

XIII Trinity 2021
Sermon – Saint Joseph Parish
Father Craig Looney
Hosea 6.6 St. Luke 10.23-37



Learn this...Jesus tells us...God told the prophet Hosea what he wants us to do is show kindness...not sacrifice. He wants us to do the right thing. Jesus tells us he has not come to call respectable people...but outcasts!

The Good Samaritan is probably the most famous of Jesus' parables even among those who have never read the Bible. It has become synonymous with the person who often goes to heroic efforts to help someone...even setting aside his own welfare. Hospitals are named after the hero in our story because they are in the business of helping people.

Our Gospel begins with a religion teacher trying to trap Jesus into saying something he could use against him. The religion teacher asks Jesus what he has to do to get to heaven? Jesus doesn't answer the question directly. Instead, he asks the religion teacher what does the Law say. Our religion teacher answers we are to love God above all else and love our neighbor as we love ourselves. That was the correct answer!

Not satisfied and wanting to make himself look good, the religion teacher asks Jesus who is his neighbor. Game on! Jesus knew the religion teacher was trying to trap him into saying some people were his neighbors and some were not. The respectable religion teacher was about to get a lesson in what it really means to be a neighbor...from God's point of view.

Jesus tells a fictional story about a man traveling from Jerusalem to Jericho along the Jericho Road. The Jericho Road was a notoriously dangerous road to travel...even during daylight hours. No one traveled the road alone. It was referred to in Jesus' time as "Blood Alley".

Our unfortunate traveler in the story got robbed and beaten up and left on the side of the road to die. A priest and Levite pass by and decide not to get involved. They had important tasks at the Temple and didn't want to risk being excluded by touching a man they thought was already dead.

Along comes our hero in the story...he was a Samaritan...and as far as our religion teacher was concerned...anything but respectable...he was an outcast and someone to be avoided...definitely not his neighbor.

Jews and Samaritans were both descendants of Abraham. Samaritans lived in what had been the Northern Kingdom of Israel. In 721 BC, its capital city, Samaria, was taken over by the Assyrians and much of the population assimilated. Jews and Samaritans shared a common history but by Jesus' time the Samaritan religion was very different than its Jewish roots.

The priest and the Levite in the story were important players in the worship in the Temple in Jerusalem. They were more concerned about looking respectable than being truly religious and doing the right thing. The surprising part of the story is the appearance of the Samaritan. He helps the man without asking any questions. He doesn't care who he is or where he came from. He does the right thing.

Today we could substitute any oppressed racial, social, political or religious group for the Samaritan in the story. When we ask ourselves who is our neighbor...they all are! We are equally filled with horror and pity for children in Afghanistan...or those suffering the affects of Covid-19. Why? Because they are our neighbors and what affects them affects us! All human beings are connected...to each other.

The Parable about the Good Samaritan is ultimately a story about Christian love and compassion and doing what's best for our neighbor. At the end of the story Jesus challenges us to go out and show the same kind of compassion the Samaritan showed toward a complete stranger. We need to ask ourselves if we are willing to risk going out of our way to show kindness.

Jesus is asking us to do the right thing...always...and everywhere!

