

Emmanuel Ev. Lutheran Church—Wisconsin Evangelical Lutheran Synod

Pentecost 5

July 10, 2022

Sermon by Pastor Daniel Pautz

***Lessons From the Good Samaritan***

— Luke 10:25-37

Just then, an expert in the law stood up to test Jesus, saying, “Teacher, what must I do to inherit eternal life?”

“What is written in the law?” he asked him. “What do you read there?” He replied, “Love the Lord your God with all your heart, with all your soul, with all your strength, and with all your mind; and, love your neighbor as yourself.” He said to him, “You have answered correctly. Do this, and you will live.” But he wanted to justify himself, so he asked Jesus, “And who is my neighbor?”

Jesus replied, “A man was going down from Jerusalem to Jericho. He fell among robbers who stripped him, beat him, and went away, leaving him half dead. It just so happened that a priest was going down that way. But when he saw the man, he passed by on the other side. In the same way, a Levite also happened to go there, but when he saw the man, he passed by on the other side. A Samaritan, as he traveled, came to where the man was. When he saw him, he felt sorry for the man. He went to him and bandaged his wounds, pouring oil and wine on them. He put him on his own animal, took him to an inn, and took care of him. The next day, when he left, he took out two denarii, gave them to the innkeeper, and said, ‘Take care of him. Whatever extra you spend, I will repay you when I return.’ Which of these three do you think acted like a neighbor to the man who fell among robbers?”

“The one who showed mercy to him,” he replied. Then Jesus told him, “Go and do likewise.”

Sixty-nine pounds and eleven ounces! Over five feet long! That was part of a conversation with someone. It was a world record musky caught in the Chippewa Flowage in Wisconsin. But how was it that we talked about this large musky. We traced back our conversation. It all started off with how hot these Arizona days get. Then that led to talking about cooler climates and how he was going to go back to the Midwest and visit people and do some fishing. Somewhere along the line I mentioned that my brother was a good fisherman and had mounted some of his very large walleyes, perch, and brook trout that he had caught. Soon we were talking about huge fish and soon we were talking about that musky that had held the world record. The conversation started, however, with how hot the day was.

In front of us is the familiar story of the Good Samaritan told by Jesus. But what led Jesus to tell the story? He was asked a question by a very smart person, an expert in the law, who was convinced that you had to do something to get eternal life. So as Jesus tried to crack this tough nut of salvation by works, He in essence said, “Okay, so you think you can be saved by doing something. What does the law say?” The expert in the law gave a good summary of the law in his answer, “Love the Lord your God with all your heart, with all your soul, with all your strength, and with all your mind and, love your neighbor as yourself.” Jesus answered, “Do this and you will live!” And it is true that if you are absolutely perfect, never a sin, you would be saved. The man knew it but rather than seeking out the answer that we are saved by grace through faith, he asked another question. He tried to justify himself. It was sort of a snarky smart aleck question, “And who is my neighbor?” Then came the story of the Good Samaritan which teaches that we are to be a neighbor to everyone.

How many people has God led into your life? Wikipedia says that the average person living for seventy years interacts with 80,000 people, and at any given time knows well about 600 people. They are all neighbors. What should we do about our neighbor? Taking a cue from the Good Samaritan account, should we cheat and beat him up, pass him by, or help him out as a Good Samaritan.

Oh that road from Jerusalem to Jericho! Jericho Road is a seventeen-mile road that connects Jerusalem to Jericho. The road drops 3600 feet in those seventeen miles. It is a steep, winding, descending, remote road that for centuries has been a place of robberies and sufferings. And there as that man was traveling thieves came, robbed him, beat him up, and left him half dead.

Well, welcome to the 21st century. There still are thieves, and plenty of them. Scams are all about us, aren't there? Some would have no qualms about hurting you or shooting you. Daily one hears about people getting beaten and shot. The first 5-10 minutes of local news broadcasts are devoted to murders and shooting of police and spousal abuse and domestic violence. Sometimes brawls go on especially late at night.

Now we might not have beaten up somebody but do remember that the Lord has said, “Love your neighbor as yourself.” He also has said, “Love one another as I have loved you.” But do you consistently do that? Do I? What might be some reasons why we haven't? It might be jealousy or begrudging another person for what he has or his ability, looks, personality, success in life.

Maybe there is hatred in your heart for someone who has wronged you. No one goes through life without being wronged. You hope he suffers – you hope he gets what he deserves. In fact, you might even hope that someone would beat the living daylights out of him. But remember what Jesus said, **“Whoever hates his brother is a murderer.”** In both the Old Testament and the New Testament are these words, **“Do not take revenge, my friends, but leave room for God’s wrath, for it is written: “It is mine to avenge; I will repay,” says the Lord.”** You can hate what a person does or stands for but be careful of personal hatred.

Closely, related is sinful anger against your neighbor. The Book of Proverbs says, “A hothead stirs up a fight, and a quick-tempered person commits many sins.” Sometimes we might even be sinfully angry at family members. Remember, there is no perfect family. Not even the sinless Jesus had a perfect family. John tells us that Jesus’ brothers had not believed in Him. Mark tells us that they said that Jesus was out of his mind. Later on they did believe but not at first. Now there is righteous anger. For example, when a wife finds out that her husband has been cheating on her, she just cannot be blasé about the situation – she can be justly angry and upset. But even in the cases of just anger, we are told, “In your anger do not sin.”

How about the use of our tongue? If your tongue were a weapon, how many people would you have left half dead as that person on the road to Jericho? There is little or no truth in that old saying, “Sticks and stones may break my bones but words will never hurt me.” Words can hurt and hurt deeply. A mother said to her son who had made a sarcastic remark to her, “Your words hurt me more than if you had slapped me.” James 3:2 says, “We all stumble in many ways. If anyone is never at fault in what he says, he is a perfect man, able to keep his whole body in check.”

Another caution as we seek to be the kind of neighbor Jesus wants us to be is to be careful in our use of alcohol. It happens that when people drink too much, they start to lose control of their emotions and words. Arguments break out. Cruel words are said. As the night wears on, even brawls break out. “Wine is a mocker, and beer is a brawler. Whoever is intoxicated by them is not wise.” So says Proverbs 20:21. My father-in-law, Werner Riemer, was a very wise man although he did let me marry his daughter. He said, “Nothing good happens after midnight.” It might have been an overstatement but it contains a lot of truth.

What should I do with my neighbor? Beat him up? Not at all! Pass him by? That is exactly what a priest and then a Levite did in connection with that man who was left half-dead. You would have thought that of all people these two men closely connected with religious leadership would have done something. It was different than what many of us are confronted with daily as beggars on street corners want us to give them money. We might be hesitant to do so for many are on drugs or refuse to work. When needy people stop at church, we always will give them food. If you are hesitant to help out those on the street corners, you likely are acquainted with people who do truly need help. Don’t pass them by. It was obvious that the man who had been robbed needed help, he was wounded, he was bleeding, he was a victim of robbers. Perhaps the priest and the Levite did not help because it was too bothersome; maybe they were in a hurry, they did not want to get involved. They figured that somebody else could and would help. And so they passed him by. Do we do much the same?

But of all people, a Samaritan helped. The Samaritans were despised by most of the Jewish people. They were looked upon as being inferior. The Samaritans were not full-blooded Jews. Most of them accepted only the first five books of the Old Testament. Although the most direct way to travel from Jerusalem to Galilee was to go through Samaria, many Jews took a much longer journey avoiding Samaria. But the Samaritan man helped out –and did he ever. “When he saw him, he felt sorry for the man. He went to him and bandaged his wounds, pouring oil and wine on them. He put him on his own animal, took him to an inn, and took care of him. <sup>35</sup> The next day, when he left, he took out two denarii, gave them to the innkeeper, and said, ‘Take care of him. Whatever extra you spend, I will repay you when I return.’” The reason he helped was that he felt pity and compassion. And goodness gracious, did he ever help! He took care of that person, took him to an inn, paid the fare, and then gave what amounted to several hundred dollars to the innkeeper to continue to take care of that man.

Then Jesus asked, “Which of these three do you think acted like a neighbor to the man who fell among robbers?” “The one who showed mercy to him,” he (the expert in the law) replied. Then Jesus told him, “Go and do likewise.” Jesus was instructing that man and us today to show mercy to others.

About this time you might be thinking, and rightly so, that so far there has been a lot of law in this sermon and that you feel guilty. Exactly! That was the reason why Jesus had told the account of the Good Samaritan to the self-righteous man who thought he could be saved by doing something. Jesus wanted this man to feel guilty but then to ask one more question, “How then can I be saved and have eternal life?” Jesus would have answered, Repent and believe that you are saved by grace. He could have told him the words of John 3:16.

Jesus rightly could have passed us by. Unlike that person who was beat up by the robbers, our condition was self-inflicted. We are guilty of sins. And we cannot do anything of our own about it. It would be easier for a cow to jump over the moon than for us to save ourselves. But hold on, we also have a Good Samaritan. His name? It is Jesus. He has had mercy upon us. In your place and for your benefit he led a perfect life, perfect in all ways including His love and

compassion for others. That righteousness is given to you; from you is taken all of your sins including the times you have not loved one another as the Lord has loved you. Your slate of sins is wiped clean. Come to communion and be assured of that!

Good Samaritan! It was a great name that was used by some of our hospitals but the names were changed and the name Samaritan dropped out. Good Samaritan Hospital downtown is now called Banner University and the local Desert Samaritan is now Banner Desert.

Now the Lord Jesus calls upon you to be a Good Samaritan. God has blessed you so that you in turn are a blessing – a blessing to your family, your congregation, and your acquaintances. There are people all about you who need your help. Most often it is not financial help that is needed. Many are hurting, lonely, discouraged. You might not be able to solve things for them but what is needed are words of encouragement to them and prayers for them. Maybe for some it is a ride to church or for medical appointments. Perhaps it is just a “How are you doing?” Perhaps a phone call or a text would be very helpful. Maybe it is simply a matter of being nice, kind, and polite. There is a woman in our congregation who is a Good Samaritan to some of our homebound people as she weekly writes notes of spiritual encouragement to them; another who makes little gift bags of food; a couple who monthly provide grocery gift cards for any needy homebound person in our congregation.

There are many in our congregation who are Good Samaritans as they serve God and brothers and sisters in our congregation as they work on things such as committees or Council or serving food. Right now I think especially of those serving on the Building Committee for our new Ministry Center. They have put in many hours for our benefit, experienced joys and also frustrations. We laud them and thank God for them,

God who bids us to love our neighbor bids us to see the opportunities He has placed in our lives and to be Good Samaritans.