

XIII Trinity 2024  
Sermon – Saint Joseph Parish  
Father Craig Looney  
*St. Luke 10.23-37*

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What must we do to get to heaven? We hear the answer to that question at the beginning of every Mass: *Love the Lord our God with all our hearts, with all our souls, with all our strengths and with all our minds, and love our neighbors as we love ourselves.*

The Parable of the Good Samaritan teaches us love is not about how we feel about others...love is about how we treat them. Christian love is an action...it's dynamic and comes from the heart. Christian love is about doing what is best for others. Christian love is about doing the right thing.

In the Gospel story, a religion teacher tries to trap Jesus first with a question about what he must do to get to heaven. Jesus asks the man to tell him what the Law says the must do to get to heaven. He quotes the Great Commandment. Jesus tells him to go do exactly what the Great Commandment says he must do.

Our religion teacher friend had a narrow understanding of who his neighbors were. He was hoping Jesus would tell him his neighbors were those people who were exactly like him, had the same religious beliefs, hung out with the "right" crowd, so he could justify the way he treated people he didn't like and feel good about himself in doing so.

In the Parable of the Good Samaritan, a man is on his way from Jerusalem to Jericho, a distance of about 20 miles. The Jericho Road was notorious for being a difficult road to travel, and it was dangerous. Travelers along the Jericho Road were often robbed and sometimes killed, especially if they were traveling alone.

The man in the Parable is a Jew. He is attacked, robbed, stripped naked and left on the side of the road for dead. Along comes a priest, who sees the injured man and crosses to the other side of the road. The fact the priest was heading "down" the road, away from Jerusalem, suggest he had finished his duties in the Temple. There is no reason he

couldn't have helped the injured man. He just didn't get involved.

The Levite who follows was also heading away from Jerusalem. Levites were Jewish males who were descended from Levi, the third son of Jacob and Leah. Levites were the priestly clan within Judaism, but not all Levites were priests (Kohanim). The Levite in the story could have been a singer or guard at the Temple, or helped the priests in their duties. The Levite, like the priest, passed by the injured man.

The hero in the story is a Samaritan. Jews and Samaritans hated each other. The religion teacher Jesus is talking to would have considered Samaritans the "wrong" crowd, not people he would want to be around. But the Gospel tells us the Samaritan in the story "was moved with pity" at the sight of the injured man. He doesn't check the man's identity. He goes into action. The wine and oil he pours over the injured man's wounds would have disinfected the wounds and helped them to heal. He then takes the injured man to the nearest hotel and gives the desk clerk money to take care of him.

The Good Samaritan is perhaps the most famous of Jesus' parables. The term "Good Samaritan" is synonymous today with a person who goes out of his way to help another person. Churches and hospitals are named after the Good Samaritan. Police, firefighters and emergency medical teams are Good Samaritans, helping people often without regard for their own safety.

The Parable of the Good Samaritan is 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. Jesus wants us to be Good Samaritans.

What must we do to get to heaven? Do what Jesus tells us to do... *Love the Lord our God with all our hearts, with all our souls, with all our strengths and with all our minds, and love our neighbors as we love ourselves.*

And who is our neighbor? Everyone! Especially those who need our help!

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