



**Orthodox Mission of the
Entrance of the Theotokos
into the Temple**

**306 W. Main Street
Emmitsburg, MD 21727**

**The V. Rev. Elias Yelovich,
Rector**

<http://EntranceMission.org>

***Who Is My Neighbor?*
November 28, 2021**

Dear Brothers and Sisters in Christ,

Glory to Jesus Christ! Glory forever!

But he, wanting to justify himself, said to Jesus, "And who is my neighbor?" (Luke 10:29)

The familiarity of the Parable of the Good Samaritan which we will hear on Sunday in our Gospel Lesson blunts the edge of the story as it was told by Jesus. The context of the parable was that of a question asked by a lawyer. That in itself was a danger sign, for lawyers then as now were notorious for twisting words in their effort to find weaknesses in their adversary's position. "What must I do to inherit eternal life?" the lawyer asks. Jesus answers with a question, "What do the scriptures say?" The lawyer responds with an answer that is impressive. He recites the Shema, the basic daily prayer of the Jew as recorded in the book of Deuteronomy. "Hear, O Israel, the Lord our God is ONE; and you shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, soul, mind and strength." And then, indicating that he was really very much aware of the teachings of both the Law and the Prophets, he adds, "... and your neighbor as yourself."

I would have been impressed with his answer, and perhaps the Lord was also, for He says to the lawyer, "You have answered rightly; do this and you will live!" But as lawyers often do, this one pushed the matter one step further. "Tell, me, Master: Who is my neighbor?" In other words, "Who am I obligated to serve? ... and, conversely, who can I get away with not loving, not serving."

Jesus of course responded with the Parable of the Good Samaritan, the very name of that parable being itself a contraction in terms, for the popular opinion of the time in which Jesus lived was that no Samaritan was good! Samaritans represented an entire people who had relaxed the strict prohibitions of the Jewish law, intermarried with idolators and even had a temple of their own apart from the great Temple in Jerusalem. The fact that it was a Samaritan who showed compassion on the man who had been attacked would have really grabbed the attention of those who heard the parable! It was a “no good” Samaritan who fulfilled the essence of the Law by showing compassion.

The fulfillment of the Law and the Prophets is not about obedience and adherence to every jot and tittle of this or that minutiae of the law. It is about showing compassion to others in need. This would seem to be straightforward until we realize that there are to be no exceptions to our actions. The Good Samaritan took a risk helping the injured man. After all, the man injured was not a Samaritan himself, but a Jew, coming down from Jerusalem, most likely after participating in a religious ritual there. The Good Samaritan put himself in danger along a road evidently visited by violent thieves. He dressed the man’s wounds and even paid someone else to look after him. All of this done by one who came from a class of people that the pious religious people of the time considered unacceptable. He was neighbor to the man in need by showing compassion.

It is not always easy to show compassion. Our passions are such that when someone hurts us or hurts someone that we love we want to get revenge; we want to hurt in return. But the fulfillment of the Law and the Prophets that each of us seek to follow in our lives as Orthodox Christians is to hold ourselves back from hurting those who have hurt us and to show compassion instead. Sometimes this means reaching out and lending aid or money or providing other needs. But more often than not it means forgiving – allowing our hearts to be reconciled to people who have hurt us and waiting for the time when they will likewise accept the hand that we extend to them.

The question, Brothers and Sisters, is not “Who is my neighbor?” But rather, “To whom can I be a neighbor.” That is the point of the Parable of the Good Samaritan. And let us never forget that it is our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ Who is the ultimate Good Samaritan to us, bruised and wounded though each of us are by our own sins and passions. He has spared no effort to bring us back to health by the self-giving ministrations of compassion without end!

Fr. Elias

Orthodox Mission of the Entrance of the Theotokos into the Temple

306 West Main Street

Emmitsburg, MD 21727

<https://EntranceMission.org>

717-817-0084