

Luke 10:25-37  
July 10, 2016

8<sup>th</sup> Sunday after Pentecost  
Series C

Christ Lutheran Church  
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A long time seminary professor, who trained many, many pastors through the years,  
received a standing ovation after his final lecture. As he headed out of the lecture room,  
he turned and the class fell silent for a parting word. The professor took in the class with his eyes and  
said: “Just remember, Jesus is the question to all of your answers.” And with that, he left.

Today we heard a beloved and familiar parable of Jesus – The Parable of the Good Samaritan.

The parable sits in the middle of an exchange between Jesus and a lawyer – an exchange of questions.

The lawyer, who addresses Jesus respectfully as Teacher – seeks Jesus wisdom.

The two exchange questions following good Jewish tradition, rabbinic – teacher – tradition.

A good teacher knows how to ask questions, and Jesus was the best.

In fact, throughout the gospels Jesus asks questions, hard questions, lots of questions –

Why? Because Jesus seeks to draw us in and transform us, not just fill us with answers and information.

Martin Copenhaver, author of Jesus is the Question writes: “Questions are an invitation to further  
reflection. For the most part answers close and questions open. It is telling that the word *question* contains  
the word *quest*. That is, a question sends you on a journey and often in search of something valuable.”

And so to the questions – the lawyer first: “What must I do to inherit eternal life?”

Jesus comes back with two questions of His own: “What is written in the law? How do you read it?”

By answering with a question, Jesus invites the lawyer into a conversation,

what do you think is the answer? How do you interpret the law?

The lawyer quickly combines two different verses, one from Deuteronomy and one from Leviticus,  
to offer a comprehensive statement of godly living. Love God & your neighbor as yourself.

Jesus likes his answer and as if to send him on his way says: “Do this and you will live.”

Before we proceed, there is something here that I don’t want us to miss – something in these questions.

“What must I do to INHERIT eternal life?” Pause with me on that word “inherit.” What does it mean?

Is there anything you DO to inherit? Is not by its very nature an inheritance

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a gift because of your relationship with the giver?

Let us first remember that like the lawyer and Jesus' first hearers, we are part of the family of God.

As Christians, we are beloved children through baptism and therefore our inheritance is already sure!

The only thing we can do is respond – make good use of the gift.

This is why God gives us the law – a guide to help us live good lives, godly lives.

And so Jesus asks: "What is written in the law?" and then says: "Do this and you will live."

The lawyer, not quite satisfied, follows up with a second question.

If doing this, that is, loving God and loving neighbor as oneself, is how to truly lead godly life,

then defining neighbor is important. Give me specifics here Jesus –

he wants to justify, that is prove, that he indeed is loving his neighbor.

He is probably thinking "I have taken very good care of my neighbors" – that is, of the good Jewish people living

in his neighborhood. Society in Jesus' day was strongly tribal – you identified with your people. That is

clear in today's story because we know Jews and Samaritans didn't consider each other neighbors.

So he asks: "Who is my neighbor?" Jesus answers again with a question – but with a marvelous parable inbetween.

Just before bedtime a young child turned to her grandfather: "Tell me a story grandpa."

"What kind of story would you like to hear, sweetie?" "One with me in it." ... "One with me in it."

And so Jesus tells the lawyer a story – one with his eager new student in it. \_

2 experts in the Law, perfect stand-ins for the lawyer, walk by a beaten & nearly dead man on the side of the road.

They know the commandments, to love God and neighbor, even have them memorized.

But they don't stop to help a stranger at the point of death. Why? Because of what they saw.

Before this parable is about doing, it is about seeing. All the priest & Levite saw was a bloody & unclean stranger,

if they touched him it would make them ritually unclean & require time consuming & complicated washing

rituals, he was also someone suspect under the law, and it could even be a possible trap; not a neighbor.

And so, it turns out, they actually *do* do something: they cross over to the other side of the road.

Why? Because the risk, the time, the money-too much-so they cross the street so they don't have to look twice.//

You've probably seen this sign in a yard. It is part of a PA public service campaign for motorcycle

safety. Watch for motorcycles. Look twice save a life. But do you know why it is necessary? PAGE 3

Because car drivers literally don't see motorcycles – they don't see them!

Brain researchers hypothesize that the car driver's brain has learned to exclude the non-essentials,

and to focus only on those objects which are a threat to survival.

On the road, those objects are predominately other cars and trucks.

Because vehicles are wider than they are tall, the brain classifies threats as objects with horizontal lines.

The brain eliminates from consciousness as non-threatening things with vertical lines.

Trees, light poles, sign posts– none of these vertical objects are liable to jump out

in front of the driver & cause an accident. Along comes a motorcycle – vertical too.

A driver turns left while looking directly at the motorcycle bearing down upon him, he simply doesn't see it!

Truth be told most of us see horizontally and pass by on the other side everyday – without looking twice.

We all too often are just too busy with our own stuff even to notice the plight of the needy, lonely or poor.

We too have strict definitions in our minds of neighbor – like the lawyer, the priest and the Levite –

we don't consider everyone our responsibility.

Our problem therefore isn't knowing the general demands of the law – love God and neighbor -what we should do

– its having the vision to see the person in need truly as our neighbor – worthy of risking time and money.

How do we get that kind of vision?? We look to Jesus – He loved vertically & He teaches us today to do the same!

Vertical love doesn't count the cost or have a strict definition of neighbor–vertical love comes down,

gives all, is full of compassion and mercy – it is the love made known on the horizontal & vertical cross

for all! So friend–see with Jesus eyes this week– look twice–horizontally yes, but also vertically.

When you drive past the nursing home– look twice–&remember the folks you know there, stop in &visit.

When you drive past the food pantry – look twice – and plan to volunteer or make a donation.

When you drive past a school – look twice – do what you need to do to serve there, PAGE 4

maybe as a big brother or big sister for a needy child. When you drive past our church – look twice

stop in and find out what you can do to serve alongside your brothers and sisters in Christ

as our youth will do this week, maybe the GAIN event in August or on the trip this fall.

When you watch the news – look twice -let it move you to pity and to action –

get involved in some way to help the most vulnerable in our nation and in our world.

The Parable of the Good Samaritan is a story with you in it! The question: Which character will you be?

The lawyer's answer was clear – obvious – so, as Jesus says – “Go and do likewise!” AMEN