

Channeling my inner Rev. Paul, I am starting today with a question. How many of you have heard this when you were growing up, "It's not what you say but how you say it"? If you didn't hear that, perhaps you heard: "Actions speak louder than words", or "You can't judge a book by its cover".

In today's reading, we heard the familiar story of the good Samaritan. You have probably heard this story many times, but in case you haven't, I will recap. This man was minding his own business, walking down the road, and was set upon by thieves who robbed him, beat him, and left him for dead. Several people pass by him and do not help; one man even crosses the road to avoid interaction with the victim.

Finally, one man shows compassion, stopping to attend to the wounded man. He dresses his wounds and takes him to an inn, leaving money to cover the cost of his stay and any additional care he may need. Can you imagine doing that for someone you don't even know? You must also remember that the man was from Samaria, which means, during the time that this scripture was

written, he was viewed negatively by society. Samaritans were outcasts. Perhaps that made him uniquely suited for the task, he had nothing more to lose, no appearance to "keep up", no societal expectations to fulfill.

There is another character in this story that you may not have considered who acts just as selflessly as our hero, the Samaritan, the innkeeper. Imagine how he must have felt when this man, obviously near death, is brought into his inn and he was asked to care for him. It would have been very easy for him to say that he was unable to take on the responsibility and additional burden of this man's care along with running the inn, but he does not. He steps up, accepts the responsibility, and believes that he can make a positive difference. He also exhibits faith that the Samaritan will return, as he promises, with additional money to cover the expenses the innkeeper has incurred while caring for the

injured man. This man is another example of someone we should strive to emulate, the consummate "good example".

Presented with the opportunity to demonstrate an act of kindness, rather than calculating all that could go wrong, we are called to embrace the opportunity to help-to love the other person, to show kindness, and respect for their humanity and frailty. "To love our neighbor as ourselves" (Matthew 22:39 and Luke 10:27) the commandment that is second only to loving God with all our heart, soul, and being.

If you are truly coming from a place of love, you do not fear what will happen, but seek to do what God would do. God loves us. He sacrificed his son for us. How much should we, if we are his followers, acting in his name, be willing to give to our fellow man?

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Life is brief and full of the unexpected. We must try to ask ourselves, "What am I going to do with what I have been given today?" What better way to respond to this question than to state with conviction that I am going to seize the moment to act in the most loving way possible to those around me? Will we always be able to step out in faith to help and support others? Of course not, we are still human, but calling upon our faith for strength, we can try.

The Samaritan was able to see past the things that separated him from others. He was able to reach out with compassion and see the injured man on an equal level of humanity. He demonstrated the love of God without hesitation, and we should strive to do the same.