



SERMONS THAT WORK

Pentecost 5 – Proper 10 Year C

What Will Happen to Him?

[RCL]: Amos 7:7-17; Psalm 82; Colossians 1:1-14; Luke 10:25-37

Today we hear a very familiar parable, the parable of the Good Samaritan. Many great preachers have preached on this story; one of these great preachers was the late Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr.

The day before Dr. King was assassinated, he gave his last speech in Memphis, Tennessee. In this address, he talked about this parable. Towards the end, he reflected on why the priest and the Levite did not stop for the traveler. He imagined that those men were simply afraid. The road from Jerusalem to Jericho was indeed dangerous. Dr. King said, “And so the first question that the priest asked, the first question that the Levite asked was, ‘If I stop to help this man, what will happen to me?’ But then the Good Samaritan came by, and he reversed the question: ‘If I do not stop to help this man, what will happen to him?’”

Dr. King helped us to consider our Christian discipleship with these good questions. The latter one should be the guiding principle of our approach toward those who are in need. What would happen to others if we would not offer help?

There is another contemporary Good Samaritan story that happened in a faraway place: Hong Kong.

St. James’ Settlement is a triad of an Anglican church, an Anglican school, and a community service center in Hong Kong. The beginning of this place is very inspiring. In 1949, the late Bishop Ronald Hall, who oversaw the Anglican Church in Hong Kong, saw the need to minister to a group of youth in a small town named Wanchai. The youth, who did not get adequate care from their working parents, were hanging out in this town and had gotten into trouble. There was no Anglican church in the area and there were very limited resources to start one. Bishop Hall did not have enough cash to rent a place to gather and minister to them. The need to keep them from getting involved in gang activities was great.

Bishop Hall then found out a Taoist temple in the neighborhood had some room available. He asked the monks to let the Anglican ministers gather the young people there. The monks let them use their temple space. By gathering the youth, the Anglican Church gradually formed clubs for boys and girls and offered them love and guidance, which were lacking from their families. These youths turned out well and escaped

from the downward path into delinquency. This humble beginning of a Christian youth ministry in a Taoist temple eventually turned into an Anglican church, a school, and a community service center, and has helped millions of people in Hong Kong.

The Taoist monks did not think about what would happen to them and their sacred place if they let these Christians use their temple, but were instead concerned what would happen to the young people if they did not receive guidance. These two different religious groups were not concerned about their religious boundaries, but rather the need to help young people.

Both Dr. King's questions and St. James' example demonstrate the parable of the Good Samaritan's lesson on how to be loving and compassionate to our neighbors. The Samaritan and the Taoist monks were concerned more about the wellbeing of the people rather than whether the people were from different faiths, backgrounds, or classes. They might have looked down on the people, or they might have been looked down upon by the people they were helping. What should we Christians do to be good neighbors?

In our world today, we have so many war-torn countries and many people flee to different parts of the world from human-caused disasters. We, the United States, are one of the receiving countries for these refugees. The refugees are of different cultures and different faiths. They are in desperate need for others to help them. Due to our human nature, just like the priests and Levites, it may be natural to fear what would happen to us by their coming here: that we might not have enough resources to go around, that we might be changed ourselves by different races, cultures, and faiths, and even the prospect that their might be "terrorists" among us.

In the gospel we read today, Jesus tells us, "You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, and with all your soul, and with all your strength, and with all your mind; and your neighbor as yourself." This is not the first time we read in the Bible about loving our neighbors; it has been written in the Hebrew Scriptures and different gospels.

According to what God teaches us and what Dr. King echoed, shouldn't we stop worrying about what would happen to us if we offered our help to these refugees, the strangers? Instead, we should be more concerned about what would happen to them if we were to neglect them. Think about it. If we showed them resentment instead of compassion, would we push them to join the terrorists or the gangs from whom they are running? The gangsters or terrorists may end up being the only people welcoming them.

We read that the prophet Amos prophesied the truth of God, though people did not like to hear it. The false prophet tried to silence him so as to please the king in power. As Amos claims, he was not a professional prophet, but an ordinary person being called by God. He was like the plumb line for God, guiding people on the way. He knew he would face danger, but did what was right anyway. We are ordinary people, too, but also called by God through our baptism to tell God's truth, to have compassion for people in need, and to be good neighbors. However, when we Christians are reminded to love our neighbors who

look different, speak different languages, and behave differently, we may not like to hear it either. The fear of scarcity, of uncertainty, can block us from hearing our call and seeing others' needs.

We are in the season after Pentecost. On Pentecost, we heard the miracles of ears and tongues that people understood each other, even when they spoke different languages. Br. James Koester of the Society of Saint John the Evangelist wrote in one of the daily reflections, *Brother, Give Us a Word*, about Pentecost, saying, "We need not fear any longer. We need not fear God, nor the other, nor death any longer, because Pentecost has healed Babel and Easter Day has healed Good Friday. This is the promise of Easter, and of Pentecost. And we share that promise as we emerge dripping wet from the waters of baptism, marked with the sign of the cross as Christ's own forever."

The promise of Pentecost is that the Holy Spirit dwells among us. Through the Holy Spirit, we can understand each other with one common language: love. With this common language of love, we can understand those in need and we can see those in misery. With this common language, we can offer compassion.

The United Nations has designated June 20 as World Refugee Day, and our Presiding Bishop Michael Curry commented in his 2019 World Refugee Day Message, "When we welcome the stranger, we welcome the Lord God himself. We welcome Jesus... On World Refugee Day, pray, learn about refugees, learn about what you can do, and do whatever you can to help the strangers in our midst."

Let us do whatever we can to understand and to help the strangers in our midst. Let us pray:

O Lord, mercifully receive the prayers of your people who call upon you, and grant that we may know and understand what things we ought to do, and also may have grace and power faithfully to accomplish them; through Jesus Christ our Lord, who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and for ever. Amen.

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