**Have You Not Sins Against The Lord?**

**2 Chronicles 28-8-15**

13th Sunday after Trinity

08.29.2021

Grace to you and peace from God our Father and our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. Amen.

You have heard this Old Testament lesson before. You know how God used the men of Israel to punish their own relatives from Jerusalem and Judah. Ahaz and his people had worshipped Baal, they had gone to the forbidden high places to offer false worship, and as had King Ahaz, they had even burned their sons as sacrificial offerings.

In their rage against them, the men of Israel killed120,000 warriors of Judah in one day. They took all the rest of the people as spoils of war, and they brought the captives to Samaria which is where our text finds us. While God had used these men to show his displeasure and wrath upon those of Judah, these men of Israel had gone far and above what God had intended.

Jesus uses this event as the backdrop in our Gospel lesson. He knew the hatred the Jews – descendants of those from Judah and Jerusalem – had for the Samaritans. There was no love lost between these two people. At one time, they were united as the tribes of Israel, all descendants of Abraham. There was no love lost between them though. They had fallen far from their fear, love, and trust in the only true God.

Jesus uses this animosity to teach about how we are to love and care for our neighbor.

There are times and situations where we may feel justified in what we think about our neighbor. We may know how bad they are, for we have seen their behavior. We may know what they deserve, for we know how they have treated their neighbors, especially us. It may even be that we have Scripture on our side, we use it to justify us in our cause for declaring that our neighbor is a sinner. A sinner who does not deserve anything good from us.

We claim we are righteous in our anger with our neighbor. We are justified in our unwillingness to forgive our neighbor. We claim the place of righteousness for the other ways we treat them – because of their sinfulness. Sometimes, we do not even care whether their sinfulness is against us, or just in general. We can find our own justification for the way we treat others, yet that treatment is nothing more than a rage that reaches up to heaven.

Oded the prophet was right to ask, “Have you not sins of your own against the Lord your God?”

This is rightly queried, and not just of those returning from the war – but for you and me as well.

What gives you the right to think you are better than others? “Have you not sins of your own against the Lord your God?”

Yes, they may have caused you grief or pain, but, “Have you not sins of your own against the Lord your God?”

They may indeed deserve nothing but God’s wrath and eternal punishment. Are you any different? “Have you not sins of your own against the Lord your God?”

Truth be told, all we need do is look in the mirror to see what sinners look like. Who have we sinned against who thinks we do not deserve to be forgiven? Who have we hurt with our words or actions for which we ought to be punished?

We need to be careful that our own deeds are not too closely scrutinized with a magnifying glass. Face it, we think that each of our individual sins are hidden.

Dear friends, they are not hidden. God knows each and every one of them. From those sins we have done in the light of day, to those we think hidden under the cover of darkness, God has seen them all. Even those sins we consider concealed from all squirreled away in the darkest recesses of our minds – the ones which have never come forth from our thoughts – God is intimately acquainted with them. God knows each and every one of them.

To be sure, neither you, nor I, deserve anything more than God’s wrath and eternal punishment.

With this in mind, how then should we treat our neighbors?

Simply put, in the same way that we would like to be treated.

Did you see how the elders cared for those prisoners? They clothed them, gave them sandals, provided them with food and drink, anointed them (that is, they bathed them), and provided transportation that they might return to their families. They were treated as honored guests.

In our Gospel lesson a man asks what he must do, what works must he accomplish, to earn a place in God’s eternal kingdom. He understands that he must love God with all his heart, soul, strength, and mind. He also knows he must love his neighbor as himself. But when Jesus proclaims that he is correct, and that if he does so, he will live – the man balks! He knows he cannot love properly.

He THINKS he is getting it right in his relationship to God. However, in his question to Jesus, he shows he does not do that either. He has some people he knows he cannot love. He has a problem getting over something with certain neighbors which will not allow him to love them. If he truly loved God perfectly – with all his heart, soul, strength, and mind – he would love His neighbor as well. He does not, for trying to justify himself, he asks, “Who is my neighbor?”

There is no neighbor we are not to love. Jesus tells His parable to teach a lesson. Claiming to be godly is different than being godly. Just because you think you are a believer in God does not mean that you are.

Your actions reveal much!

It was the churchly people, in fact leaders in the church – a Priest and a Levite – who are shown to be heartless. One of their kinsmen, a fellow Jew was beaten almost to the point of death. Rather than go to him and care for him, they passed by on the other side. There was no mercy or sympathy in them. They offered no assistance they showed no compassion for him – one of their own for whom they held their respective offices of Priest and Levite.

Indeed, it was one all the listeners knew might be considered an enemy, a Samaritan, who cared for him. Jews had no love or care for Samaritans. This is a grudge that went deep. You did not speak to Samaritans, they were considered vile. You could speak to Gentiles before you could even smile at a Samaritan. Samaritans knew what the Jews thought of them – and likewise avoided them at all costs.

It is a Samaritan though, one of the despised, hated, and rejected who comes to aid the man. He gives willingly of himself, and more, in sacrifice to help this dying man. There is no hesitation in his willingness to assist another, and care for him. We are directed to do likewise. Christ himself says that we are to be christ-like, sacrificing self to care for those who are even the most unlike us. We are to sacrifice self to care for others, especially those in need.

This is what the church does. The church is nothing more than the inn to which the Samaritan brought the man half dead. The innkeeper is nothing more than the one entrusted with the care of the souls brought to this inn, the pastor. Christ himself is the one who has compassion on us, those beaten and dying by our own sinfulness. He binds up our wounds. He pours upon us the oil and wine of baptism. He gives instructions to the innkeeper on how we are to be cared for. He, with his own suffering and death purchased the care and feeding of you who, left on your own, would have died.

What is more, He promises to return and repay what is spent on you care. He does return, each and every week. He delivers what He purchased upon the cross with His innocent suffering and death. The innkeeper delivers to you Christ’s very body and blood – food of healing and strength, food which grants eternal life and salvation.

It is with thanks to God that in His mercy He graciously delivers us from the punishment that we so richly deserve for our sinfulness. Instead, His own Son is the sacrifice which pays for our sin, and brings to us healing and life.

By His gracious intervention, His Spirit moves us to love and care for our neighbors in the same way he cares for, and loves us.

We pray that the Lord bless us with this peace and strength to live as His children now, forever in His kingdom hereafter. Amen.