

## Sermon for March 15, 2015 The Fourth Sunday of Lent

### Luke 10:25-37

BLESSINGS TO YOU AND PEACE FROM GOD THE FATHER, OUR LORD AND SAVIOR JESUS CHRIST, AND THE HOLY SPIRIT. AMEN.

Today in our **4<sup>th</sup> week** of Lent and our **3<sup>rd</sup> week** of our '*Parables of Jesus*' preaching series we heard a gospel story of **mercy** which is only told through the eyes of St. Luke, the physician. This parable has become one of Jesus' most **famous** parables, "*The Story of the Good Samaritan*." This parable is **so** popular that when we hear someone called a '*Good Samaritan*' we know **exactly** what is meant. **All** 50 states including the District of Columbia have a law which is known as the "*Good Samaritan*" law which offers legal protection to people who give **reasonable** assistance to those who are injured, ill, in peril, or otherwise incapacitated.

**Today**, I would like to focus on the portion of this parable that points to the question of **just who is our neighbor**. It **never** ceases to amaze me how the Holy Spirit works. How the Spirit opens our eyes and our hearts to the expression **of** and the different ways **for us** to be a neighbor to others in our current world. Because this week while I was **preparing** for this sermon I became aware of 3 very different examples of how this parable, and of how the lawyer's question to

Jesus of 'And who is my neighbor?' --is **still** a viable question for us in the 21<sup>st</sup> century.

Today with the advent of the internet and technology news is **almost** instantaneous. We can hear of and see events from **all** corners of the world happening **right** before us. Our world today has become smaller and smaller as someone we may have never heard of or known about before can become a **face**, an **experience**, with whom we can connect, a neighbor, even though they may live  $\frac{1}{2}$  a **world** away. The comparatively small world of Jesus' time is a thing of the past for sure.

That brings me to the story that I saw on the **internet** the other day which had originally begun as an ad by Samsung but it ended up morphing into so much more. You can watch this video on You Tube. It is the story of an entire town in Turkey that **secretly** learned sign language to surprise a neighbor who was hearing impaired. It showed the young man, *Mu-a-har'-rem*, and his sister walking down the street, going about their regular daily routine, going to the bagel shop, buying fruit from a street vendor, taking a taxi, and even bumping into other pedestrians as they went along. The thing that was different for this young man **that** day was that **everyone** he came across used sign language to communicate with him. From the person who waited on him in the bagel shop who let him know that the bagels were hot, to the street vender who signed to him, "*I'd like to offer you an apple*", to the

pedestrian who apologized to him for bumping into him, to the outgoing taxi driver who gave he and his sister a ride.

Samsung had spent about 1 month teaching the town's residents to use sign language so they could communicate with their neighbor. There were cameras **strategically** located to get Mu-a-har'-rem's surprised reaction. It was very touching to see this video.

The **second** opportunity to see someone in a different light happened on Thursday about noon. The door bell rang here at the church office. Since I am not quite tall enough to see out the little window in the door I actually have to open the door to see who is there when the bell rings. I **opened** the door and there stood a man. He asked me if we give any sort of aid to help pay utility bills, etc. I told him that we do not but as we talked a bit further, I told him what I could do for him was to give him a \$25 food card. Also, I did have some information for Riverside City Mission and some other city agencies which might be able to help him. We spoke for about 10 minutes and during the course of our conversation I asked him his name and where he was from. I assumed by his look he was probably not from the United States and he spoke with a rather thick accent. He gave me his name and said he was Palestinian. He continued by saying that he had been in this country for **many** years and had worked for **Boeing** aircraft. He was now on disability because of a **medical** condition and he needed help to feed his family.

Here was **another** opportunity given to meet and to get to know a neighbor in need which would have **not** happened otherwise were it not for the gift of the Holy Spirit bringing him here to Eden.

The last example of neighbor helping neighbor comes a little closer home and to our Eden family. This week Dick Anderson took a **nasty** fall when he and Marilyn were out for a walk. He went down, he landed on his chest, his arm, and his face. After talking to Dick and seeing the pictures on facebook he did a pretty good job of banging himself up. When Marilyn told me this story she said that they were both surprised by the willingness of passersby to **come** to Dick's aid. **One** man stopped his car and by the time he had gotten over to Dick the man had **already** called the paramedics. **Another** young man on a bicycle stopped quickly, threw down his bike, and ran to Dick's aid. Marilyn said that she did not think that people did those kinds of things anymore. Neighbor **being** neighbor to the other. **Helping** someone in need.

In all these cases: **isn't that what Jesus was talking** about in our gospel reading for this morning when the lawyer asked of Him, "*Teacher, what must I do to inherit eternal life?*" The answer is clear; **yet, not always easy**. The answer for all of us is what **every** Jew knew because even to this day practicing Jews, **2 times** a day, will say these words from the book of Deuteronomy chapter 6, "*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.*” The lawyer also added the line, “*and your neighbor as yourself*” which is **actually** from the book of Leviticus chapter 19 verse 18.

Jesus **told** the man, “*You have given the right answer; do this, and you will live.*” Loving one another is the way to gain eternal life. We are to do **everything** which has been said; to **love** God with our souls and **all** of who we are, to **love** God with **every bit** of strength we have, to **love** God with our mind, as well as **loving** our neighbor as our self. For we Christians believe that love comes down from God **to us**, our love goes up from us to God, and then loves goes forth from each of us toward one another. We **love** God as He first loved us and we show that love to our neighbors.

So here we are back at the question of ‘*And who is our neighbor?*’ Today we are **welcoming 7 new members** to our Eden family. **Some** of these people have been born and raised in this area, **some** in a different state, and a few in **different countries** from the United States. (South Korea, Peru, and Brazil) **Yet**, here we are—all neighbors. Each of us are brothers and sisters in Christ. God has brought us all together to be a part of this loving community we call Eden Lutheran Church. Let us welcome everyone we meet as our neighbor **even if** we have just met them. The **Spirit of God** lives in and through all of us no matter who we are

and no matter where we are from—we are **beloved children** of God one and all.

**AMEN**