

Today's Gospel lesson is a very familiar story. It is the parable of the Good Samaritan. It takes place within the context of Jesus teaching the crowds that gathered to hear His words. At one such time an expert in the law questions Jesus regarding a fairly simple and plain teaching from Scripture. He asks Jesus (in order to test Him), what he should do in order to inherit eternal life. Jesus turns the question back to the expert and asks him what he thinks, based on what Scripture says. The expert in the law answers the question easily enough – "You should love the Lord your God with all that you are and Love your neighbor as yourself." Jesus then tells the man that he has understood the law correctly. However, the lesson is not quite over yet. The expert in the law seeks further explanation, in order to justify his own knowledge and maybe his own personal actions. Therefore, he asks Jesus, "Just who is my neighbor?"

Jesus answers the man as only the master teacher can. He uses a parable, a story designed to help instruct. He tells this expert in the law about a man who has fallen a fowl of some bandits and robbers, and of the people who travel his way and their reactions when they see him. One is a priest - a recognized religious leader; the next a Levite – a sort of "lay associate" to the clergy; and the last a Samaritan – a hated foreigner of the Jews. The Jews viewed the Samaritan people as half-breeds at best. Half-breeds both physically, and spiritually. These were not the true chosen people, but rather usurpers to the line of Abraham. It is interesting to note then that Jesus makes a significant point by commending the actions of this man. The Samaritan is the only one who shows compassion to the stranger in need of help. The Samaritan alone displays mercy. It seems that he is the only one in this story who truly understands who his neighbor is.

The Samaritan man is put forth as an example for us all. He is the person who recognizes the need of his fellow man and seeks to do all that he can in order to aid him.

Often we forget that actions require re-actions. You will hear people raising their voices to claim their God-given rights. “This is my right as a mother, or as a citizen, or as a human being...!” Most of the time in these little speeches or cries for justice - one element is sorely lacking. You see, along with your rights, come duties. With the free gift comes a responsibility. And this truth applies to the grace of God as well.

Let's take a look at the scene in the Garden – the home of our first parents. Adam and Eve were given and shown God's love from the start. They were given a perfect relationship with their Lord and Maker. With this blessing they were also expected to return this love. They were to love each other and love their Lord. The Fall into sin came as a result of them not loving their neighbor, nor loving their Lord above all else. Instead, they loved themselves first and foremost. They sought their own individual gain. Because of this idolatry –this putting of self before God, sin entered the creation and destroyed the perfect harmony which God had created. Adam and Eve separated themselves from God because they had made themselves their god. We are as guilty as they were, we often put ourselves and our own selfish desires before the Will of God. Often we seek to serve ourselves rather than our Lord. We put our own interests before that of our God and that of our fellow man.

But you see, with the free gift of God's Grace, there also comes a duty – a responsibility. With God's gift to us (of His mercy) comes a duty in the form of a divine command. We are to love the Lord God with all that we are AND, we are to love our neighbor as ourselves. With Christ's love entering into our

hearts a number of things happen. Not only do we experience joy and peace in the recognition of our salvation, but our hearts are now made able to express this mercy and compassion to our fellow man. Our eyes are now open to a whole new perspective. We hear of other people suffering and our hearts are troubled. This is what happened to the Samaritan. He saw the man lying there and he had compassion on him. Regardless of the cost to himself, he did what he could to help the man.

If you did not know Christ's love for you, you would hear of suffering and pain and not recognize it as tragedy. Since it wasn't happening to you, you might not care. Your heart would remain cold. But, with Christ in your heart, with Christ ruling your life, you experience compassion; you are made aware of mercy. You are told to do likewise to your neighbor. You are told that the greatest love, is that a man lay down His life for His friends. Dear friends, Jesus Christ is the parable of the Good Samaritan – incarnated. Jesus is the parable of the Good Samaritan in the flesh. While here on earth, Jesus recognized that every person was His friend, every man was His neighbor. And He loves them all with the same perfect love that His Father has for the world. He expressed that love in His obedience to His Father's will, even unto death on a cross.

What does this mean for us? What are we to learn from His sacrifice? For us, it means that Christ died for us, and has won for us victory over death and damnation. It means we are again able to have intimate fellowship with our Lord and Creator. We are not destined to die. That is not our fate. We have been given life, here and in eternity.

What we are to learn from this, is that Christ has reconciled us to our Father in heaven, and He has given us the perfect example of what real love and obedience is, as we live out our daily lives. We are to love and serve God

Jesus tells us to be a neighbour Luke 10:23-37 Trinity 13 2026
by actively seeking His will. His will is that we praise and honor only Him and
that we care for our fellow man and deal with him in kindness and in mercy.
Our enemies have been destroyed - all who are left (every one we meet), are
to be our friends. We are to show them the same love that Christ does in that
we are to lay down our lives for our friends. This means sacrificing our selfish
nature. Putting our self-centered fleshliness to death, and living according to
fruits of our faith. We are to be kind, slow to anger, abounding in mercy, as
our Father is to us.

It is an important lesson that Jesus taught to that expert when He told the
parable of the Good Samaritan. And that lesson has been preserved for us in
His word that we too learn who our neighbor is and how we should live
according to him.

To Christ, who is our Lord and Savior alone, be all glory and honor -
forever and ever. Amen.