

Luke 10:25-37
Pentecost 5C
Pastor Dave Wegner
July 14, 2019

**A few years ago at a camp in North Carolina,
Several confirmation students were attending
A week of camp not unlike our own trips
To Lutherdale in Wisconsin.**

**That particular week the focus of our bible studies were the parables,
And no study of the parables would have been complete
Without some time given to that of the Good Samaritan.**

**Because the parables often provide an excellent script
Upon which a dramatic presentation can be built,
Several youth were asked to act it out.**

**The chosen actors took a moment to get into character.
There was Jesus, the lawyer, priest, Levite, bandits, the victim,
And the Samaritan man who came to his aid.**

**Things were going well in the beginning of the story,
Jesus and the lawyer shared their opening lines with great ease
And the audience was listening intently.**

**The story progressed and suddenly, with great swiftness,
Those portraying the bandits rushed into the room
And playfully assaulted the poor traveler
On the way to Jericho.**

**Unfortunately for our dramatic representation,
The young man playing Jesus got so wrapped up in the action,
That he forgot that he was functioning as the narrator,
And started pretend beating up on the victim himself!**

The young woman playing the Good Samaritan had to improvise
As she tried pulling Jesus off the beaten traveler:
“Leave him alone Jesus,
You’re not even supposed to be here!”

When our collective laughter settled to a dull roar
We began to process how we understand parables.

One common exercise is to place ourselves in the story:
Who do we think we are?
Who do we want to be?
Who are we called to be?

Perhaps there are times when we feel like the lawyer,
Trying to reconcile his understanding of the law,
With this new emphasis on the love of neighbor.

Perhaps we are the priest or Levite on the path in the story.
We find it difficult to help others if it seems inconvenient.

Or maybe the bandits, who will do anything to get ahead
At the expense of everything and everyone around us.

Or the Good Samaritan, who happens upon a person
Bloodied and bruised by the evil of the world, and offers help.

Finally, what if we are the poor man who was attacked?
In great need watching the world go by
Without more than a glance our direction.

This is a common exercise that we can apply to Jesus’ parables
And it will often yield very interesting conversations
And reflections from those who discuss it.

I've been "too busy" to help a person in need.

I've found it an inconvenience to enter into another's life,
Their pain, their suffering, their need for advocacy.

I've beaten up another person with words that hurt the heart,
Or negligence that leads to pain and confusion.

I've offered help to someone I didn't even know
Because they had a clear and identifiable need.

I've desired to make sense out of the law of God
Paired with the grace of God at work in my life.

I've felt like the bloodied and bruised,
Ignored and alone.

Maybe you can identify with some of these personalities, too.

Whoever we are whenever we are them,
The standing, well known moral of this parable still stands:
Love your neighbor.
Witness the mercy of the Samaritan,
Witness the mercy of God, and go to do likewise.

Who we are called to be in and through and because of this parable,
Are those who take hold of this blatant example of agape love
And offer care and compassion to ones on the road.

Even when such action defies, transgresses,
Or flat-out contradicts
The social and political mores surrounding us.

Who we are called to be

**Are those who give of our own resources
To ensure the safety, comfort, and restoration to health
For those left broken in the world's ditches.**

"Who is my neighbor?" the lawyer asks.

**Will I be able to recognize them on the street or in town?
Will it be clear to whom I should be neighborly?
Is there a quick reference you could offer?**

**Yes, the quick reference is that which is traced on our foreheads
As water is poured over them: the cross.**

**The cross on which Jesus stretched out his arms
That the entire world might know
How much God loves the world and ALL people in it.**

**The cross of Christ transcends the boundaries of race and class
So our neighborhood transcends the boundaries
Of race and class.**

**The cross of Christ transcends the barriers of economy and politic
So our neighborhood transcends the barriers
Of economy and politic.**

**Jesus redefines the boundaries of our neighborhoods
By stripping all the boundaries away.**

**United through water poured, Word spoken,
Bread and wine consumed,
We become one with each other,
And with everyone out there.**

**Being a neighbor is being in love:
In love with the world God has made
And the people of God in it.**

**And we are to use all our heart, soul, strength, and mind
To live and move and act in this love.**

**Jesus makes us neighbors not *just* to break down barriers between us,
But to show us how to *act* once they're gone.**

**We hear again this familiar story and think about who we are.
We are reminded who our neighbors can be,
Who they've already been made to be.**

**Our encounter with Jesus this morning calls us to think how we,
The people of Grace Lutheran Church,
Are going to do likewise.**

Welcome to the neighborhood!