



ST. PATRICK'S ANGLICAN CHURCH

4794 Curtis Blvd, port St. John FL 32927

**Trinity 13
August 29, 2021**

**✠ In The Name of The Father and of The Son
and of The Holy Ghost. Amen.**

The passage selected for the Sermon this morning is taken from the Gospel:

“A certain lawyer stood up and tempted Him, saying “Master, what shall I do to inherit eternal life?” Jesus said unto him, “what is written in the law? How readest thou?” And he answered said, “Thou shalt love the Lord they God with all thy soul and with all thy heart and with all thy mind and with all thy strength, and thou shalt love thy neighbor as thyself. Jesus answering said, thou hast answered right. This do and thou shalt live. But he, willing to justify himself, said unto Jesus, “and who is my neighbor?”

We are all familiar with the 23rd Psalm, and the verse, “yea, though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, I will fear no evil.” In first century Jerusalem, the manifestation of that metaphorical road through the valley was the caravan route to Jericho. It was rugged terrain, challenging in its own right. But it was also beset by gangs and highwaymen that preyed upon the merchants and pilgrims that traversed the road. The place described o in this parable would be easily recognizable to

the crowd surrounding Jesus as that very real and dangerous road. No one would travel it alone. In fact, while we see the parable as a simple teaching about charity, there is more to the story than that. Most people listening to Jesus would have considered the man who was injured as foolhardy and rash. The likely sentiment would have been, the darn fool deserves what he gets for being so stupid. It would not be the normal, rational sentiment to see the man as a worthy cause to interrupt one’s life and responsibilities.

For the priest and the Levite that passed by, there was actually very good reason not to have stopped. Each of them was on the way to the Temple. They would have been ritually purified. To touch this man would be to defile themselves, to undo their purification, and disqualify them from their important duties. It would be a serious question as to which was the greater responsibility for these men. In fact, the only reason the Samaritan can touch the wounded victim is because he is not a Jew, not one of the privileged that serve God in the Temple.

The point of this parable isn’t that bad and sinful men neglected the misfortunate soul. The point is that their religion, their society, their membership in the sensible and

responsible club gave them very real exemption from having to do the job of caring for that man. If this parable happened in our day, the priest and Levite would be the ones dialing 911 on their cell phones as they drove by, fulfilling all righteousness as they hurried on to church. In other words, the parable is meant for us.

It is easy for us to rationalize the opportunities we let pass to serve the train wrecks that populate our lives. We certainly do it as a church. When this country was founded, as well as when Anglicanism was developing in the British Isles, the primary source of charitable care was the Church. The church ran the hospitals, orphanages, homes for unwed mothers and places of refuge for the mentally ill and the handicapped. We gave that all away to the government. It isn't our job anymore. We pay our taxes and we are done. Like 1st Century Judea, we have set up our laws to make that neglect palatable and normal. For them it was ritual purification, for us it is HIPAA, liability and "good Samaritan" laws that insulate us from touching the wounded souls.

It is very much the same in our lives. The victims don't have to be strangers. We set up all kinds of rationalizations that allow us to exclude the people who are difficult for us from our sense of responsibility. Whether colleagues or neighbors or especially family, we are comforted by the knowledge that we aren't being judged when we neglect their needs because we are the "good people", and they don't really deserve our help, our compassion

and our attention. They are simply, "not my problem." Perhaps, God looks upon us, we are the same people in His eyes.

We are being told that our neighbor is the person we encounter who is in distress and need, whether they look like us or not. It is our duty to get them from imminent danger to a place where they can be healed. It is our duty to get them to a safe place. It is our duty to support and pay for the care provided by the people who tend the wounded on our behalf, and not just by paying taxes, by supporting, appreciating and sharing the work with them.

This parable is a hard lesson, because none of us passes the test of living up to God's standards of charity. We may never achieve that goal, but we can do better at rationalizing our excuses for avoiding the difficult and distraught neighbors God has placed in our lives. There should not be any doubt, for Christians, as to the identity of our neighbor, our duty to minister to their needs, and to support the people who care for them in our name. There is also not a doubt that extending ourselves is hard work, difficult physical, mental, emotional and spiritual labor. It is also work that is blessed and work for which we receive God's grace when we make the effort to be obedient and humble in this duty.

Let's pray for the strength to be the Good Samaritan when the opportunity arises. Let's be the best disciples that we can be.

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