

Luke 10:23–27 (Trinity XIII)  
Kaiserslautern Ev. Luth. Ch.  
September 11, 2022

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

Dearly bought hearers by the blood of Jesus Christ,

“The Good Samaritan” is one of those biblical accounts everyone still seems to know. Just like the Flood, David and Goliath, the Christmas story, and the Golden Rule, there are parts of Scripture that have influenced western culture so much they will not soon be forgotten, at least that’s what one would hope. As ignorance about the Bible increases, certain stories and themes of Scripture continue speaking to people even if they are not aware of it. These stories and themes can then be used to remind those around us what they are missing by neglecting the rest of God’s Word, because it’s not just the stories everyone knows that are important. All of Scripture is written that we might believe Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God, and that by believing, we might have life in His name (John 20:31).

People still know the parable of the Good Samaritan in part because the term itself is still used when tragedy strikes. I’m sure many of you have heard Good Samaritan stories from the September 11th attacks, twenty-one years ago today.

The language of the Good Samaritan text is also still entrenched in our legal systems. In the United States, the United Kingdom, and Canada, for example, there are “Good Samaritan” laws in place to protect those who try to help someone in need. A Good Samaritan law attempts to remove any hesitation on the part of someone who could help. Someone might be scared of future litigation should the First Aid they provide not work. In other countries, such as Germany, there are actually “duty to rescue” laws in place. Not only is a person allowed to help in an emergency; a person is even required to offer assistance. Several years ago, the ADAC, the

German Automobile Club, performed a simulation of a deadly accident having just occurred.

Those who passed by the scene were stopped by the police around the curve and asked why they did not stop to offer assistance. Most of the people failed to stop because they didn't want to see anything traumatic. Others were simply in a hurry (Hahne, *Nicht auf unsere Kosten*, 179).

Maybe it would have been the same thing had our parable this morning been a set-up. If there were guards in position around the corner, what would the priest and the Levite have said? Why didn't they stop? Maybe they didn't want to see such a pitiable sight, a man lying half-dead on the side of the road. If the man was going to die anyway, they could keep moving on and nobody would be the wiser. Or maybe they were in a hurry. Priests and Levites are important men with important business to take care of. They were here to serve God and country. There's no time to stop and help someone! And besides, surely someone else would stop and take care of it. Or maybe they feared that they, too, would be robbed. Maybe the thieves were still lying in wait for someone to stop and take the bait. There are any number of reasons why the priest and the Levite could have decided to ignore this man's distress and simply keep going their way. And besides, they didn't even know the guy!

Of course, Jesus is telling this parable to explain who a neighbor actually is. The teacher of the Law, this canon lawyer, stood up to test Jesus, asking: "what shall I do to inherit eternal life?" Jesus asks the lawyer how he reads the Law, and the lawyer gives a perfect summary of the Law: Love God and love your neighbor. Jesus says: "You have answered correctly; do this and you will live." But the lawyer wanted to justify himself. The lawyer wanted to make the Law doable, so that he could keep it and inherit eternal life. If the man's neighbor includes only those he knows and loves, his family, friends, and acquaintances, then this commandment is not terribly hard. But if it's only about loving those who love you, as Jesus tells us elsewhere in

Scripture, how are we any different than tax collectors and Gentiles and everyone else on the face of the earth? The Jewish religious leaders taught that “you shall love your neighbor and hate your enemy,” but Jesus teaches us to love even our enemies (Matt 5:43–48). God’s Law is far deeper, and harder to keep, than our sinful flesh wants to admit.

Notice how Jesus then turns the tables in this parable. Those who should know better, those who of all people ought to have stopped to help the man half-dead, the priest and the Levite, simply pass by. In the end, it was a Samaritan who both had compassion and acted on that compassion. Samaritans were despised by the Jews, and vice versa. Samaritans were half-breeds, Jews mixed with Gentile Assyrians after the fall of the Northern Kingdom. The Samaritans did not worship at Mt. Zion in Jerusalem, but at Mt. Gerizim. They did not have the complete Old Testament, but used only the Pentateuch, the first five books, written by Moses. If anyone could not count as a neighbor for a Jew, it would be a Samaritan.

It’s the Samaritan, the most despised one, who has compassion on the man half-dead. It’s the unclean Samaritan who risks his neck to help someone in need. The least expected passerby, not the priest or the Levite, but the Samaritan, goes above and beyond what could reasonably be expected of anyone. The Samaritan dressed the man’s wounds, pouring oil and wine on them. He took the man to an inn and basically cut a blank check, ensuring he would pay whatever expenses were accrued in helping this man. The Samaritan understands what it means to love your neighbor as yourself. He understands that “neighbor” includes anyone God puts into your life to help, whether that person deserves it or not, or whether you like the person or not. The Samaritan proved to be a neighbor by showing mercy.

Jesus’s parable of the Good Samaritan points first and foremost to Himself. Jesus is the Good Samaritan. Jesus is the one who fulfills the Law perfectly in all its points. That’s why

artistic depictions of this parable often show not just a generic Samaritan helping the half-dead man, but Jesus Himself, as you can see on your bulletin cover. In John 8[:48], the Jews said to Jesus: “Are we not right in saying that you are a Samaritan and have a demon?” The Jews knew Jesus was like them, but not really. There was something off about this man and His origin. Jesus is a foreigner. He is from this place, but not entirely. He was born of woman, but God is His Father. Like the Samaritan descending from Jerusalem to Jericho, our Lord descended from Heaven to Earth, taking on our own flesh that He might heal our flesh.

“The LORD . . . gathers the outcasts of Israel. He heals the brokenhearted and binds up their wounds” (Psalm 147:2–3). Jesus is a true neighbor to us. Our Lord found us lying half-dead, in fact, completely dead in our trespasses and sins (Eph 2:1). As the Apostle Paul puts it in Ephesians 2[12–13]: “You were at that time separated from Christ, alienated from the commonwealth of Israel and strangers to the covenants of promise, having no hope and without God in the world. But now in Christ Jesus you who once were far off have been brought near by the blood of Christ.” Our Lord looked upon us with compassion and determined to save us. He shed His blood on the cross for our sake, to redeem us from sin, death, and that robber, the Devil (John 10:10). The Lord binds up our wounds, literally our trauma, with the oil and wine of His Word and Sacraments. He brings us to the inn of the Church, where He takes care of us and provides for whatever else we need until He returns on the Last Day. Our Lord Jesus Christ is the Good Samaritan, a true neighbor to those in need.

Jesus’s final words in His parable are instructive to all of us: “You go, and do likewise.” That is, have compassion on whoever God brings into your life, regardless of their background or what your first instinct might tell you to do. Our Lord came to this earth to have compassion

on us, and so we have compassion on others. God sent His Son into the world because He loved the world. We love, then, not to justify ourselves like the lawyer, but because He first loved us.

As 1 John 3[:15–16] says: “Everyone who hates his brother is a murderer, and you know that no murderer has eternal life abiding in him. By this we know love, that He laid down His life for us, and we ought to lay down our lives for the brothers.” And again: “In this is love, not that we have loved God, but that He loved us and sent His Son to be the propitiation for our sins. Beloved, if God so loved us, we also ought to love one another” (1 John 4:10–11). God loves us and so we love everyone God brings into our life. God had compassion on us and so we have compassion on all others. God is merciful to us, and so we show mercy to those around us. That is what life in Christ looks like.

Jesus is the Good Samaritan, the outcast in this world who came to bring us life. In Him we have life, here in time and there in eternity. Jesus fulfilled the Law for us perfectly by loving God and neighbor to the point of death. In Christ, you too, are to have Christ-like compassion for those around you, not only in word and talk, but in deed and in truth (1 John 3:18). In Christ, you too, are able to be Good Samaritans to those who need your help right now.

In the name of Jesus, Amen.

The peace of God, which passes all understanding, keep your hearts and minds in Christ Jesus. Amen. We stand for the Offertory.