putting the needs of others before themselves. God Bless and stay warm Pastor D