

Message #1026
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"MAKE A DIFFERENCE WHILE YOU CAN"
{Luke 10:25-37}

Trinity Presbyterian Church
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THE GOOD SAMARITAN

Jesus enjoined his followers to "love your neighbor as yourself!"

...a most difficult challenge

...begins with the assumption that the individual has a genuine, healthy, self-love

...I know many people who dislike the person they see in the mirror

...the person who cannot look into the mirror and say, "I'm okay" and point to that image and say, "You're ok!" is one who will find it difficult to love anyone else! So, Jesus says for one to inherit eternal life they must love God with their entire being...and love their neighbor as much as they love that person in the mirror!

In first-century Palestine, the Jews and Samaritans were locked in a blood feud. Divided by geography, religion and race, the two groups spewed venom {much like the Jews and Arabs today}. Each had its own turf. Jews considered the Samaritans to be racial "half-breeds!" The two groups disputed which followed the Bible better and on whose land proper worship should occur.

The Samaritans were often inhospitable to...and hostile toward...the Jews. Many Jewish pilgrims deliberately lengthened their journeys to bypass Samaria. That is why Jesus' encounter with the Samaritan woman {John 4} was earth-shattering. I recall the summer of 1969 when my mom and dad visited us in Southern California. On their last night they decided to stay with my mother's aunt who lived in Inglewood near the Los Angeles International Airport.

Having just moved to Arcadia from Oregon I was totally unfamiliar with the freeway system. I remember driving south on the Harbor Freeway and seeing the Century Boulevard exit. I knew the airport was on Century, therefore, this seemed to be the right turn. Wrong! Moments later we were in the heart of Watts--a racially charged neighborhood where riots had erupted following the assassinations of Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. and Senator Robert Kennedy the year before.

People bypassed Watts...but we were right in the center. Everyone felt very uncomfortable and breathed a sigh of relief once we reached the city limits.

The Bible says: "...Jesus HAD to go through Samaria!"

...no Jew "HAD" to go through Samaria

...nonetheless, Jesus "HAD" to go through Samaria

That act broke a number of barriers and says much about Jesus....

...Jesus was not a racist

...Jesus was not prejudiced

...Jesus indeed loved all

...Jesus was not a male chauvinist

...Jesus went out of His way to make a difference in someone's life!

Jews publicly cursed Samaritans in their synagogues, would not allow Samaritan testimony in Jewish courts, and generally considered Samaritans excluded from eternal life.

Once a Jewish lawyer asked Jesus, "Who is my neighbor?" Jesus, a Jew, surprised

people by mixing freely with Samaritans--as He did in John 4, and told him a story. Robbers attacked a Jewish traveler, beating him and leaving him half-dead. Two Jewish religious leaders ignored the injured man as they passed by. But a Samaritan felt compassion for the Jewish victim--his cultural enemy--and bandaged his wounds, transported him to an inn and provided of his care. Jesus' point in this parable? This "Good Samaritan" was an example of how we should relate to those with whom we differ!

We've all heard the story since we were children...but what are the characteristics a modern day Good Samaritan?

Characteristics of a Modern Day Samaritan

In the home it is kindness

In business it is honesty

In work it is fairness

Toward the weak it is help

Toward the strong it is trust

Toward the wicked it is resistance

Toward the fortunate it is congratulations

Toward the unfortunate it is compassion

Toward the penitent it is forgiveness

Toward each other it is the Golden Rule!

Mother Teresa...

...how else could this dear saint be described then as a Good Samaritan?

She left us with many of her guidelines for living a life of service to others...

"The dying, the cripple, the mental, the unwanted, the unloved...they are Jesus in disguise!"

"It is not how much we do, but how much love we put in the doing. It is not how much we give, but how much love we put in the giving!"

"There is a terrible hunger for love. We all experience that in our lives--the pain, the loneliness We must have the courage to recognize it. The poor you may have right in your own family. Find them...love them!"

"Cat's in the Cradle"

Harry Chapin {Lyrics by Sandra Chapin}

"My child arrived just the other day,

He came to the world in the usual way.

But there were planes to catch, and bills to pay.

He learned to walk while I was away.

And he was talking 'fore I knew it, and as he grew,

he's day, 'I'm gonna be like you, dad.

You know I'm gonna be like you.'

And the cat's in the cradle and the silver spoon,

Little boy blue and the man in the moon.

'When you coming home dad?' 'I don't know when,

But we'll get together then.

You know we'll have a good time then.'

My son turned ten just the other day,

He said, 'Thanks for the ball, dad, come on let's play.

Can you teach me to throw?' I said, 'Not today,

I got a lot to do.' He said, 'That's ok.'

And he walked away, but his smile never dimmed,
Said, 'I'm gonna be like him, yeah.
You know I'm gonna be like him.'

And the cat's in the cradle and the silver spoon,
Little boy blue and the man in the moon.
'When you coming home dad?' 'I don't know when,
But we'll get together then.
You know we'll have a good time then.'

Well, he came from college just the other day,
So much like a man I just had to say,
'Son, I'm proud of you. Can you sit for a while?'
He shook his head, and he said with a smile,
'What I'd really like, dad, is to borrow the car keys.
See you later. Can I have them please?

And the cat's in the cradle and the silver spoon,
Little boy blue and the man in the moon.
'When you coming home son?' 'I don't know when,
But we'll get together then, dad.
You know we'll have a good time then.'

I've long since retired and my son's moved away.
I called him up just the other day.
I said, 'I'd like to see you if you don't mind.'
He said, 'I'd love to, dad, if I could find the time.
You see, my new job's a hassle, and the kid's got the flu,
But it's sure nice talking to you, dad.
It's been sure nice talking to you.'
And as I hung up the phone, it occurred to me
He'd grown up just like me,
My boy was just like me.

And the cat's in the cradle and the silver spoon,
Little boy blue and the man in the moon.
'When you coming home, son?' 'I don't know when,
But we'll get together then, dad.
You know we'll have a good time then.'"

"WHO IS MY NEIGHBOR?"

The parables of Jesus are NOT illustrations of a point. They ARE powerful events that change us! They are meant to turn our lives upside down.

It was Leo Tolstoy who lamented that "Everybody thinks of changing humanity, but nobody thinks of changing himself!"

Jesus' parables should catch us up and carry us away. We find ourselves inside the parables and they are meant to transform us. His parables often shocked people...trouble is, because of their familiarity, they fail to shock us any longer.

During the revolution in Nicaragua, an American Dominican helped a young group of Nicaraguans to enact the parable of the Good Samaritan. They showed how a young Nicaraguan was beaten up and left half dead by the road. A Dominican friar went by

and ignored him. Then a church officer passed by as well. And then one of the enemy, a contra, came by wearing a military uniform. He stopped, put a rosary around the neck of the Nicaraguan, gave him water and carried him to the next village. At this point, half of the congregation began to shout and protest. It was unacceptable that a contra could do this. "They are terrible people. We have nothing to do with them." The mass broke up in chaos!

Jesus' parable was meant to move us from what is comfortable to the uncomfortable!

...from what is convenient...to the inconvenient

...from the norm...to stretching ourselves

...from spiritual lethargy to social action!

...from talking about our faith to putting our faith to work!

The shock of this parable is that this heretic, the Samaritan, offers to help...not the priest or the Levite {the pastor or the elder and deacon}. But the challenge Jesus' message is even deeper!

The lawyer asks: "Who is my neighbor?"

At the end Jesus poses a different question: "Which of these three proved neighbor of the man who had been beaten?"

...the lawyer puts himself as the center of the question

...Jesus' parable transforms the question and puts the wounded man at the center

Lesson one of Jesus' parable: Surrender the center to others.

...that was the theme of the song we just heard

..."I...I...I...I..." we kept hearing

...the focus was on the ego..."I"

Jesus calls us to lose our lives for Him!

...not to bypass the Samaritans of the 21st century

"Anyone who does not take his cross and follow Me is not worthy of Me. Whoever finds their life will lose it, and whoever loses their life for My sake will find it!"

{Matthew 10:38-39}

"If anyone wants to be first, they must be the very last, and the servant of all!"

{Mark 9:35}

...not one person in this room wants to hear these words!

...this is discipleship that is costly

When the Samaritan saw the beaten man he was touched to the center of his being...

...he did what was uncomfortable

...what was inconvenient

...he altered his course

...HE ALLOWED HIMSELF TO BE TOUCHED BY THE NEEDS OF ANOTHER!

...and it cost him

...he took care of another

...he reached out...touched...

...AND he got involved!

...he went into unknown territory

TRUE COMPASSION UPSETS OUR PLANS AND LEADS US IN UNEXPECTED DIRECTIONS!

...dare to reach out to the wounded in our midst

...there may be some here this morning

...there may be some in your neighborhood

...even in your own home

...be prepared then for the consequences

"Who is my neighbor?"

...sometimes we make others our neighbors

...and we make ourselves neighbors to strangers

"LOVING YOUR NEIGHBOR AS YOURSELF"

When I do this...I then discover my true identity...

...why I exist on Planet Earth

...and you experience a true transformation in identity

...others take on prominence

...prejudice is broken

The questions we must ask ourselves today are...

...how can I become a neighbor to the wounded?

...how can I discover myself with that person and for that individual?

...and, how in the process do I discover God in this?

CONCLUSION

God move us from our comfort zone...help us to become people who genuinely love others...care for them.