

Scripture Study

Fifteenth Sunday in Ordinary Time – Cycle C



Opening prayer

Deuteronomy 30:10-14

(Ps 69:14, 17, 30-37)

Colossians 1:15-20

Luke 10:25-37

Overview of the Gospel:

- In this Sunday's Gospel Reading, as he makes his way to Jerusalem Jesus is questioned by a "scholar of the law" about how to inherit eternal life. These scholars, also called lawyers (RSV-CE) or scribes (Luke 5:21) were considered to be experts of the Jewish Law.
- Jesus asks him what his understanding of the Law is. The lawyer answers by citing Leviticus 19:18 and Deuteronomy 6:4, which is a summary of the Ten Commandments stated in positive terms (i.e., as opposed to "thou shalt not...").
- Even though Jesus approves of his answer, the lawyer, who seems satisfied that he knows what it means to love God, wishes to define more precisely who can be considered one's neighbor. Jesus answers with a parable that is found only in Luke's gospel, the story of the Good Samaritan.
- The characters in this parable include: a traveler on the perilous road from Jerusalem to Jericho; a priest and a Levite who, given their important religious roles in the Temple, were considered role models to other Jews; and a Samaritan, a member of a despised people who were traditional enemies of the Jews (John 4:9).

Questions:

- The setting for the First Reading is the discourse of Moses to the Israelites instructing them how they are to follow God's law in the Promised Land which they are about to enter. What do his words tell us about how God wants us to obey his commandments?
- Who is testing whom in this Sunday's Gospel Reading? Does the scholar of the Law seem to think he has passed Jesus' test in verse 28? How so? Why does Jesus answer with a story instead of with a straight answer? Does Jesus answer his actual question?
- How might the priest and the Levite justify their behavior (see Leviticus 21:1-3; Numbers 19:11-22)? Why or why not was this a valid excuse?
- Given the animosity between the Jews and the Samaritans (see John 4:9, 8:48), what is unusual about the plot twists in this story? What is Jesus' point here?
- What attitude or behavior does God want you to have that is most difficult to accept? After reading this parable, who would you say is your neighbor?
- Who have been the Good Samaritans in your life? What makes a Good Samaritan really good? To whom will you be a Good Samaritan this week?

Catechism of the Catholic Church: §§ 2822, 1825, 2083, 2447, 1458, 2842

Closing Prayer

Remember to read and meditate on the daily Mass readings found in the bulletin!

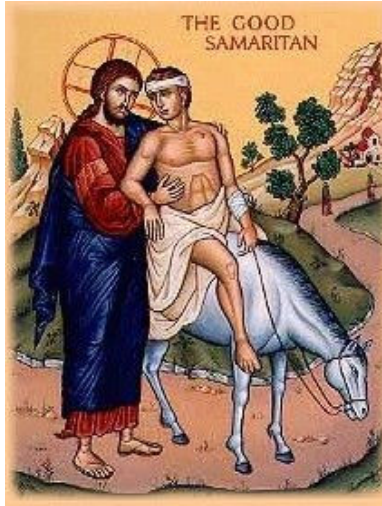
When we serve the poor and the sick, we serve Jesus. We must not fail to help our neighbors, because in them we serve Jesus. –St. Rose of Lima

"Go and do likewise"

Scripture: *Luke 10:25-37*

Meditation: If God is all-loving and compassionate, then why is there so much suffering and evil in this world? Many agnostics refuse to believe in God because of this seemingly imponderable problem. If God is love then evil and suffering must be eliminated in all its forms. What is God's answer to this human dilemma? Jesus' parable about a highway robbery gives us a helpful hint. Jesus told this dramatic story in response to a devout Jew who wanted to understand how to apply God's great commandment of love to his everyday life circumstances. In so many words this religious-minded Jew said: "I want to love God as best as I can and I want to love my neighbor as well. But how do I know that I am fulfilling my duty to love my neighbor as myself?" Jesus must have smiled when he heard this man challenge him to explain one's duty towards their neighbor. For the Jewish believer the law of love was plain and simple: "treat your neighbor as you would treat yourself." The real issue for this believer was the correct definition of who is "my neighbor". He understood "neighbor" to mean one's fellow Jew who belonged to the same covenant which God made with the people of Israel. Up to a certain point, Jesus agreed with this sincere expert but, at the same time, he challenged him to see that God's view of neighbor went far beyond his narrow definition.

Jesus told a parable to show how wide God's love and mercy is towards every fellow human being. Jesus' story of a brutal highway robbery was all too familiar to his audience. The road from Jerusalem to Jericho went through a narrow winding valley surrounded by steep rocky cliffs. Many wealthy Jews from Jerusalem had winter homes in Jericho. This narrow highway was dangerous and notorious for its robbers who could easily ambush



their victim and escape into the hills. No one in his right mind would think of traveling through this dangerous highway alone. It was far safer to travel with others for protection and defense.

So why did the religious leaders refuse to give any help when they saw a half-dead victim lying by the roadside? Didn't they recognize that this victim was their neighbor? And why did a Samaritan, an outsider who was despised by the Jews, treat this victim with special care at his own expense as he would care for his own family? Who was the real neighbor who showed brotherly compassion and mercy? Jesus makes the supposed villain, the despised Samaritan, the merciful one as an example for the status conscious Jews. Why didn't the priest and Levite stop to help? The priest probably didn't want to risk the possibility of ritual impurity. His piety got in the way of charity. The Levite approached close to the victim, but stopped short of actually helping him. Perhaps he feared that bandits were using a decoy to ambush him. The Levite put personal safety ahead of saving his neighbor.

What does Jesus' story tell us about true love for one's neighbor? First, we must be willing to help even if others brought trouble on themselves through their own fault or

negligence. Second, our love and concern to help others in need must be practical. Good intentions and showing pity, or empathizing with others, are not enough. And lastly, our love for others must be as wide and as inclusive as God's love. God excludes no one from his care and concern. God's love is unconditional. So we must be ready to do good to others for their sake, just as God is good to us. Jesus not only taught God's way of love, but he showed how far God was willing to go to share in our suffering and to restore us to wholeness of life and happiness. Jesus overcame sin, suffering, and death through his victory on the cross. His death brought us freedom from slavery to sin and the promise of everlasting life with God. He willingly shared in our suffering to bring us to the source of true healing and freedom from sin and oppression. True compassion not only identifies and empathizes with the one who is in pain, but takes that pain on oneself in order to bring freedom and restoration. Jesus truly identified with our plight, and he took the burden of our sinful condition upon himself. He showed us the depths of God's love and compassion, by sharing in our suffering and by offering his life as an atoning sacrifice for our sins upon the cross. His suffering is redemptive because it brings us healing and restoration and the fullness of eternal life. God offers us true freedom from every form of oppression, sin, and suffering. And that way is through the cross of Jesus Christ. Are you ready to embrace the cross of Christ, to suffer for his sake, and to lay down your life out of love for your neighbor?

"Lord Jesus, may your love always be the foundation of my life. Free me from every fear and selfish-concern that I may freely give myself in loving service to others, even to the point of laying my life down for their sake."

