

**SPIRITUALITY**

**GOSPEL ACCLAMATION**

cf. John 6:63c, 68c

R<sup>1</sup>. Alleluia, alleluia.

Your words, Lord, are Spirit and life;  
you have the words of everlasting life.

R<sup>2</sup>. Alleluia, alleluia.

**Gospel**

Luke 10:25-37; L105C

There was a scholar of the law  
who stood up to test Jesus  
and said,

“Teacher, what must I do to  
inherit eternal life?”

Jesus said to him, “What is writ-  
ten in the law?

How do you read it?”

He said in reply,

*“You shall love the Lord, your God,  
with all your heart,  
with all your being,  
with all your strength,  
and with all your mind,  
and your neighbor as  
yourself.”*

He replied to him, “You have  
answered correctly;  
do this and you will live.”

But because he wished to justify him-  
self, he said to Jesus,

“And who is my neighbor?”

Jesus replied,

“A man fell victim to robbers  
as he went down from Jerusalem to  
Jericho.

They stripped and beat him and went  
off leaving him half-dead.

A priest happened to be going down  
that road,

but when he saw him, he passed by  
on the opposite side.

Likewise a Levite came to the place,  
and when he saw him, he passed by  
on the opposite side.

*Continued in Appendix A, p. 307.*

**Reflecting on the Gospel**

Luke introduces the parable of the Good Samaritan with a story found in Matthew and Mark, namely, a scholar of the law correctly summing up the law as loving God and loving one’s neighbor. In the other gospels the story effectively ends and another teaching is introduced. But Luke tells us that the scholar wanted “to justify himself” and so to clarify who is his neighbor. Rather than answer straightforwardly, Jesus poses a story with which we are familiar. The priest and the Levite, both upright privileged people considered favored

by God, leave the unfortunate man in the ditch. Only the Samaritan, one of a group of people generally despised

by many Jewish people of the time, offered any assistance. And it was no mere prayer or well-wish. He went out of his way, cared for the victim, bandaged him, carried him, and paid for his stay at the equivalent of a hotel. With that, Jesus asks the scholar which of the three was the neighbor to the man in the ditch? The scholar of the law in reply does not even use the word Samaritan, but says, “The one who treated him with mercy.”

Though the question is about “neighbor,” mercy is the keyword in this gospel. The scholar was likely predisposed to believe that the priest or the Levite would be a neighbor, by acting mercifully. But it was the person the scholar did not expect who acted in that way.

When the scholar asks, “And who is my neighbor?” the answer could rightfully be said, “The one who treated him with mercy.” When one is in the ditch needing help, who is neighbor? More important than role or station, privilege or power, is the capacity and the willingness to be merciful and to receive mercy. Without mercy, the person in the ditch dies. One reading of Jesus’ story might be that we are the person in the ditch. We should be open to receive acts of mercy no matter where they come from, or who performs them. Those who act in this way are neighbor, much more so than those we might otherwise expect. As Jesus continues to do, he creates upheaval in our worldview by a simple story that causes us to reconsider our priorities and prejudices.

**Living the Paschal Mystery**

Sometimes those who need to be helped want help on their own terms. But today’s gospel is a reminder that to those in the ditch, help may come from the most unforeseen or even unimaginable people. When we place limitations on even such things as who might lend us help or assistance, we might not be open to the mercy of God, which is extended in a variety of ways. Though this parable of the Good Samaritan is often read to mean we should be neighborly and act mercifully, it can also be read in a way so that we are open to receive mercy and kindness from others, no matter who they might be. Jesus invites us to move beyond ourselves in moments of crisis and to be open to mercy from wherever it might come. In doing so, we die to our own preconceived notions and live anew with an openness broader than we had before. For if we in the ditch are not willing to see the Samaritan as a neighbor, and accept his act of mercy, we will surely die in that same ditch.



**Focusing the Gospel**

**Key words and phrases:** You shall love the Lord, your God, / with all your heart, / with all your being, / with all your strength, / and with all your mind, / and your neighbor as yourself.

**To the point:** Everything in Judaism and Christianity can be reduced to this one essential statement: Love God and love your neighbor. And yet, the life-changing nature of this teaching to love God and love your neighbor as yourself is only discovered in the interpretation. In the parable of the Good Samaritan, the priest and the Levite pass by the man left for dead. Obviously, they did not recognize him as “neighbor.” The Samaritan, acting with mercy, interprets this ancient Jewish commandment with the full abundance of the God of love.

**Connecting the Gospel**

**to the first reading:** The reading from Deuteronomy confirms the model of discipleship Jesus gives us in the parable of the Good Samaritan. The writer tells us that you can only keep the commandments and statutes of God when “you return to the LORD, your God, / with all your heart and all your soul.” The Samaritan gives not only of his time and energy but also of his material resources to care for the stranger he finds on the side of the road half-dead. His response begins when, seeing the robbers’ victim, he is “moved with compassion.” Unlike the Levite and the priest, the Samaritan allows himself to fully encounter the person in front of him in need.

**to experience:** Sometimes our lives become compartmentalized. In some ways this is good. We want our work to stay at work and our family life to take priority at home. But spirituality is not meant to be one of many facets of life that sits apart from the others. Instead of Christianity being something we do on Sunday morning, it is a way of being. As the first reading and the Gospel show us, it is a way of being fully for God.

**Connecting the Responsorial Psalm**

**to the readings:** In the responsorial psalm we can hear the robbers’ victim on the side of the road: “I am afflicted and in pain; / let me call for help, O God, protect me.” And if this was the prayer of the man he is answered. But perhaps not in the way he expected.

**to psalmist preparation:** We are not told if the victim in the parable of the Good Samaritan is conscious, but if he was we can imagine his moment on seeing first a priest and then a Levite coming toward him. We can also imagine his crushing disappointment as these men turn away from him. Being neglected by his own people, what must the victim have been when he spied the Samaritan coming toward him? Did he lose hope or was he fearful? How would you feel if you saw your enemy coming toward you while you lay helplessly in a ditch? Jesus tells a parable that challenges our vision of “neighbor.” Both the Samaritan and the robbers’ victim are past external labels to recognize the neighbor within each other.

**PROMPTS FOR FAITH-SHARING**

Jesus confronts his Jewish audience by making a Samaritan the hero of his story. What groups within your life do you have a hard time believing well of? What happens if you imagine a member of this group as taking the place of the Samaritan in this parable?

The scholar of the law tries to get out of the commandment of God on a technicality. Love my neighbor, but who is my neighbor? Are there places in the life of faith where you are tempted to limit God and God’s mercy? Are there some people you believe are outside the realm of God’s mercy?

**Fifteenth Sunday in Ordinary Time, July 14, 2019**

**Gospel (cont.)**

Luke 10:25-37; L105C

But a Samaritan traveler who came upon him  
 was moved with compassion at the sight.  
 He approached the victim,  
 poured oil and wine over his wounds and bandaged them.  
 Then he lifted him up on his own animal,  
 took him to an inn, and cared for him.  
 The next day he took out two silver coins  
 and gave them to the innkeeper with the instruction,  
 ‘Take care of him.  
 If you spend more than what I have given you,  
 I shall repay you on my way back.’  
 Which of these three, in your opinion,  
 was neighbor to the robbers’ victim?”  
 He answered, “The one who treated him with mercy.”  
 Jesus said to him, “Go and do likewise.”