

The Lessons Appointed for Use on the Sunday closest to July 13



Proper 10

Year C

RCL

Deuteronomy 30:9-14

Psalms 82

Luke 10:25-37

The Collect

The Collect

O Lord, mercifully receive the prayers of your people who call upon you, and grant that they may know and understand what things they ought to do, and also may have grace and power faithfully to accomplish them; through Jesus Christ our Lord, who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and for

ever. Amen.

Deuteronomy 30:9-14

MOSES said to the people of Israel, “The LORD your God will make you abundantly prosperous in all your undertakings, in the fruit of your body, in the fruit of your livestock, and in the fruit of your soil. For the LORD will again take delight in prospering you, just as he delighted in prospering your ancestors, when you obey the LORD your God by observing his commandments and decrees that are written in this book of the law, because you turn to the LORD your God with all your heart and with all your soul.

“Surely, this commandment that I am commanding you today is not too hard for you, nor is it too far away. It is not in heaven, that you should say, ‘Who will go up to heaven for us, and get it for us so that we may hear it and observe it?’ Neither is it beyond the sea, that you

should say, ‘Who will cross to the other side of the sea for us, and get it for us so that we may hear it and observe it?’ No, the word is very near to you; it is in your mouth and in your heart for you to observe.”

Psalm 82

- 1 God takes his stand in the council of heaven; * he gives judgment in the midst of the gods:
- 2 “How long will you judge unjustly, * and show favor to the wicked?
- 3 Save the weak and the orphan; * defend the humble and needy;
- 4 Rescue the weak and the poor; * deliver them from the power of the wicked.
- 5 They do not know, neither do they understand; they go about in darkness; * all the foundations of the earth are shaken.
- 6 Now I say to you, ‘You are gods, * and all of you children of the Most High;
- 7 Nevertheless, you shall die like mortals, * and fall like any prince.’”
- 8 Arise, O God, and rule the earth, * for you shall take all nations for your own.

Luke 10:25-37

just then a lawyer stood up to test Jesus. “Teacher,” he said, “what must I do to inherit eternal life?” He said to him, “What is written in the law? What do you read there?” He answered, “You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, and with all your soul, and with all your strength, and with all your mind; and your neighbor as yourself.” And he said to him, “You have given the right answer; do this, and you will live.”

But wanting to justify himself, he asked Jesus, “And who is my neighbor?” Jesus replied, “A man was going down from Jerusalem to Jericho, and fell into the hands of robbers, who stripped him, beat him, and went away, leaving him half dead. Now by chance a priest was going down that road; and when he saw him, he passed by on the other side. So likewise a Levite, when he came to

the place and saw him, passed by on the other side. But a Samaritan while traveling came near him; and when he saw him, he was moved with pity. He went to him and bandaged his wounds, having poured oil and wine on them. Then he put him on his own animal, brought him to an inn, and took care of him. The next day he took out two denarii, gave them to the innkeeper, and said, ‘Take care of him; and when I come back, I will repay you whatever more you spend.’ Which of these three, do you think, was a neighbor to the man who fell into the hands of the robbers?” He said, “The one who showed him mercy.” Jesus said to him, “Go and do likewise.”

SERMON

The good Samaritan has become so much a part of our language that I wonder if we even hear it anymore. When I read it, did you think, “The good Samaritan. I remember that one. Wonder where we’ll go for lunch after church?” My mother used to say, “Familiarity builds contempt”, by which she meant that the more familiar a story is, the less attention we pay to it. That’s a pretty common human response. When we think we’ve gotten a thing figured out, we don’t spend much time thinking deeply about it any more. The good Samaritan teaches us to be nice to people, even strangers. There. Got it. Wonder where we’ll go for lunch?

We often read Scripture for shortcuts and easy, familiar answers. I want to do X or I did X now I need to find a Bible passage that says that’s OK. That’s quite

wrong. Scripture is more than a collection of permissions and prohibitions. This is Scripture. It is entitled to our attention. The Eastern Orthodox bishop, Kallistos Ware, once wrote that

It is not the purpose of Christianity to provide easy answers to every question, but to make us progressively aware of a mystery. God is not so much the object of our knowledge as the source of our wonder.

God is not the object of our knowledge. He is the source of our wonder! Really think of that! The Most Holy, who spoke everything into existence, including each of us, has written instruction on how to live within His Creation and He didn't write it on paper; He has written it in the actual lives of people! Let's pay close attention to what God has written in the lives of the people in this parable.

The story begins with a lawyer asking the wrong

question:

But wanting to justify himself, he asked Jesus, “And who is my neighbor?”

Just like a lawyer. He knows what the law is. He just recited it! Now he’s looking for ways to avoid it. Jesus isn’t fooled. He knows exactly what is behind that question. The lawyer wants to “justify” himself. In other words, he wants to demonstrate his righteousness, but he wants permission to avoid the inconvenient aspects of righteousness, the soul-searing demands of justification which must involve a positive and loving orientation to all of God’s children, all the time. Even those you don’t like very much.

Is this not us now, in 2019? Has not our public discourse become so divisive and toxic that we can scarce stand the sight of each other? Have we not turned a corner from, “I disagree with what you say, but I will de-

pend to the death your right to say it” to, “I disagree with what you say, and I wish you were dead”? Even a casual glance at our contemporary conversation with each other reveals a hostility that is inconsistent with that positive and loving orientation toward all of God’s children Jesus teaches.

To put the man right, Jesus tells a story:

Jesus replied, “A man was going down from Jerusalem to Jericho, and fell into the hands of robbers, who stripped him, beat him, and went away, leaving him half dead. Now by chance a priest was going down that road; and when he saw him, he passed by on the other side. So likewise a Levite, when he came to the place and saw him, passed by on the other side.

The priest and the Levite aren’t examples of how hypocritical religious folk can be. They aren’t exceptionally evil or unsympathetic people. They are demonstrating to the lawyer the error in what he was suggest-

ing by his question. The errors in our lives are often invisible to us until we recognize them in the lives of others. THEN we see much more clearly.

The story of the good Samaritan a story rooted in a tragic division very similar to that which divides our people today. In Jesus' time, there was a lot of mistrust between the people of Israel and those of Judah. That enmity is why Jesus chose a Samaritan as the least likely person to help a southerner. The point of the story isn't a comment on human response to injury. It is about the divisions between people which we allow to separate us one from the other and our belief that justification may be found in membership in a group. That division is unnatural. It's unnatural to us as followers of Christ and it's unnatural to us as humans. We are a caring species. This week we saw the Vice President of the United States view the conditions of the men in cages at

our border. He turned and walked on the other side. This is unnatural! It is evil. We respond to injury and hurt. A shopping center blew up this week and people were running TOWARD the explosion to help the injured. I saw a news piece not long ago of a man who ran to a car which was on fire, braved the flames and successfully extricated the driver who was tangled in her seat belt, saving her life. These stories are uplifting and I love to hear them, but it's not because I think we're better people than the priest and the Levite in Jesus' story. That's a story for a different sermon. The priest and the Levite are demonstrating the way we allow our attempts to justify ourselves lead us to act in unnatural ways. In Jewish belief, touching a dead body (and he was half dead) would render the one touching ritually unclean. The priest and the Levite then couldn't perform their duties so they walked by on the other

side, justifying themselves by saying, “My church duties are important, more important than responding to the suffering of this man.”

That’s patent nonsense! I’m convinced that people in Jesus’ time were no less willing to come to the rescue of one injured than are we. The Good Samaritan isn’t a simple morality story teaching that we should be kind to each other. Yes, we should be kind to each other, but that’s not the point of the story. The Good Samaritan is an account of human unwillingness to surrender to God. That’s what makes the story so riveting.

But a Samaritan while traveling came near him; and when he saw him, he was moved with pity. He went to him and bandaged his wounds, having poured oil and wine on them. Then he put him on his own animal, brought him to an inn, and took care of him. The next day he took out two denarii, gave them to the innkeeper, and said, ‘Take care of him; and when I come back, I will repay you what-

ever more you spend.'

The Samaritan wasn't moved by a search for justification. He didn't search the law for rules and exceptions. He was moved by pity, pity at the suffering of another person. That pity, that empathy for the pain of another, allowed him to set aside political differences and respond to need. THAT I would suggest, is our natural response to suffering. Anything we allow to disrupt that natural response leads us to act unnaturally.

I searched for words to end this sermon better than those of my friend, Judy Dugas, and came a cropper. Here's what she wrote:

To me, the essence of Jesus' teaching was to 'Love one another' not because they were 'worthy', but ANYWAY. To 'love anyway' is much harder, more selfless, more powerful than to 'love because'. Jesus did not qualify his love for all people. Sadly many Christians seem to proclaim their love of human-

ity, but then declare that they really don't care much for 'some' people. When they say, 'I'll pray for you,' they often are saying, 'I pray for you to change so I can love you.'

Even so unlikely a person as a Samaritan knows better than that!

AMEN

BENEDICTION

Speaking of the commandments of God, Moses told the people:

“Surely, this commandment that I am commanding you today is not too hard for you, nor is it too far away. It is not in heaven, that you should say, ‘Who will go up to heaven for us, and get it for us so that we may hear it and observe it?’ Neither is it beyond the sea, that you should say, ‘Who will cross to the other side of the sea for us, and get it for us so that we may hear it and observe it?’ No, the word is very near to you; it is in your mouth and in your heart for you to observe.”

You know how God wishes you to respond to human suffering. The word is very near to you; it is in your mouth and in your heart. Go and do in accordance with it.

The Lord bless you and keep you;
the Lord make his face to shine upon you, and be gracious to you;
the Lord lift up his countenance upon you, and give you

peace.

Optional parts of the readings are set off in square brackets.

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