

15th Sunday Ordinary Time C

DT 30:10-14

Col 1:15-20.

Lk 10:25-37

Jesus loved to teach with parables... a lesson contained in a short story. Because in Jesus time, without books and media... people told stories. And the parables about lost coins, or lost sheep or prodigal sons seem to resonate as loudly then ...as they do now.

And today's Gospel, the Good Samaritan—how we love to hear this story!

Even today... this story still seems so relevant to us.

.... the Good Samaritan story is continually told all around us.

Not long ago I read a story about a food pantry worker in Arizona who was leaving for the day when he saw a homeless man crawling around on all fours ...like a crab walk because he had no shoes...they had been stolen and the pavement was so hot in the 100 degree heat ...he couldn't walk upright in his bare feet.

So the worker ran to his car and retrieved a pair of sneakers and a bottle of water and gave it to the man... and some small amount of money so he could buy a few things.

When the news media picked up the story that had gone viral, the man explained that it was” no big deal”

...the sneakers were extra pair, the water and the money were hardly a sacrifice.

Anybody could have done it...it was simple he said

Simple...just like the actions of the Samaritan in today’s gospel

What a shock Jesus’ parable about the Good Samaritan must have been for his listeners. But not for the reasons we might think.

When we look at what life was like in first century Jerusalem the story takes on different meaning.

Because people not only told stories but they walked...

The distance between Jerusalem to Jericho was about 17 miles

.... well known for robbers.

...and frequently the robbers would pretend to be injured and then would attack an unsuspecting rescuer.

It was also probably not much of a shock that the priest passed by on the other side of the road... because if the

person were dead, then Jewish law forbade the priest to approach him or the priest would be declared “unclean”

...he would not be able to function as a priest for 7 days.

Likewise it would not have shocked to anyone that the Levite passed by on the other side of the road because Levites were the priests’ assistants and the same restrictions applied to them.

No... the shock for those listening to Jesus was that it was of all people, a Samaritan who went over to help the injured man. And not a fellow Israelite.

... a Samaritan whom Jesus makes the unlikely hero of this story to make an even stronger point which is the central question of this parable Who is our neighbor? And what are my obligations and responsibilities

Now the word “neighbor,” comes from the Old Saxon language “Nachbar,” which simply means “nearby” —so your *neighbor* is anyone *nearby*.

But today, thanks to modern technology and social media. A neighbor can mean almost anyone... almost anywhere!

In this Gospel story, the lawyer wants to know what he must do to inherit eternal life. Jesus reply is simple: —love God and love your neighbor.

But the lawyer cannot resist a bit of legal haggling: “and who *is* my neighbor?”

Then Jesus answer is quite simple. EVERYONE is my neighbor. Treat every man, every woman, every child with mercy, and you will inherit eternal life!

If the lawyer were looking for a loophole, Jesus does not provide one .

...so the parable is not so much about placing blame on those who do did not respond to the injured man... but about praising the one man who did

... and encouraging us to do the same.

Simple enough...?

Moses tells the Israelites in the first reading: If only you would keep the commandments of God! You would increase and prosper and find true joy. And the command of God is not mysterious or remote: it is in your hearts already; you have only to carry it out.

The beauty of the Good Samaritan parable is it's simplicity... with a command that is so simple: love God, and love your neighbor.

The directive that Jesus gives the lawyer 2000 years ago is the very same that he gives each one of us today, “Go, and do the same yourself.”

God Bless