

July 10, 2022

Grace, grace and peace to you in the name of our Risen Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. Amen.

A great text this morning! It's especially rich with layers upon layers. We have a story. As I started the service, you remember I invited you to listen and hear the story with new ears. Maybe an old story you've heard many times, but listen and hear it with new ears, an open heart. In the story, Jesus encounters a lawyer, he has an encounter with a lawyer, and then Jesus goes on in our text to share a parable.

But before we get to the parable, let's explore this scene a little bit. Imagine you're a teacher and a student stands up and asks a pointed question. All eyes are on the question, that individual asking the question, and on you as the teacher with this question. The text says this man is (it's probably a fairly good translation) the man's intent is to test Jesus, to quiz him. Now we don't know--the text doesn't share with us what's in the man's heart. Maybe he's trying to be a pain in the you-know-what. Maybe he was just curious, we don't know that. He wants to know the parameters. We were told he is a lawyer. Sounds reasonable. It's a matter of life and death, is it not? The question he asks--his wife, his death--it's important to him. So he raises the question. He wants to also kind of legitimize himself: 'What must I do? Who is my neighbor?'

He pushes it a little bit further after Jesus responds in this exchange. He says, 'Well, who is my neighbor?' Now here again we don't know what's in the man's heart. I guess it's a reasonable question, if you're keeping score.

Questions as posed draws lines. Does it not? Who is my neighbor? You're my neighbor. You're my neighbor. You're not my neighbor. You are my neighbor? Of course, yes. Yes, yes. But no. He's this the question draws lines, who's in and who's out. So, Jesus responds to this--who's in and who's out?

Also we have some background here in the old Hebrew text, the rich text of The Testament.

It often talks about showing mercy and love and compassion towards your neighbor--one, who is of your people. Not all the text is that way, but oftentimes in Leviticus, for example in other books there's this reference 'to of your people'.

Where is wanting to know who he has to love in order to have life eternal. He seeks clarity. we like to Clarity we like clarity as well don't we? We want to know the rules of the game then I can decide whether or not to play the game and is it worth playing the game? And how do I play the game? This game of life. If I pay for this, I don't want to end up with that. We don't like bait and switch, and other words. So, he's asking some Curious questions and I think Jesus senses the lawyer's heart.

He's asking the wrong question; he is wanting to construct sets of rules that don't exist. Watch what happens in our text. Jesus doesn't scold him often times. Jesus is confronted by disciples and others but doesn't do a lot of scolding like that was a really stupid blankety blank question. Now Jesus doesn't go there. He doesn't belittle the man instead of a direct answer to the lawyer's question. He tells a parable

Now, as we know, parables are meant for the hearer to imagine and wonder to shed light to deep and a message to cause the listener to ponder or to have anxiety inside, maybe a bit too short to have a little discomfort like, oh, yeah, really, I guess it is that way W of different things going on in a parable, a different way of thinking about something. Comes out in the stories of the stories are parables.

Now, the priests, the Levites in the Samaritan, our characters important characters in this story that Jesus uses to teach to explain to unfold the truth to paint a picture.

Now I won't go into all the details, but did you know the Samaritans had quite a history. They weren't a people that were very much liked or thought of fondly by the Judeans, and this bringing up a Samaritan in this parable would have perked the attention of the listener.

Now, this road from Jerusalem to Jericho was known as the Bloody Pass. It's a dangerous stretch of road. Now, the man who had fallen to the robbers. We have no i.d. identification, figuratively. and literally. We don't know really what he--this man who was robbed and beaten and left for half dead--the priest, the Levite thinking, what were they thinking?

There's lots of, in the commentaries lots of conversation about. Well, maybe they were thinking I'll get home too late. So I shouldn't help the man. Maybe maybe I'll become unclean. I'll be late for the synagogue at Roy, to get home and have a meal with my family. It's a trap. What if he's trying to lure me over there, so there's a lots of things that we don't know that could be going on in the priest's and Levite's head. It's unclear to us what's going on in their minds.

But the priest and the Levite asked the question, what might happen to me. If I go over to help this man left for dead.

Been this out a little bit there. What might happen to me.

The Samaritan thought

The Samaritan asked what will happen to the man, if I don't go to help him out. He changes the question, doesn't he? es man puts him on his Beast yet. Another nuance of this story, this part was probably going along this road and writing on his Beast. So tough road is easier to ride on. Is on the animal.

He gets off Dismounts and puts the wounded man on his beast. And presumably, then the Samaritan walks.

Brings them to The Innkeeper gives The Innkeeper money. Take care of this man until I return. And I will pay you, whatever you spend.

The Samaritan looks to be the righteous one. The good guy doing the right thing.

This story is, Jesus told it would have had the crowd stirred up. What do you mean us? Samaritans, the good guy in this story where the priest and the levite didn't fare too well.

Could be the end of the parable, what people Ponder and wonder but then Jesus goes on, doesn't he nut? Jesus goes on and answers the questions. The question of the lawyer. Or does he? The question from the lawyer was, who is my neighbor does Jesus answer that question.

No does not. Jesus follows up with a question to the lawyer. After the parable, what is the question?

Who was a neighbor to this man who fell among Thieves?

Doesn't necessarily dismiss their lawyers question. Reframes. It right. Jesus refrains the question. It was a raw. The wrong question in the beginning.

Who can I exclude,

what law or way of constructing lines and boundaries? Borderlines can I construct to say? I love you. You are my neighbor. But you, well, I'm not so sure about. That's the wrong question.

Who do I have to love another words? Maybe is where this question comes from? I get to choose.

Jesus switches it not, who is my neighbor, but who was a neighbor to this man?

So we love neighbor by by what by being Neighbor. Showing Mercy means showing Mercy showing compassion as our text shares not to select from a group of those who are in those who are out, we are called to intent to be Neighbor, showing love, and mercy. We're the Commandment is to go and do likewise.

Sometimes we miss the mark, though, those seeking Refuge Asylum, those who have been knocking on the door of immigration trying to survive. trying to follow policies set before them even though inhumane, oftentimes conversations about immigration or about

Exercising, a more Humane approach.

What's tighten the walls, build more walls, make them higher and wider a policy. We sometimes hear towards immigrants but few ask the question inquire discuss the reason for migration.

U.s. foreign policy and military policy is directly and indirectly responsible for the conditions in Central America.

the condition and situation, oftentimes Central Americans, find themselves are siblings

This year is spent some 15 years since the anniversary anniversary of the coup backed by us back coup in Honduras.

But this isn't something new, it's happened throughout much of Central American history and what the Masala Chilli Panama Haiti, Nicaragua El Salvador, nobody asks the question I think because we would then have to take responsibility for the inhumane. We have continued to inflict on our siblings and Central America.

Enough of that. You I think know much of that. My point is sometimes we're not good neighbors.

Our Command in our text this morning. Is to show compassion and mercy.

We have sometimes falling short but our continued daily. As we awake in the morning to go and do likewise, today is a new day. Tomorrow will be a new day as well. But we have the opportunity to participate in going and doing likewise

Go and do likewise, we all have a lot of work to do. Lots to think about in this parable.

But I'd like to leave you with this question. Something to ponder the priests and the Levites question was what might happen to me. If I go to help this man, the Samaritan suggest, what might happen to the man, if I don't go help him,

Leaving him for dead. This is the question. I would like to leave you or thought to leave you to ponder as well. This morning perhaps the Samaritan was also asking it's not in the text but perhaps the Samaritan was also asking what might not happen to me. If I go to help this man. Another words as I as we engage, when we engage in doing mercy and compassion, are we not transformed?

We grow in understanding who we are and who our neighbor is our siblings around us near and far. We understand we grow in our understanding of who we are in the part of the bigger creation of God's beloved world.

There's something challenging and joyful gut-wrenching and soothing when we roll up our sleeves and get involved, get involved in what God is doing in the world. What God is doing in us inside of us?

When we walk away and we don't participate, when we ignore the opportunity to participate, we miss out on going and doing likewise miss out on the opportunity of transformation.

God at work in US.

Yes, we are called and sent in our baptism to show mercy and to show compassion. To be a neighbor. To be a neighbor.

Let us pray.

Gracious God, you equip us with hearts of love, but at times we lock up, shut down, and have hearts of stone. Be with us today and all our days to come guiding us. Guiding guiding us to be a neighbor to those we encounter locally and globally, sharing the love we have come to know in Christ Jesus.

Amen.