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St Paul's Lutheran Church  
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Austin, MN, 55912-1749

Pastor Ted Barthels  
sermon preached on-  
July 14, 2013  
8<sup>th</sup> Sunday after Pentecost

Scripture Lessons: Deuteronomy 30:9-14; Colossians 1:1-14  
Hymns: 11; (244) 389, 373:1-4, 413:1

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

Sermon Text: Luke 10:25-37

25 And behold, a certain lawyer stood up and tested Him, saying, "Teacher, what shall I do to inherit eternal life?" 26 He said to him, "What is written in the law? What is your reading of it?" 27 So he answered and said, " 'You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, with all your soul, with all your strength, and with all your mind,' and 'your neighbor as yourself.' " 28 And He said to him, "You have answered rightly; do this and you will live."

29 But he, wanting to justify himself, said to Jesus, "And who is my neighbor?" 30 Then Jesus answered and said: "A certain man went down from Jerusalem to Jericho, and fell among thieves, who stripped him of his clothing, wounded him, and departed, leaving him half dead. 31 Now by chance a certain priest came down that road. And when he saw him, he passed by on the other side. 32 Likewise a Levite, when he arrived at the place, came and looked, and passed by on the other side. 33 But a certain Samaritan, as he journeyed, came where he was. And when he saw him, he had compassion. 34 So he went to him and bandaged his wounds, pouring on oil and wine; and he set him on his own animal, brought him to an inn, and took care of him. 35 On the next day, when he departed, he took out two denarii, gave them to the innkeeper, and said to him, 'Take care of him; and whatever more you spend, when I come again, I will repay you.' 36

So which of these three do you think was neighbor to him who fell among the thieves?”

37 And he said, “He who showed mercy on him.” Then Jesus said to him, “Go and do likewise.” (NKJV)

This is the Word of God!

Sanctify us, oh Lord, through Your truth. Your Word is truth. Amen.

In Christ Jesus, dear fellow Redeemed

INTRO: Jesus’ Parables –

are among the most memorable of the lessons which Jesus taught. His intended use of parables was to get a spiritual point across in a way that people would comprehend and remember.

This morning’s text contains one of Jesus most familiar parables, “The Good Samaritan.” It has a powerful point that people easily grasp and certainly should remember, but the lesson behind that point is the greater lesson, and unfortunately many people fail to grasp that lesson. This happens because all too often this familiar parable is presented without its greater context. It is only with this context of the lawyer (that is a scholar in Biblical law) confronting Jesus with a vitally important question that the greater lesson of the parable becomes apparent. It is Jesus’ answer to that lawyer’s question that directs us to the main lesson Jesus presented that day, using the parable to bring home that most important point. So then let us also consider the Lord’s response to the Scribes question, -

**Theme: What Shall I Do to Inherit Eternal Life?**

This question is a significant question for each and every one of us, and we must hold in our hearts and minds the right and proper answer to this question. Since the question came from a master of Jewish religious law, Jesus first directed attention to the law and what it has to say. So then we also need to understand -

**I. What Does the Law Say?**

The lawyer responded to Jesus' question with a true and accurate summary of the law of God.

We read in –

**Luke 10:27-28** So he answered and said, “‘You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, with all your soul, with all your strength, and with all your mind,’ and ‘your neighbor as yourself.’” 28 And He said to him, “You have answered rightly; do this and you will live.”

Jesus has an advantage that the rest of us do not possess. Jesus knew the man's heart. Jesus knew the heart of this man who had been trained to think in terms of achieving righteousness by one's own strict observance of the law of God, and by keeping all of God's ordinances in one's life. He also knew beforehand that this man had his own doubts about his personal record in maintaining the law, doubts that are revealed by the lawyer's follow up question.

**Luke 10: 29** But he, wanting to justify himself, said to Jesus, “And who is my neighbor?”

We are not left without any doubt about why the scribe asked this question. He was seeking to justify himself. He knew that he could not live up to what he must have felt was too comprehensive of an answer to this question. He already must have felt a twinge of conscience that he was not loving all those whom he should regard as neighbor as much as he loved self. Maybe if this scope of people could be limited to those who actually lived next door, or those who were near and dear to him he could make a case that he was upholding the law of God in His life. **He sought to justify himself!** He wanted to make a case that he was a righteous man, and that he would be successful in securing a righteousness that would avail before God on his own. He not only desired to be righteous in his own eyes, but also in the eyes of God, but by his own merit!

Jesus' answer to this second question, “**Who is my neighbor?**” is the parable before us, the parable we know as the “Good Samaritan.”

We know the details of the parable. There were stretches of road in the hill country surrounding Judea that were dangerous because of the robbers that could hide in the rough terrain and so centered their activity there. A Jewish man was victimized by some of these robbers as he traveled from Jerusalem to Jericho. We would say today that he

“got mugged,” and was severely beaten. In the parable both a priest and a Levite passed by the man, both giving him a wide berth. They didn’t know him. They didn’t want to get involved. He was not their concern.

The third person presented by Jesus as passing by was a Samaritan. The animosity, the hostility that existed between the Jews and the Samaritans went back centuries. The Samaritans were mixed blood. Yes, they had some Jewish blood in their veins, but also the blood of many other peoples who had been brought to the land by the Assyrian deportation program. For that they were despised by the Jews. When the Jews returned from the Babylonian exile they did not allow the Samaritans to join in rebuilding the temple. They did not worship with them because their worship had been corrupted with a mixture of heathen religions. For that they were despised by the Samaritans. Resentment ran deep and long. If any would be expected to pass by this injured Jewish man surely it would be this Samaritan. Indeed, one might expect him to find some small pleasure in the evil that befell the Jewish man.

That, however, was not the response Jesus provided for the Samaritan in this parable. It was the Samaritan that took compassion on the injured man. He not only tended to his wounds on the spot, he took him along with him to an inn. He even went so far as to provide for the man’s care after he left. This was at no small expense. Maybe two denarii doesn’t sound like much to us, but it was equivalent of two days wages for a common laborer.

At this point Jesus truly exposed the vanity of the self-righteous observance of the law. He exposed the rationalizations and ends runs limiting the application of the law while restricting other activities beyond the law. He made it obvious to all that one’s neighbor included any and all who are in need, any and all to whom we might extend a loving and caring hand. Yes, even those we don’t like, even those who resent us and are our enemies may be included among our neighbors whom we should love as ourselves.

So what did the law say regarding the question, “**What must I do to be saved?**” It says exactly what Jesus said to this lawyer, “**Do this and you will live!**” But that is the tricky part. Perhaps the lawyer assumed the first portion of the law’s summary was the easier part for him, ‘**You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, with all your soul, with all your strength, and with all your mind,**’(v.27). Really? With **ALL** your heart? With **ALL** your soul? With **ALL** your strength? With **ALL** your mind? Don’t we often cave

in this regard, and I do mean often, and I mean not just slip a little, but really cave in to the desires and rationalizations of the flesh? Time and again WE reveal that we want things on our terms, not God's. We are right there with the rest of the world, presenting excuses and rationalizations for why our failures to obey the holy will of God are not failures to love and respect God with our whole being. It is sin that is present with us.

**What must I do to be saved?** "Love my neighbor as myself." Far easier said than done. We live in a world that looks out for number one! An occasional kind word or compassionate gesture is a far cry from truly loving our neighbor as one's self, especially when we get Jesus' point that the term "neighbor" extends to that individual we may regard as unreasonable, or may even think of as a jerk, as he cuts us off on the highway, or takes our parking spot, or speaks unkind words about us to others. **Love him as myself?!** And you think you can do what needs to be done to inherit eternal life?! Even small petty grievances rile us to love less than the law requires.

But the will of God is clear. If we are to attain a righteousness that avails before God, we must "**be perfect even as our Father in heaven is perfect**" (Matthew 5:48). What the law reveals is that "**All have sinned and all fall short of the glory of God**" (Romans 3:23).

We desperately need to hear a different message.

## II. What Does the Gospel Say?

What was Jesus' message? What did He teach and preach to people for those three and half years of His public ministry. He made it plain that one could not inherit eternal life by doing something, even something special or extraordinary in one's life. Jesus went from town to town preaching repentance and the forgiveness of sins that was to be found in Him. Jesus made it clear that He is "**the way, the truth and the life.**" **No one comes to the Father except through Him** (John 14:6). The righteousness that avails before God is the perfect righteousness of Christ. This righteousness is credited to sinners by the grace of God. This righteousness comes by grace through faith alone! The message of the gospel is to despair of attaining righteousness by the deeds of law, "**For by the deeds of the law no flesh will be justified in His sight**" (Romans 3:20).

So then it is by faith. It is by God graciously opening our hearts to believe, and simply receiving the gift of salvation that brings us to be heirs of eternal life, “**heirs of God and joint heirs with Christ**” (Romans 8:17).

It is from this gift of salvation that the love of Christ flows, filling our hearts with His love and then flowing from our hearts to others. But that does not alter the foundation of our salvation; it is of grace and not of works. We do well to recall the familiar Scripture passage that puts our works in their proper place.

**Ephesians 2:8-10** For by grace you have been saved through faith, and that not of yourselves; *it is* the gift of God, not of works, lest anyone should boast. For we are His workmanship, created in Christ Jesus for good works, which God prepared beforehand that we should walk in them.

Believing in Jesus for righteousness and life, knowing that in Jesus we have forgiveness of sins, seeing in Jesus the love of God for us, this is the key that opens our hearts that we also may love God and truly glorify His name. Then love for our neighbor flows from a regenerated heart. The good we do is not an attempt to make us better people, but because the love of Christ rules our hearts. We no longer live to ourselves, but to Him who loved us and gave Himself for us (Galatians 2:20).

It is with this faith in our hearts that we can love our neighbor, even love our enemy, for “**when we were still sinners Christ died for us**” (Romans 5:8)! This amazing love, this amazing grace lives within us and flows through us because we live with the certainty that because of what Christ has done we shall inherit eternal life.

AMEN.

And the peace of God which passes all understanding shall keep your hearts and minds in Christ Jesus. Amen.