

Pentecost 8
July 10, 2016

Text: Luke 10:25-37

Theme: Go and Do Likewise!

Who of you hasn't heard this parable before? Who of you doesn't know most of the details of this parable? It's so familiar to us, in fact, I would venture to say it's in the top 10 of the most familiar accounts in all of Scripture. Jesus used this parable to impugn the self-righteous spirit of this expert in the law. He came to Jesus in almost the same place most people today might come to Jesus, wanting to demonstrate that he had earned his way to heaven by keeping the law.

Isn't that where most people today start? If they have any concept at all of heaven or more generically the after-life, don't they see it something to be earned? Don't they see it as something we merit? Maybe that's because Roman Catholics make up 50% of the world's Christians and their official church teaching remains one of works. Maybe it's because nearly every other Christian denomination teaches some form of my doing something to earn heaven or come to faith. Maybe it's because outside of Christianity, every other world religion is a religion of works and merit. But Jesus used this now familiar parable to urge him, **Go and Do Likewise**.

That statement of Jesus leads us to two very important questions. The first question we must ask is go where or to whom? Consider the Samaritan. He was simply going about his life. Traveling along the road from one place to another, we might say, minding his own business, when he happened upon this man who had been beaten. So the first thing we see is that we might have these opportunities wherever we are and whatever we are doing. At home with your family. Along the road as you travel. At the store when you shop. At work. At play. Even at rest, these opportunities come along.

And to whom? There are no limits. As this expert in the law heard Jesus open this truth to him, he must have been stunned. Samaritans were abhorred by the Jews as a half-breed people. They weren't socialized with. They were outcasts. Yet this Samaritan didn't care that this Jew might not return the favor. He wasn't worried that other Jews might be troubled or his friends might wonder why he would go through the trouble. He was moved by love for his fellow human being to help him. Social barriers wouldn't stop him. Cultural norms were no object.

Sometimes we are less enthusiastic. It's never convenient for us to help someone on the road or our crazy neighbor in the back, or the homeless guy whose reputation precedes him. We are people of our own culture too – a culture that divides on racial, social, political and economic status. And we dare not to let these artificial barriers override the great unifying characteristics we all share. Namely, that we make up one human race and that we are all sinners incapable of changing that on our own.

And that leads us to the second question that Jesus' closing comment raises, do what? When we look at the God's law, what are we to do, what does it want us to do? This lesson would lead us to summarize with one word. Love. Love our fellow man of every race, social or economic status. Don't just say it. Show it. Love was shown in a most powerful way by the Samaritan. Not only did he potentially risk his own reputation, he risked his life, if those robbers had yet been hiding in the area. And then, beyond that, he gave of his own resources to help this helpless man. In doing so, did he earn heaven?

You know that's not right. Rather, his love for his fellow man was a response to the love he had already received from God in giving him heaven as a gift. But, Jesus led the expert in the law, so eager to justify himself, to see how far short he was of keeping the law, only then could he recognize his Savior and his need for him. That Savior, standing before him, was the perfect teacher. For our past failures to show love and compassion, we too have that Savior who forgives us, without condition. His boundless love for us when we were yet powerless and helpless, trapped by that greatest foe the devil bandages our wounds and provides the balm for our souls. That Savior makes us fit for heaven, in spite of our too often loveless lack of compassion. And yet his love compels us to do likewise,

loving our neighbor without expecting anything in return and sharing with them what we can for their bodies in this life and their souls in the next.