

In the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit, Amen!

The Good Samaritan is one of Jesus's two most beloved Parables, along with the Prodigal Son. But it's part of a larger discussion. Our Gospel lesson doesn't start with the Good Samaritan; it starts with a Question and Answer session between a Scribe and Jesus.

The man asks, "By doing what will I inherit eternal life?"

Jesus responds by asking what stands written in the Law.

To which the man replies with well-known words, also in Jesus's time:

YOU SHALL LOVE THE LORD YOUR GOD FROM YOUR WHOLE HEART
AND WITH YOUR WHOLE SOUL AND WITH YOUR WHOLE STRENGTH,
AND WITH YOU WHOLE UNDERSTANDING-----AND YOUR NEIGHBOR
AS YOURSELF.

Jesus commends the answer and proceeds to say: DO THIS—or, better,
PRACTICE THIS CONTINUALLY—or—ACTUALLY DO THIS, AND YOU
WILL LIVE.

It's important to understand what is going on here. By his question the man is NOT asking, HOW DO I GET SAVED, i.e., HOW DO I ENTER, COME UNDER, THE KINGDOM OF GOD//THE REIGN AND RULE OF GOD?

NO! The Jews believed that they entered God's Kingdom, by God's gracious election-----but that they STAYED in---ACHIEVED THE FINAL GOAL OF ETERNAL LIFE---**by their works.** Hence the man's phraseology: **BY DOING WHAT WILL I INHERIT ETERNAL LIFE?**

The man is clearly bothered by Jesus's command of action, which seems to imply that he won't be able to succeed in his pursuit, to achieve his goal. And he seeks to show that he IS on the right track—he seeks to JUSTIFY himself—by now asking, WHO IS MY NEIGHBOR? But Jesus doesn't let him off the hook. He tells the Parable of the Good Samaritan. Note what Jesus does thereby. **He avoids an argument about neighbor identification, about WHO MY NEIGHBOR IS.** Instead, he returns to the 2nd Part of the Love Command—YOU SHALL LOVE YOUR NEIGHBOR AS YOURSELF, by saying (after he tells the parable);

WHO SEEMS TO YOU TO HAVE PROVED TO BE NEIGHBOR TO THE MAN WHO FELL AMONG BANDITS?

Jesus says, in effect: *DON'T ARGUE NICETIES ABOUT WHO IS MY NEIGHBOR. YOU KNOW THE ANSWER! IT IS ANYONE WHO NEEDS YOUR MERCY.-----EVEN IN VERY EXTREME INSTANCES.* THEREFORE, GO AND **PRACTICE THIS CONTINUALLY—*ACTUALLY DO THIS.*** Which should

make the man—and anyone else, including you and me, really, really nervous.

Who can do such difficult and noble action consistently?? Indeed, Jesus leaves this Scribe, and anyone else who talks about actions, with NO HOPE regarding finally obtaining the full end for God's people-----that is, *eternal life*.

And this leads to the second major point of the Gospel Lesson for today, namely, that **the man in the conversation is asking about staying in the Kingdom of God, and in so doing, he is assuming that he IS ALREADY IN THE KINGDOM OF GOD!!** In fact, we must now see that the man is *running* before he can *walk*, as it were, when he asks about staying in. Jesus's line of questioning and the Parable exposes the fact that this Scribe//interlocutor has **not even actually entered** the Kingdom of God!!—come under the Reign and Rule of God! How do we know this to be the case? By the details of Jesus's Parable. The foreigner in the Parable corresponds to the Scribe, who is told to DO MERCY just as the foreigner did mercy—and that man is a SAMARITAN.

But a Samaritan was NOT among the chosen people of God! The Samaritan was an OUTSIDER, a kind of half-breed, descended from people who had been brought to the Holy Land by the Assyrians, after they had conquered the Northern Kingdom of Israel in 722 BC.-----**near to**, but not under, the gracious Reign and Rule of God. By implication, then, in the application of the Parable, the Scribe/Questioner is like the Samaritan----he, too, is an outside, at this point not

under the gracious Reign and Rule of God-----in other words, **he is not one who is headed toward Eternal Life at all!!**

That this is so is confirmed by a parallel passage in Mark, chapter 12, which discusses the same passage about loving God and loving the neighbor and develops the same line of thought. Jesus says to the man who acknowledges these two commands concerning love, **YOU ARE NOT FAR FROM THE KINGDOM OF GOD. Not far—BUT—you are not in the Kingdom of God!!** Anyone fascinated with doing commands is not even under the gracious Reign and Rule of God in the first place—let alone on the way to Eternal Life.

How, then, does someone like the Scribe become an **insider**, i.e., enter the Kingdom of God and come under his gracious Reign and Rule at all? It is hinted at in the Parable. It concerns the **beaten man**. Consider the description in verse 34: **AND UPON COMING TO HIM, HE BOUND UP HIS WOUNDS**—in the Greek, τραύματα. Now, consider Isaiah 53:4: **BUT HE WAS WOUNDED (ἐτραυματίσθη) FOR OUR TRANSGRESSIONS; HE WAS CRUSHED FOR OUR INIQUITIES; UPON HIM WAS THE CHASTISEMENT THAT BROUGHT US PEACE, AND WITH HIS STRIPES WE ARE HEALED.**

The key, Jesus is suggesting, is to embrace the beaten man. Embrace the one who would be **WOUNDED FOR OUR TRANSGRESSIONS AND BRUISED FOR**

OUR INIQUITIES. Embrace the one, O Questioner, who is standing before you—and, indeed, before you and me today. That is the **first step**, and, really, the **only crucial step** toward final, eternal life.

But—some of you might be thinking, IS IT REALLY ALL THIS COMPLICATED, PASTOR JIM VOELZ? ISN'T THE PARABLE SIMPLY SAYING THAT IT IS ALL ABOUT DOING GOOD DEEDS TO THOSE WHO ARE IN NEED, AND THAT THAT IS WHAT GETS A PERSON TO THE FINAL GOAL, ETERNAL LIFE? Well, that our passage is **not** heading in that direction—that it is **not** simply making that kind of point, is demanded by the passage that follows this text, Luke 10:38-42. Does anyone know what that story is? (Answer from Congregation)

Yes, it's the story of **Mary and Martha**, next Sunday's Gospel lesson. That story goes like this: JESUS VISITS A VILLAGE AND IS RECEIVED INTO A HOME BY MARTHA. HER SISTER MARY IS ALSO PRESENT AND SITS AT JESUS'S FEET LISTENING TO HIS DISCOURSE. MARTHA, MUCH BUSIED WITH SERVING, COMES TO THE LORD AND WONDERS WHETHER HE CARES THAT HER SISTER HAS LEFT HER ALONE TO ENGAGE IN SERVING, AND THEN SHE SAYS, "TELL HER TO ASSIST ME." JESUS, IN RESPONSE, SAYS TO HER, "**YOU ARE RIGHT, MARTHA. WHAT I WANT MY FOLLOWERS TO DO IS TO TAKE CARE OF PEOPLE'S PHYSICAL**

NEEDS, NOT TO BE WORRIED ABOUT RELIGIOUS INSTRUCTION.” ---

-----NO!—It doesn’t go like that, does it?? Helping people in their physical needs is **not** what obtaining eternal life is all about! In fact, Jesus tells Martha that **one thing** is necessary, and that Mary has chosen that one thing, which will not be taken from her. *That **one thing** that one needs to inherit eternal life is **Jesus**—listening to Jesus. Focusing on Jesus.*

Indeed, that *one thing needful* is what is **necessary** for the **step prior** to finally obtaining final, eternal life—which Jesus alludes to in depicting the Scribe as a Samaritan—and that is: *entering* the Kingdom of God, *coming under* the gracious Reign and Rule of God in the first place, as the Scribe/Questioner really needs to do, by listening to Jesus and embracing the beaten man.

Yes, as it always is, the **answer to all questions such as these is Jesus**. He is at the beginning of the process of salvation = entering the Kingdom of God, and he is at at the end = obtaining final, eternal life.

This is true for the Scribe, for Mary and Martha, for you, for me,
indeed, for everyone. **Listen to Jesus and embrace the beaten man.**

In Jesus’s name, Amen.

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