

Pentecost 5 7/14/19
Luke 10:25-37 10C

WHICH OF THESE THREE, DO YOU THINK, PROVED TO BE A NEIGHBOR TO THE MAN WHO FELL AMONG THE ROBBERS?

A feisty lawyer once stood up to put Jesus to the test.

We have to understand this feisty lawyer is not the kind of lawyer we typically think of in our day, ie, the person who would help you write your last will and testament. This kind of lawyer was an expert in the Old Testament, the Mosaic law. This is the guy you would go to with a question like: could you use your Keurig to make coffee on the Sabbath Day? After all, you were not to do any labor on the Sabbath Day, right?

So, this feisty lawyer put Jesus to the test, and in answer to his question, He tells the parable of the Good Samaritan, as we commonly call it, and the parable culminates in the Lord asking this feisty lawyer a question, “Which of these three, do you think, proved to be a neighbor to the man who fell among the robbers (v. 36)?” That’s a great question, especially for us to consider this morning.

Jesus says a man is traveling from Jerusalem to Jericho, when he fell into the hands of robbers. They stripped him and beat him, leaving him half dead. So far, no one has shown him any mercy at all. But then again, robbers are not in the mercy business. They are in the beating, stripping, leaving you half-dead, and stealing all your stuff business.

A priest happens by. Now, a priest was an upper-class citizen, which means he was most likely riding a horse or a donkey. He would not be walking from Jerusalem to Jericho. So, there he would be, riding along on his trusty steed, when he spots this naked, beaten, and half dead man, lying on the side of the road. Now, a priest would know the Old Testament

law and that law clearly said if you saw your fellow Jew being mauled or being beaten by robbers, you are bound to help him. But, here's the thing: he didn't see it happen. He just stumbled upon his man, naked, beaten, half dead. And, how was he to know this man was his fellow Jew? He's naked, so he's not wearing the distinctive clothing of a Jew. He's half-dead, so he couldn't shout to the priest, "Hey, I'm your fellow Jew." And remember, to come in contact with a non-Jew would make him "unclean". And furthermore, what if, just what if, this man were not merely half-dead, but dead, dead? The Law said you had to stay 6 feet away from a dead body, so if he went to help and the man was dead, the priest would become "unclean," which meant he could not participate in the worship at the temple, which would mean he could not receive the tithes he and his family would depend on for existence. So, there this priest is, sitting on his animal, not sure if this man were his fellow Jew, being sure to stay 6 feet away from this man because he doesn't know if he's dead. So, this priest shows the man no mercy.

Next to pass by was a Levite. A Levite was not in the same class as priests, so he was most likely hoofing it, walking to Jericho. He comes upon this man, beaten, naked, half dead. The Levite, too, passes by on the other side. Couple of reasons. For one thing, he could go and ask him if he's all right, he could hold his hand, but he really has no resources to help this man. After all, he cannot carry him all the way to Jericho. But, there's more to it than that. In the context of the Old Testament, priests and Levites worked together. So, we could take an educated guess that this priest and this Levite worked together, so he knew the priest went ahead of him and he's thinking if the priest did not stop and show him mercy, why should he? Think about it. If he stopped to help, he would really be

criticizing the priest. He would be criticizing priest's interpretation of the law and here he is, just a lowly Levite. So, he shows the man no mercy; he just passes by on the other side, leaving the man lying there, naked, half dead.

And, along comes the 3rd man. He sees the man naked, half-dead, and he takes action. He binds up his wounds, pouring in oil and wine, puts him on his animal, and takes him to the inn

And, Jesus tells us this man was a Samaritan and you know what that means. Back in those days, Samaritans and Jews didn't like each other very much. Samaritans took care of Samaritans, Jews took care of Jews, but they did not care for one another. But, that's the point: he doesn't care if he's a Samaritan or Jew, he just sees he's naked, half dead, lying by the side of the road, and shows him mercy.

He takes the man to the inn, leaves him in the care of the innkeeper, and promises to repay whatever more expenses the innkeeper has. This man is now the innkeeper's responsibility. And he does it – the innkeeper shows him mercy, at the request of the Samaritan.

Jesus asks the question: which of these three proved to be a neighbor to the man who fell among the robbers? The priest? The Levite? The Samaritan? Three choices. Three potential answers. You can quickly eliminate the priest and the Levite. That would leave the Samaritan. But the lawyer who stood up to test Jesus answers this way, "The one who showed him mercy (v. 37)." He didn't say it was the Samaritan. He answered, "The one who showed him mercy."

Have you ever thought who it is who shows you mercy?

Like the man, you, too, are traveling. You are traveling from the cradle to the grave. And as you make your way in that journey, you often find yourself in the hands of robbers, who strip you of your dignity, rob you

of your worth, and leave you half dead along the road. These robbers are called the world, your flesh, and the devil.

And quite honestly, you get beaten up by them because you think it's cool to hang out with them, play their games, games like idolatry, adultery, fornication, lying, coveting, jealousy, envy, strife, fits of anger and rage. The truth of God's Word is that you are a sinner, who does sinful things. And, sin leaves you naked in guilt and shame, beaten up, robbed, dying on the side of the road.

Many people come by and talk to you. Some say "Sin? It's no big deal. Everybody else is doing it. So, live a little. You only go around once."

Others will come, probably looking nice in their white shirts and ties. And, they will give you rules, rules to make yourself alive, like "Don't eat meat on Friday. Don't drink coffee. Don't dance, don't play cards. Pray five times a day facing the east." But the truth is, you cannot make yourself alive in Christ by following more and more rules.

Oh, and the priests and Levites have a lot of company. They will thumb their nose at you because they think they are better than you; after all, you sinned. You're bad! You deserve what you got. So, if you die and perish in your sin, they could care less.

But, along comes our Lord Jesus Christ. He comes to have mercy and compassion on us. He comes to take on our flesh and blood. He did journey to Jerusalem for us. There, the devil, the world, and the sinful flesh attacked Him. They stripped Him. They flogged Him. They forced Him to carry a cross, and then they nailed Him to it. Six hours later, He died upon it, died for you, in your place, to defeat those unholy three; to bring you the

forgiveness of sins, life, and salvation; to bring back to you dignity and worth.

And after our Lord Christ was died and buried, He rose the third day to come to you in your wounded state. He rose to carry you, as a shepherd carries his little lamb, to His Inn, here, His holy Christian Church. Here, He cares for you, until that times that He comes to take you to Himself in heaven. In this Inn, He gives you gifts, gifts of Word and Sacraments; through which He brings you forgiveness of sins, life, and salvation, healing, health, and strength; as He takes you who were naked in your guilt and shame and clothes you with His own righteousness in the water of your Baptism; as He feeds you with His life-giving Body and Blood; as He speaks words of comfort and cheer into your ears.

The one who showed him mercy. That one is Jesus Christ.