

Daily Reading & Meditation

Go and Do Likewise

SUNDAY 10 JULY 2022 GOSPEL READING: Luke 10:25-37

25 And behold, a lawyer stood up to put him to the test, saying, "Teacher, what shall I do to inherit eternal life?" 26 He said to him, "What is written in the law? How do you read?" 27 And he answered, "You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, and with all your soul, and with all your strength, and with all your mind; and your neighbour as yourself." 28 And he said to him, "You have answered right; do this, and you will live." 29 But he, desiring to justify himself, said to Jesus, "And who is my neighbour?" 30 Jesus replied, "A man was going down from Jerusalem to Jericho, and he fell among robbers, who stripped him and beat him, and departed, leaving him half dead. 31 Now by chance a priest was going down that road; and when he saw him, he passed by on the other side. 32 So likewise a Levite, when he came to the place and saw him, passed by on the other side. 33 But a Samaritan, as he journeyed, came to where he was; and when he saw him, he had compassion, 34 and went to him and bound up his wounds, pouring on oil and wine; then he set him on his own beast and brought him to an inn, and took care of him. 35 And the next day he took out two denarii and gave them to the innkeeper, saying, 'Take care of him; and whatever more you spend, I will repay you when I come back.' 36 Which of these three, do you think, proved neighbour to the man who fell among the robbers?" 37 He said, "The one who showed mercy on him." And Jesus said to him, "Go and do likewise."

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 neighbour as well. But how do I know that I am fulfilling my duty to love my neighbour as myself?"

Jesus must have smiled when he heard this man challenge him to explain one's duty towards their neighbour. For the Jewish believer the law of love was plain and simple: "treat your neighbour as you would treat yourself." The real issue for this believer was the correct definition of who is "my neighbour". He understood "neighbour" 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 neighbour went far beyond his narrow definition.

God's love and mercy extends to all

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 Jerico. 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 defence.

Our prejudice gets in the way of mercy

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 neighbour? 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 neighbour 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 neighbour.

God expects us to be merciful as he is merciful

What does Jesus' story tell us about true love for one's neighbour? 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.

The cross shows us God's perfect love and forgiveness

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 fulness 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 neighbour?

Daily Quote from the Early Church Fathers: *God desires to be our neighbour*, by Augustine of Hippo, 354-430 A.D.

"God our Lord wished to be called our neighbour. The Lord Jesus Christ meant that he was the one who gave help to the man lying half-dead on the road, beaten, and left by the robbers. The prophet said in prayer, 'As a neighbour and as one's own brother, so did I please' (Psalm 34:14). Since the divine nature is far superior and above our human nature, the command by which we are to love God is distinct from our love of our neighbour. He shows mercy to us because of his own goodness, while we show mercy to one another because of God's goodness. He has compassion on us so that we may enjoy him completely, while we have compassion on another that we may completely enjoy him. (excerpt from *CHRISTIAN INSTRUCTION 33*)

OPENING 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. **Amen**

CLOSING PRAYER:- "World Peace" " Lord, we pray for the victims in Ukraine that they have the strength to forgive the Military forces that are attacking them and the leaders of these forces cease such aggression and repent for their sins.

May we put our trust in the power of good, to overcome evil, and the power of love, to overcome hatred. We pray for the vision to see and the faith to believe in a world emancipated from violence, were no longer men commit injustice, or bring suffering to others. **Amen.**