

The Fifth Sunday after Pentecost

Luke 10:25 – 37

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(transcribed from his sermon on Sunday July 10th, 2022)

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

It is time to be redundant, redundant. We are on a repeat, repeat. You see what I did there? I was redundant with redundant and repeated repeat. Okay. You guys aren't laughing today. Today we talk about the Parable of the Good Samaritan, which I have actually already preached on once before here at this church.

We are in rerun mode. When I watch a movie or show a second time, there is always something I pick up a little different that I miss the first time. We're going to dive into the story and see what we can learn anew.

Full disclosure for you. I hate this sermon. I really do, because this sermon just kind of hits me right in the heart. I don't particularly like that. I don't like what this passage is telling me to do. Because of that, I hate it. I hate its message. Thus, I'm all the more passionate about it and preaching it, because it's pretty much against me.

Let's dive into this. Here's the story. We've got a man who comes and he wants to know from Jesus, what can I do, me, myself, what can I do to earn eternal life? Well, if it's up to you, that means keep the law. What is the law? To love God and love your neighbor. The debate has always been – who really is my neighbor?

If we can get some sort of loophole there, then just maybe we might have a chance. Spoiler, not really. You still have no chance. You're born sinful. Even the person that I love most, I still sin against regularly. You can ask Rachell and my children. Just getting the neighbor pool narrowed down isn't exactly helpful, but that's maybe the chance.

We have to explain who the neighbor is, who we're to love and Jesus, in answering this, tells this story. A Jewish man is going down the road from Jericho to Jerusalem and he is attacked by robbers, he's beaten, left naked and half dead. I think I used the joke from Princess Bride last year. He's not all the way dead, just half dead, mostly dead. We're not using that joke this time. A priest and a Levite, they walk by on the other side, a Samaritan stops and helps the man. Tends him, heals him and leaves him in the care of an inn and innkeeper. "Who is the neighbor?" Jesus asked. It's the one showing mercy. That is how we are to love.

Jesus says, go and do likewise. That's it. Right? Pretty simple. Nothing else to talk about? I could say Amen and we would be good, I think. There's a few things maybe, maybe we might want to impact. That's where I start to get really uncomfortable.

First, it's helpful to know what exactly is a Samaritan?

A Samaritan are people from the region of Samaria. It's not so much where they're from, but their history, that is an issue. We're about to go through thousands of years of history. So buckle up. Put on your seat belts. We're getting in the DeLorean. We're going back in time. Israel is one nation under King David and Solomon.

He dies, his sons splits it. 10 tribes go north two tribes, go south. The north; Israel, the south; Judah. Israel immediately goes right off the rails. They start worshipping other gods. They fall away completely. Judah stays faithful... for a little while. Then they have their own problems. In 721 BC, after years of siege, the northern kingdom falls.

It falls to the invading army Assyria. Assyria has a practice where, when they took over an area, they took most of the people and put them in the rest of their empire. Then they'd take people that they'd conquered in other regions and put them there in the land they'd just conquered.

It was their way of breaking up the culture and religious system and imposing their own will on the area. That's what became the Samaritans. The 10 tribes were basically no more of that northern kingdom. You have this mixed breed, forced to intermarry with all these people of all these other religions and cultures from all over the Assyrian empire.

So that's who the Samaritans are. They're half breeds, they're perverts of the faith. In fact, it was their teachings and practices that would continue to lead their southern neighbors, Judah, into false religion. Judah would fall to Babylon in 587 BC. The difference with Babylon, they didn't do this mixing policy.

They just took most of the important people. If you had anything of worth or were any one of worth, you went to Babylon and they left the beggars in the land. When the exile was ended, the Jews were able to return and many of them, but not all of them, did. Thus the remnant of those two tribes from the south was preserved.

No remnant of the northern tribe was preserved only those dispersed over all the earth, mixing them with the rest. These Samaritans, they're half breeds, they're perverters of the faith and they're also violent and malicious people. They would be at war with the Jews, at various times. They would attack Jewish travelers.

They hated the Jews and the Jews hated them. The Samaritans were in short against the kingdom of Judah. They were destroying its religion, its culture. They were destroying it all. They were everything that Judah was against and stood against. That's the long and the short of it. They hated each other and they had good reason to do so.

But it's the Samaritan that helps this Jewish man. What does that all mean? I'm glad you asked. It's important to identify the characters in play here. First, there's a tendency to immediately jump

into identifying ourselves with the priest and the Levite. We're the faithful and devout religious people. And too often, we turn a blind eye to the suffering around us, blah, blah, blah, blah, blah.

That's all true, but that shouldn't be our first move. The first move that we should make is that you are the beaten man left half dead. That's you. You have fallen prey to sin, death and the devil attacking you on the road of this life. They have attacked you and they have left you for dead and on your own you cannot save yourself.

You are toast. You are dead meat. You are hopeless. Who should come along? There's people of similar background. They come along, but they're not willing and they're not able to save you. Who else should come along? The one you hate and the one that should hate you. You and your sin rebelled against God and made him your enemy.

You are an enemy of Jesus and Jesus comes along when he should hate you for destroying the Father's creation, perverting the truth and being a dirty heathen. Instead of hating you, Jesus has compassion on you and loves you. Jesus is the good Samaritan. The early church, basically from the start got this right.

Jesus is the good Samaritan, which makes you and I, the beaten man. What about the two that pass on by? They're also us at times. They probably had a good reason to pass on by, in a hurry to do something more important. They had their own needs to worry about. For the priest and Levite, that would be on their way to Jerusalem, this might have been their one occasion to serve in the temple and lead worship of the entire assembly. Some only got to do that once in their entire life, to lead worship in the temple. If they stopped to even inspect and help and touch this man, they would be unclean according to the law. They'd be ruled out from being able to serve God in the temple. That's a big deal.

Or maybe they just had fear. Maybe they were worried the robbers might come back or might be using the man as a trap so you have to hustle on the way to preserve yourself. Self-preservation is good, right? You have to meet your own needs first before you meet someone else's. Right? Jesus says, no.

Jesus says, deny your own needs and serve the other, which is what the Samaritan does for this beaten man. He puts himself possibly in danger and he tends this man, heals him and cares for him and then leaves him to recover in the inn.

This fits with what Jesus does for us in real life, this parable. Jesus heals you. He denies his own life, dying on the cross for you. Then he rises again and ascends into heaven, but he doesn't leave us on our own. He doesn't just bandage us up and say, well, best of luck. He leaves us in the care of the inn. The inn has been widely viewed as the church. The innkeeper, there are several theories but I think one that fits and one that's nice to look at this morning, is that the innkeeper is the Holy Spirit, whom Jesus pours out on his church to guard and protect us and lead us to

eternal life. The Samaritan, he promises to come back again, just as Jesus has promised to come back again.

Where does this lead us now? What are we to do? We who have been healed and are placed in the care of this church under the charge of the Holy Spirit. What are we to do? We're going to do what Jesus says. Go and do likewise. Man, oh man, it would be nice if it was just exactly like this story. I think, I'm pretty sure, I think maybe, probably, hopefully, if I saw someone dying on the street, I would probably stop and help them. Maybe, maybe I'm late for church. I've got to lead all these people in church. If I'd seen someone dying on the way to church today, maybe I would've passed them by, but I think I would stop. I think I would stop and I think I would help them. I wouldn't have time to ask questions about background and belief. I'd just help them. Honestly, I think that's it. If they're beaten and dying, I don't have time to ask them questions about their views on abortion, or if they believe in God or not. I'd just call 911 and try and keep them alive. No, I honestly think what's harder is to love that other person that seems to be thriving in this life. Though, without Jesus, we know they're actually dying. To be loving of the other that we just plain hate, that we think is just destroying this world, that we think is destroying this society, that we think is destroying this church – to love them.

To truly love them, to put their needs above our own, their preferences above our own, the other before myself. That's what I think is the hardest part of all this to do, at least for me. I don't know about you. Not the beaten and dying person. I can't think of the last time I encountered someone like that on the side of the road, but I know there's plenty of people that drive me nuts, or dare I say, that I even hate. I'm supposed to just completely deny myself even if, or especially if, that person has wronged me and abused me? That is love. That's the love that our Savior showed us, that our Savior showed me. That he completely denied himself and lived and served those that utterly abused him. In our sin we're no different than those that whipped and beat him and nailed him to that cross.

Jesus doesn't hold that against us. He gets down in the dirt and he says you who abused me, who spit on me, who stripped me naked and hung me on a cross, I love you.

That is love. If we don't have love as Christians, what do we have? If we can't look at one another and say, that's a loving person, what are we doing? If that's not you – repent, crucify your lack of love and wake up tomorrow and follow Jesus' example. You know what's interesting, what I find interesting anyway? Jesus doesn't make this parable about a Jew rescuing a Samaritan, which would've fit with the way the question was framed – where the Jew is asking who he should love. I'm sure hoping, you know, the question isn't answered Jesus saying, love everyone. This guy is asking “Who should I love?” And he's hoping Jesus is going to give him a narrow answer.

So Jesus flips it. The enemy rescues the guy answering the question. The enemy loves you. Now, none of us can fully, truly love like that, but Jesus does. And he calls us to do, likewise. We're

not saved by doing this. We do this because we are saved and because as Christians, we follow Jesus. So my question is today, identify who is your enemy.

There's any number of people I can name that will raise the hair on the back of your necks; Republicans, Democrats, people of any number of ethnicities or people who hate other people of other ethnicities, homosexuals, immigrants, Trump supporters, Biden supporters, stubborn cold-hearted old timers, wild, disrespectful kids, pro-vax, anti-vax, prostitute, that lazy, unemployed, homeless guy, you name it. You fill in the blank. Who is it that's destroying everything you love and hold dear, that is abusing you and keeps you up at night and that you just can't look at without feeling anger while up inside you? Can you love that person?

Can you serve that person? If the answer is no, as it so often is with me, repent, drown that sin. Wake up tomorrow and try again. Start little, sit in conversation with your exact ideological opposite and hear what they have to say. Not because they're right. Not because they're right. We Christians, we have the truth and there is one truth. We have no fear. Nothing can conquer the truth. Nothing can conquer Christ and we have Christ. He is with us. He is in the church. So go and show kindness. The first step of kindness is simply to listen; no agenda, no debating. We just might discover that this other person whom we hate is someone that's been made in God's image that's in need of the Gospel. That is exactly what you all possess. The Gospel, the one true Gospel. We share that Gospel with joy and love, not with anger and fear and debating and disgust. That's what Christians have been doing for centuries. It's one of the many things that make us so unique.

That when we are really following Christ, we can love and serve those who hate us and who we even should hate. We can love and serve those who are the exact opposite of everything that we stand for and know to be true. We can love and serve those that go against everything that the word of God tells us is right and true.

Not because their view is valid. We know the only valid view is God's word, but because those are people whom Christ died for as well. That's essentially the summation of Christ's life and ministry, his death, and resurrection that he loved and served those who he should have hated who were the exact opposite of everything he was.

As Christians, we love. Each life you encounter, whether it's the embryo of just a few cells, that precious human being, even in its developmental state of embryo, to developmental state of fetus, to developmental state of baby, to developmental state of toddler who can't sit in the pew, to the developmental state of adolescent that just won't listen to their parents, to the developmental state of adult that just can't figure out what they want in life, to the developmental state of the person who is shut in and hospice and dying in their home. Each life you encounter is a life that Jesus died for. Everything in between to that person that you hate, that person you don't know, that person you like a lot – is someone that Jesus died for, that we care for and love. You fall into that category. You are life that Christ died for. He loves you, dearly. Go and do

likewise. In Jesus name, Amen. Now may the peace of God, which surpasses all understanding guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus, our Lord. Amen.