

8.26.2018 Trinity 13 (Luke 10:23-37)

In his book, *The Weight of Glory*, C.S. Lewis shared his thoughts on the value of every human life when he wrote these words: “There are no ordinary people. You have never talked to a mere mortal. Nations, cultures, arts, civilization - these are mortal, and their life is to ours as the life of a gnat... Next to the Blessed Sacrament itself, your neighbor is the holiest object presented to your senses.”

As Christians, from a biblical perspective, we recognize the truth in Lewis’ words. There are no ordinary people, because as the Psalmist declares, each and every person is *fearfully and wonderfully made, knit together in our mother’s womb* by our Creator in His very *image and likeness* (Psalm 139:13-14; Genesis 1:27). You have never talked to a mere mortal, because as the Gospels declare, the infinite value of every human life is found in the precious Blood of the Son of God shed on the Cross at Calvary. Nations, cultures, arts, civilization - these are mortal. All these things are passing away. They shall perish, but people are eternal. People have eternal souls, and therefore the most powerful nation, the greatest culture, the finest art, and every advanced civilization is like a gnat when compared to a single human life. The truth is: Next to the Real Presence of Christ in the Eucharist, your neighbor is the holiest object presented to your senses.

In our second lesson this morning, a lawyer who sought to justify his actions toward other people, asked Jesus, “*Who is my neighbor*” (Luke 10:29), and our Lord answered with what is often viewed as the greatest story in all of Scripture: *The Parable of the Good Samaritan*. As you know, this parable is the story of a man who “*went down from Jerusalem to Jericho, and fell among thieves, which stripped him of his raiment, and wounded him, and departed, leaving him half dead*” (Luke 10:30). As this unfortunate man laid there waiting to die, two men who should have stopped and cared for him, instead, when they saw him, chose to pass by on the other side. Two men of God, one a priest and the other a Levite, who were also travelers on this dangerous road, looked upon this dying man and viewed him as nothing more than a burden, just another delay in the middle of their long journey.

The men of God, those who should care don’t, and then along comes a man

who shouldn't care, but he does. The Samaritan, the enemy, sees this wounded Jewish traveler and is filled with compassion. The Samaritan views this man as a person, a *fearfully and wonderfully* created human being, a child of God made in the image and likeness of His Creator. The Samaritan uses his own clothes to bind the man's wounds, pouring in expensive oil and wine to cleanse the injury and relieve the pain. The Samaritan sets the wounded man on his own beast (while he walks), brings him to an inn, pays for his room, and promises to pay any other charges that this man incurs.

The lawyer asked, "*Who is my neighbor,*" and by telling this story Jesus declares the truth that God expects us to love and care for anyone who is in need, and to view every human being, even our enemy, as our neighbor. This is a most difficult command, and this parable is not the only place Jesus taught this lesson. Consider these words from His Sermon on the Mount: "*Ye have heard that it hath been said, Thou shalt love thy neighbour, and hate thine enemy. But I say unto you, Love your enemies, bless them that curse you, do good to them that hate you, and pray for them which despitefully use you, and persecute you; That ye may be the children of your Father which is in heaven...*" (Matthew 5:43-45).

It is in passages like these that we discover the God-man, Jesus Christ, came not only to reveal God to man, but also man to man - to show us who we are, to show us true humanity. God wants His children to value every human life the way He does, and the Samaritan is an example of a man who is living a truly human life. The Samaritan valued the wounded Jew more than his own clothes which he used to bind his enemy's wounds. He valued this dying man more than the expensive oil and wine, more than the money he spent, and more than his own safety on the dangerous road. He valued this human being as God does, and Jesus tells us to "*Go, and do thou likewise*" (Luke 10:37).

When we consider the thoughts of C.S. Lewis on the value of every human life, when we hear Jesus' answer to the question: "*Who is my neighbor?*", when we learn how God expects His children to love, and serve, and give of ourselves to care for every person in need, we each have to ask ourselves the question: Am I living as though the holiest, most important objects are most important, or am I living as though less important things have more importance than they do? We don't want to be like the priest and the Levite

who were either too busy, too self-centered, or too filled with prejudice to show compassion for their fellow human being. God calls us to more. He has revealed to us that man was created in His image and likeness, and that He sent His Son to die for all who call upon His name. These great truths of our creation and redemption should direct the way we treat every person we see, especially those who are in desperate need.

The parable of the Good Samaritan is God's beautiful explanation of what it means to love your neighbor as yourself, but that's not the only truth that Jesus wants us to recognize in this passage. There's something more, and it's found in the dialogue between Jesus and the lawyer. Remember, the lawyer who sought to justify his own actions asked, *Who is my neighbor?*, and the answer provided by the parable is clearly the injured traveler, the one in need is our neighbor, but after telling the story, Jesus asks the lawyer which of the three men was a neighbor to the injured traveler. The answer the parable provides to this question is the Samaritan, the one who loved, cared, and provided for the injured traveler. So, we see the way this dialogue emphasizes the fact that the neighbor is not only the one in need, but also the One who provides for our need, the One who shows us mercy.

This is the truth that we must cling to as we strive to live out the challenging command to love our neighbor as ourselves. The only way that we will be able to extend the grace we see in the Good Samaritan, is by recognizing the truth that we were the traveler left for dead. On this dangerous road, we fell among the greatest of thieves. Our enemy stripped us, wounded us, and left us to die, but Jesus, the perfect Samaritan, when He saw our miserable state, was filled with compassion. He came to us in human flesh. He bound our wounds, cleansing them with His own blood. He carried us to His Father's house and through His full, perfect, and sufficient sacrifice paid for our room in the kingdom of God both now and forever.

When you have encountered the amazing grace, the infinite love, and the overwhelming mercy of God in the Person of Jesus Christ, when you recognize the way He went after you, all that He gave up for you, the infinite value He places on you when nobody else does, it is then, by His grace, that you may truly begin to love your neighbor as yourself. May the kindness, the love, and the mercy that God has shown us, fill our hearts with thankfulness

and lead us to “*Go, and do thou likewise.*”