

12th Sunday, EF 2012
II Corinthians 3:4-9; Luke 10:23-37

Our Gospel reading is one of our richest stories. We've heard the Greatest Commandment and the Good Samaritan many times. They speak to the core of what it means to be a Christian, a disciple of Jesus.

When we read Scripture, we can examine it at many levels. One level is to discover who we are as Christians and how we are to act accordingly.

But, we Christians don't have a monopoly on that. Most of the world religions address how we are to act. The Golden Rule gets its name because it seems that all religions teach it. In our own torturous and meandering ways, we humans can struggle in figuring ourselves out.

What we can't figure out...who we can't figure out, is God. The reason we know God is because He reveals himself to us. Ultimately, Scripture is God's self-revelation.

In the Greatest Commandment, we are called to love God with our whole heart, our whole soul, our whole strength and our whole mind. Why?... because that is how God loves. God withholds nothing from us, even to the point of His incarnation, passion, death and resurrection.

When we, like the lawyer, desire eternal life, God calls us to enter into His divine life and to love without limit as He does. In our Gospel of Luke, to love as God loves includes loving *your neighbor as yourself*.

"The lawyer asked about works, and was told to love. The Samaritan loves and demonstrates it through works. Jesus is not telling the lawyer *who* it is that deserves his love and attention. Rather, he reveals what it means to be a loving person."¹

The Samaritan is presented as our model of one who loves.

As I was carrying the story of the Good Samaritan with me this week, another was shared with me by a new Eastside friend.

As your deacon, I am here to serve you in assistance to our pastor as he directs. I am also particularly charged with community engagement or as I call it, "being neighborly". Over the coming weeks I will bring you up to speed with some of the folks I've been meeting and will be inviting y'all as well.

Well one of my new friends is Pastor Matt Weiler of Sunnyside Methodist Church just up on Gull Road. He also carries the charge of community involvement. One of

¹ Diane Bergant, *Preaching the New Lectionary, C*, p. 303-304

the ministries his small congregation is engaged in is their Free Store. It's kind of like a Goodwill Store except that everything in it is free. This kind of ministry is new to his congregation and there has been the predictable wide range of reactions and commitments to such a thing. One of his congregants, a lady in her 80's, was not particularly optimistic about such a thing, but would cooperate and spent some hours in helping out at the Free Store.

As one can imagine with the price being right and their being such a need in these hard times and how distressed many are in our neighborhood, that there would be a number of customers frequenting the store.

Well, last week, that lady told Pastor Matt that while she was driving through the Eastside towards downtown, she saw one of her "customers" walking down the road. Now this man was about as different from her as a Samaritan is different from a Jew. But she had over the course of weeks developed a relationship with this man. So she pulled over, called out to the man by name, and gave him a ride. This would never have happened before.

Now that act of charity, giving a person a lift, would not be considered grand by many people's estimate. But what clearer demonstration can be made for loving as God loves.

And as I mentioned that Scripture is primarily about God revealing himself, when we come to this altar, can we see ourselves as the battered one, having our wounds being administered to by our savior...not just by the bandaging and the pouring of oil and wine, but by his very body and blood.

And as we leave here, may we do as Christ commanded, "Go thy way and do thou likewise."