

**Trinity 13 (September 6, 2009)**

**Luke 10:23-37 – The Good Samaritan**

**“Jesus reaches down to save you”**

**Trinity Evangelical Lutheran Church**

**Between Girard and Virden, Illinois**

In the name of the Father and of the † Son and of the Holy Spirit. Amen.

Our text is from Luke 10, with focus on the words, Take care of him; and whatever more you spend, when I come again, I will repay you.

It was a lonely road, from Jerusalem to Jericho. We don't know why the man was making the journey. It was a common journey amongst the Jews. This was how you went from Jerusalem to anywhere in the north, like Galilee. You couldn't go straight north from Jerusalem, because that was Samaria. No Jew would set foot in Samaria unless things were really desperate. So you went the long way, fifteen miles or so, down the mountains into the desert where Jericho resides. There was always something a little sad on this journey for the Jew. If you took this trip, you were leaving God's city, Jerusalem. That is where God dwells. So taking this trip from Jerusalem to Jericho was almost a signal of spiritual distress. You were leaving God's presence and going into the desert, lonely and alone.

This is the trip our man takes in Jesus' parable. Jesus is trying to teach a young lawyer what it means to be a neighbor. This young lawyer, who knows his bible, seeks to tempt Jesus, much like Satan did in the wilderness not far from where they were. Who is my neighbor, the lawyer asked. Jesus answer tells

us a lot more about God than it does about the lawyer, and it is a blessed thing for us.

The man goes down the lonely road from Jerusalem to Jericho, and on the way, he is beset by robbers. They beat him, take all of his possessions, and left him for dead. It's hard to imagine a more pathetic and tragic picture. St. Paul tries to when He says that we are dead in trespasses and sins, at enmity with God, blind to God's mercy and deaf to His Word. So this man is at the end. His life is over. He might as well be dead.

*Then a priest comes along the way.* The priest takes one look at him, and passes by on the other side of the road. He has more important things to do. He, after all, is probably on his way to Jerusalem to do service in the Lord's house. He doesn't have time for dead men lying on the road. He might become ritually unclean, and be unable to serve in God's house. *Surely God wouldn't want him to risk not being able to do his duty as a priest in the Lord's house?*

*The next man comes along, a Levite.* He's not a priest, but he is of the priestly family. He comes a little closer to this man, lying in the road. He goes over and looks at him. But he can hardly shame the priest right before him, by helping when the priest wouldn't. Besides, he had things to do in Jerusalem as well. *While the man may not be dead, he's pretty close, and frankly, why risk it?* He passes by.

*Then along comes a Samaritan.* A Samaritan in Jesus' day was the lowest of the low to the Jew. Here in America we pride ourselves in not being prejudice. They had no such illusions in

Jesus' day. Jews did not interact with Samaritans. Ever. They were despised, because they had rejected God's Word, and considered some other city besides Jerusalem to be holy. So this despised Samaritan comes along, and sees the man on the road. When he does this, he has compassion on the man. Compassion is that great word that means the man's guts were moved to help the half-dead man on the road.

Like any good physician, the Samaritan has many remedies at his disposal. He pours on oil to soothe his hurts, and he pours in wine to cleanse the wound. The Samaritan even lifts him up onto his own animal and brings him to an inn. While they are at the inn, the Samaritan says to the innkeeper, take care of him, and whatever more the cost is, I will pay for it.

*Now what is the point of this parable that our Lord tells the young lawyer? There are two points, a Law point and most importantly a Gospel point.*

**The Law point is simple.** Your neighbor is everyone with whom you come in contact. To act as a neighbor to someone is to think of what is best for them, not for you. *Did this Samaritan expect to get repaid? No. Did he have any reason to help the man? No.* The only reason was compassion. That's it. In our dealing with one another, whether we are talking about family, friends, classmates, colleagues at work, or someone off the street, we operate with the presumption of tit-for-tat. If I help them, then they will help me someday. Or they helped me once, so now it's my turn to pay them back. That is the way of the world, but that is not God's way. God does not look to receive anything in return for His love and compassion. We don't work that way. We look at skin, money, friends, social status, and a

thousand other things when it comes to who we help and who we don't. Thank God that He doesn't work like us.

**The Gospel point is also simple.** God loves you. He loves you not because you try hard, because you have a good family or haven't gotten into too much trouble lately. No, God loves you because that's who He is. He has compassion on you. You are that man lying in the road. You are dead in trespasses and sins, helpless apart from the mercy of God. But God does have mercy on you. He pours in the oil and wine of His holy sacraments. He sets you on His Word, and by that Word He carries you to the inn, His Church, where you are fed and nourished back to life. This is what God does in Jesus Christ, because this is who He is.

*The lawyer asked the question at the beginning, what must I do to inherit eternal life? The answer is that you be perfect, act as neighbor to one and all, and show compassion where no one else would. But you can't do it. However, God is merciful, and sent His Son to do what you could not. He is the merciful one, who is neighbor to you, but much more than simply a neighbor. He is the one who will bring you to the eternal mansions in heaven, where there is no more sorrow or pain, only eternal friendship and love in Him.*

In the name of the Father and of the † Son and of the Holy Spirit. Amen.