

7 PENTECOST

Proper 10

July 11, 2010

Deuteronomy 30:9-14

Psalm 25:1-9

Colossians 1:1-14

Luke 10:25-37

May the words of my mouth and the secret meditations of our hearts be always acceptable in your sight, Oh Lord, our strength and our redeemer. AMEN

“Lead me in your truth and teach me, for you are the God of my salvation.”

In preparation for today, I have read a number of commentaries, and other sermons based on the well known parable of the Good Samaritan. One listed the characters that played an important part in the story.

There are the robbers, the victim, the priest, the Levite, the Samaritan, and the inn keeper.

You may have imagined the road being traveled; lots of rocks in which the robbers could hide.

You may have imagined the inn. Nothing special.. just a safe place, a roof, and an inn-keeper ...someone paid to attend the injured man.

Maybe you also considered the robbers.. what kind of people were they, what needs did they have, why were they making a living by robbing and beating innocent people going from Jerusalem to Jericho.. When Sunday school classes prepare to act out the story.. The boys are always anxious to play the part of the robbers.. Lots of action!

Playing the victim is no where near as much fun. Who wants to get beaten up and left to

die? But have you thought about why this man was traveling alone? What was his business? What might he have been carrying that the robbers took from him? How did he feel.. being left half dead? Have you ever felt battered by circumstances?

The shy ones in the class want to play the parts of the priest and Levite. They only need to walk by.. say nothing.. do nothing.. except maybe cast a glance at the victim.. These children are innocent enough not to realize what they are doing, ignoring a needy human being; “not doing those things we ought to have done” as it says in one of our confessions.

Now, I know what the Jesus was describing and why in his day the priest and Levite avoided the victim.. but those reasons may not affect us today. But...

An number of years ago I heard a Southern preacher tell this story as if it happened in the mid 20th century.

When he came to the priest... he used the image of a preacher driving a Cadillac (I expect today the preacher would be driving a more expensive car) rushing to the revival where he was to be the main speaker.. Too important... Too busy with his ‘mission’ to be interrupted by a person in need.

The Levite he described as the song leader to the same revival.. most important his job.. to prepare the crowd to hear the message...

And the ‘neighbor’ was a old black man in a model-T Ford.. on his way to the revival, who knew he would not be missed, this humble man stopped to minister to the man who fell among thieves.

“Show me your ways, O Lord, and teach me your paths;” asks the Psalmist.

And in faith the psalmist acknowledges that God ‘guides the humble in doing right, and teaches his way to the lowly.’”

Now I do not know which character in this story is most like you.

As I think about it, I hope I am never one of the robbers.. but maybe I have robbed someone of something they held precious.. Oh, not intentionally but it by something I said that tarnished a memory or took away a hope.. Thank goodness for God’s forgiveness when I repent.

I know that I would like to be the Samaritan, always taking time to show mercy, but I am realistic enough to know that sometimes I am more like the priest (revival preacher) or Levite (well not actually a song leader but

someone who starts a meeting) ..and therefore too busy or important to see or stop to meet the need of a ‘victim’.

There have been times in my life, and I expect in your life, that you, individually or as the church community have felt like a victim. Beaten, battered, where things looked so bleak.. that we wondered if being ‘half dead’ it would be easier to just give up.. what might it cost us to survive?

I do not know what the victim in the story might have thought. He might have blamed himself for what happened.. or he might have blamed those who robbed him, and beat him up... Or he might have blamed God for not protecting him.

Did he lose hope when the first persons on the scene ignored him? Did he think it would be easier just to give up and die?

And what did he think when someone stopped to help him.. a stranger.. a foreigner.. the last person he would have expected.. did he worry that this person would finish him off.. complete the job the first robbers had started..

Or did he hold onto hope.. that this person would be his savior.

Did he give thanks.. to the savior, the one who showed mercy? To the inn keeper.. to God?

He faced a new future. He was not the same person who started out on the journey. He had been a victim.. and he had been saved.

When he was well, was he one of the humble ones that God guides in doing right?

We each and as a congregation have played each and every part in the story at one time or another in our history.

So as we at St. John's face our future, let us acknowledge where we have failed;

Let us accept God's grace,
God's forgiveness and love,
and give thanks for our savior.

And choose to look forward with trust and hope.

“To you, O Lord, I lift up my soul; my God I put my trust in you, let me not be humiliated, nor let my enemies triumph over me.” Do not let enemies fear, depression, guilt, shame not fatigue triumph over me.

Paul writes “we have heard of your faith.. the love you have... and of the hope...” “we have not ceased praying for you and asking that you may be filled with the knowledge of

God's will in all spiritual wisdom and understanding.”

Moses reminds us: “The word is very near you; it is in your mouth and in your heart for you to observe.”

So as we accept the good in our past and look to our future with faith...

Let us pray again..

O Lord.. mercifully receive our prayer as we call upon you, and grant that we may know and understand what things we ought to do, and also have the grace and power faithfully to accomplish them; through Jesus Christ our Lord, who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, now and for ever. AMEN