

Homily
15th Sunday in Ordinary Time
7/14/19

This is one of my favorite parables. We hear about this Samaritan, this Good Samaritan, who did what a priest wouldn't do, what a Levite wouldn't do, stopped what he was doing, and went to care for this person who was hurt on the side of the road. We've talked before about the relationship between Jews and Samaritans – they wouldn't be seen talking to each other let alone helping one another.

I remember growing up reading this Gospel, I was really confused. Wasn't it the priest's job to help anybody? Isn't it the priest's job to go and do these things? Then I began to realize that I was looking at the Gospel from my context, and not looking at it from the context of those who were hearing it.

To do the ritualistic sacrifice the priest had to be what was called ritualistically pure. He could not be in the presence of anyone who was bleeding, couldn't come into contact with blood by accident, because that would make him ritualistically unclean. That means that when he went to Temple, he couldn't do the Temple sacrifice. So when the priest walks by this man, it's not that he looks at this man and says, "Huh, sucks to be you." No, he thinks to himself, "I have a job, and my role as a minister is to go and do the sacrifice on behalf of this people. If I stop and help this man, I cannot do my duty first before God."

The Levitical priest as he walked by, has the same idea in mind of, "I can't stop and help this person." And then the "lay person" walks by and sees this person in pain. Because the law of the Lord is written on their heart, even though they are a Samaritan, even though they are someone we would not want to be in contact with, that person we despise, looks on us with love and mercy. Jesus tells us to go and do the same.

Jesus tells us the law is to love the Lord our God first, then to love our neighbor as ourselves. That's the totality of the law, my brothers and sisters. The reason I continue to preach and preach and preach on the love of God is because it is the totality of the law. Every rule that comes that we have from God comes from the heart of this Gospel: love God, love neighbor, love self. I even saw a meme on Facebook today that there's 13,000 laws worldwide because we couldn't get the first 10 right.

Because we didn't pay attention, we walked right by. How many times do we walk by someone in need? How many times do we walk by someone who needs the love of God and we could be that face of Christ instead we say "I don't have time for that. I've got something I'm doing instead." How many times do I do it? How many times do we each fall to that temptation to encapsulate the world in our view? To not break free from our own perspective, to see the goodness of God in creation?

Growing up I loved technology. I thought that it was God's gift to humanity. then I realized is all it does is make us less human. Because we are so intent on what's right in front of us that we miss everything that's around us. It's crazy, I'll go out to a restaurant and I'll sit people watching. Its one of my favorite pastimes. I'll go to a restaurant; I'll go to a mall. I'll just sit there and watch people. They look right through each other. There was this family of seven, sitting at a table, every one has their phone out. I remember the first time my family fell into that trap was Thanksgiving Day. And instead of playing a unified game of Scrabble, we all pulled out our phones and played Words with Friends, and played with each other! I said, "I think we're missing something here guys. How about we put down the phones, go to the table, sit around it, look at each other, and have a conversation?"

We don't want to do that anymore. We want to look past each other. We want to look to what is right in front of us instead of looking at what is around us. How do we come together? Do we work for solutions to the problems of the world, or do we create more of them? What does Jesus tell us in the heart of the Gospel? Go and do likewise.

Do likewise, what is He talking about? To treat others with mercy. How merciful are we with one another? What walls do we put up dividing us against each other? (I'm not talking about politics). Do we see the face of Christ in not just in those we like, but in everyone around us? No matter where we come from, no matter the color of our skin, our language, how much hair we do or don't have, how tall or short we are, how skinny or fat we are, how intellectual or not we are? Do we see the face of Christ in everyone who's around us because the face of Christ does stare back at us from every face around us. But do we recognize that?

Do we recognize Christ? Do we show Christ forth in our actions, in our words, in our deeds? We're glad to call ourselves Christian, but when it comes to being Christian, yeah, I don't know about that. That's pushing me a little too far,

Father. That means you've got to DO something? I mean, I'll show up for Mass. Occasionally. On time-ish. But I really need to actually do something out in the world? Yeah, because if not, why are we here?

If we come here just to receive, and we do receive the Good News from Scripture, we come to receive Christ through one another, we come to receive Christ Body, Blood, Soul, and Divinity through the Eucharist. But if all we do is receive and we're not giving, we're missing the point. How can we be the face of Christ in the world today? That's the message, my brothers and sisters. That's the challenge we have every morning when we wake up. to be Christ. That's something that's difficult to live up to. Anything worth doing, is worth doing well. Let's stop making these excuses It's so easy to say, "I don't have the energy today, I don't have the passion today."

There were probably some days that Jesus didn't have the passion or energy either, but He just healed people from the dead. He Himself was raised from the dead. He was able to take all of the backbiting, all of those around Him. Talk about a hostile work environment! Every day that Jesus went to work, someone wanted to kill Him! Wanted to crucify Him. So when you have those bad days at work, when so-and-so is coming down the hallway, and you just want to punch them in the face, remember that Jesus probably had the same feelings. But He didn't act on them, that's important, He didn't act on them. So we shouldn't either.

Actually, I take that back. Jesus did act on every one of those thoughts and impulses. How did He act on them? He acted out of love. He acted out of mercy. He acted out of compassion, And that, my brothers and sisters, is the call of the Gospel. To love the Lord our God, with all of our heart, not just part of it, with all our being, not just when it's convenient, with all of our strength, not just when we think we have it, with all of our mind, not just when we're intentional about it, but with all of these ways to love the Lord our God. So that then we can love our neighbor, as God loves us.

If we could really love each other, how much better would the world be today? How much less divided would the world be today if we actually listened to these words and did something about it instead of just spouting out the world? I see too many times on tv, at sports games, John 3:16. "God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son..."

Yeah, so what are you doing about it? How does that matter to you today? Does it matter to us? Or is it just a nice platitude? If it does matter, I'm calling us today, because God calls to us every day, to Do. Something. About it. To love God. To love our neighbors. To allow ourselves first of all to be loved by God so that we can love each other.