

Sermon Text: Luke 10:25-37

Last week, I shared in the sermon about the success of the seventy disciples that went out on their internship. I want to highlight last week's message portion on success because we are going to highlight one of them today. Here it is:

In congregation life, it is difficult to avoid measuring success. We are famous at point to the A, B, C's.

Attendance – Buildings - Cash on hand

May I be bold enough to say that those are the world's ABC measurement tool box. I think Jesus ABC tool box would be the following:

Authority – Blessing – Compassion

From hearing the Gospel text, you have probably concluded that today's sermon is going to be centered on compassion. The Samaritan was an individual that showed compassion to the stranger on the road. He has become the perfect example of going beyond the typical expectations to care for others. The compassion that he showed to the stranger should be inspiration for us in our daily living. The Good Samaritan though is at the end of the story, so, may we push the reset button and begin from the beginning.

This story comes to us fairly early in Jesus travel to Jerusalem. His journey to Jerusalem begins a chapter earlier, in chapter nine and will continue all the way through chapter nineteen. We are not too far removed from Jesus going through a Samaritan village on his way to Jerusalem and the disciples and him were not welcomed; so maybe this story can be even more intriguing to his disciples listening in.

In the beginning of the story, a lawyer stands up and gives Jesus a test. The word test here in this text is the exact same word that is in the Luke 4 text where the devil is tempting Jesus. The test or question is one that is actually based on a false premise. The false premise is laid in the foundation of personal salvation. God's presence is a gift to us, it is not something that we can demand or achieve.

Jesus decides that he is going to answer him by asking him two questions. The two question back to the lawyer is pretty straight-forward:

- 1) What is written in the law?
- 2) What do you read there?

The lawyer is a smart man and he knows the commandments and lives into his Judaism beliefs. Thus, his answers are rooted in Deuteronomy 6 and Leviticus 19. In these scriptures, one focuses on being devoted to God and the other one is loving your neighbor. It had been taught that these two commands are the hooks on which the whole law hangs. These two commands, they go together. The story, however, is clearly about the second commandment: *"you shall love your neighbor as yourself, I am the Lord. It continues, you shall love the alien as yourself."*

In the Leviticus text that the lawyer quoted, we hear over and over that God has created all people, and our concern for all people shatters the fences of our own tribes.

Now, make no mistake about it. The answer that the lawyer gives is right. However, his answer is not necessarily complete. It is not complete until he begins to live them out fully. That is why Jesus simply states, "do this and you will live." The lawyer now decides to push the issue. Thus, he wants Jesus to define for him who is his neighbor. He does this with what seems to be a straight-forward question: and who is my neighbor? Now, there is language in the text that we need to be made aware of.

The lawyer asks the question to justify himself and not to bring justice to his community. Justice is part of our baptismal vows. We promise to strive for justice and peace in all the earth?" In the lawyers questioning, he is seeking to narrow the quest. In other words, he wants to make this neighbor circle as small as he can make it. If the circle of neighbor is very small, then his duties are very manageable. If he can point to the crowd and go, okay, she is my neighbor, he is not my neighbor. Oh, the Judeans are my neighbor but the Galileans are not my neighbor. The lines are drawn and the circles are made so he can know who to love. In essence, his enquiry is not about God or his neighbor as the commandments require. Instead, it is focused on himself.

We may be tempted to do this as well and maybe we need to look at what tendencies that we hold onto. Each one of us probably divides the world and draw our circles in different manners.

We then get to hear Jesus answer through a story that we are very familiar with. Jesus answers the lawyer by telling him and the other listeners about a Samaritan who rescues a Jewish man who had been attacked, robbed and left for dead. This story would have rocked them.

They would have been shocked when they found out who the unlikely hero of the story would be. The shock would not just be on the hero though, their shock would have also rested in the aspect that the Priest and the Levite who had a call to care for others, passed by.

In our bible study, we talked about the possibilities and reasons of why they passed on the other side. We do not have an answer. Those attending the study shared that they were not given a pass. We brainstormed that maybe they did not perceive him as their neighbor. In our conversation, we also wondered about them being concerned about rituals. In the study, I did not bring it up and I did not see it, again but they were moving from Jerusalem not to Jerusalem.

Back to the shocked listeners. For them, the priest and the Levite are the good guys and they did nothing AND the Samaritan who has been in conflict would not have been expected to stop.

Yet, the Samaritan stopped and helped and went well beyond any expectation. Jeannie Brown says that these tangible actions are the authentic signs of what neighbors do. The details that Jesus uses paints this beautiful picture of a man who is demonstrating a complete, relentless, boundless care for another human being. Following the story, Jesus turns the conversation on its head and connects one final question with the original question. He looks at the lawyer after story time is over and asks him which one of these three was the neighbor?

The lawyer says, “the one who showed him mercy.” Jesus then responds to him, “Go and do likewise.” I think that Jesus was trying to get the lawyers to see and understand that if a “big bad” Samaritan can show compassion, then surely someone who knows the Torah commandments to love can do likewise.

The go and do likewise extends past the lawyer and come to us. Maybe, we shock ourselves in how frequently we are the ones who pass by without helping. Many times, we tend to ignore the cries of the downtrodden and disenfranchised.

The go and do likewise becomes an invitation. We are called and drawn to care for those in the ditch. In our study on Tuesday, we concluded with me asking the following question:

*How might Bay View go and do likewise?*

The general consensus was that we definitely need to do more. They shared that the Community Emergency Fund is a start or a foundation, but that it is really just a band-aid. In the near future, we will share more details on the fund in the future. I did highlight the amount given last week.

Maybe we can use our building more.

Maybe we can develop more goals or strategic plans regarding helping our neighbor.

Do – Do – Do can sound a little like a lot of law. We are a church and a denomination that try to live into grace as well. So, let me share with you that all five characters: the lawyer, the man in the ditch, the priest, the Levite, and the Samaritan all have the mark of God implanted on them. Even when we turn away, God draws near us. Perhaps, God even comes to us as a reminder that the call to care for others frequently goes unheeded as we pass by the cries of those in need of help.

There are definitely times when this text comes to the table to teach or preach, there is the temptation to go, what can we hear that is new. Professor Rogness reminds us that these stories need to be repeated constantly. Why? Because this story and other stories that we know by heart helps us understand what Christianity is all about. The Christian faith, following Jesus, reaches out beyond our tribal walls. Our neighbors are those who need us. **AMEN**