

7-10-16 Sermon Luke 10

We continue on with Jesus and his growing group of followers on the road that leads to only one place – Jerusalem. When you are traveling down the road it is a very good time to teach a lesson about someone traveling down a road, as it seems on point. Jesus is busy discipling his disciples. **Does that make sense?** Schooling his followers is what Jesus is all about – he is a teacher on a once in forever mission and if it is to be successful, his followers who will take up where he leaves off have to be discipled so they can disciple others . . .

The lesson this week is not directed at the 12 or at least they are not the instigators based on something they have said or done. Instead, Jesus crosses paths with someone who is on a mission to trip Jesus up. Might be a Pharisee ,but we can be pretty sure it isn't a Sadducee. An innocent yet profound question opens the conversation, ***“Teacher, what must I do to gain eternal life?”*** And as the premier teacher he is – Jesus doesn't answer the question, but asks a leading question. I have in my mind a picture of a fencing match and this is the first thrust and parry. And the legal expert answers Jesus well with a mashup of Deuteronomy 6:5 and Leviticus 19:18. Jesus gives him a pass on the verbatim part because his answer contains the spirit – the essence of the law.

At this point most people would have smiled – said thank you to Jesus and moved on – but noooooooo. Seems the agenda was not to have himself shown as approved by Jesus but to catch Jesus so he continues. ***“And who is my neighbor?”***

Here Jesus launches into the story of a traveler **on the road to?** Yep, Jerusalem. Robbed, beaten and left for dead on the side of the road (there are more details in the book) we hear how 3 passersby respond to what they see. The first two are kin of Aaron, a priest and a Levite who both swing wide to the other side of the road as they pass and I imagine they quickened their step a bit even though it doesn't say that in the text. **Why might they have picked up the pace a bit at this point?** Please hold your thoughts on that for now.

Enter passerby number 3 – a Samaritan. His response is markedly different than his predecessors. “moved with compassion” he scoops the traveler up – dresses his wounds and then puts him up in a nearby inn with a promise to make good on any additional expenses on his return trip.

Finished with the story Jesus now turns to the legal hotshot and asks him, **“Which one of these three was a neighbor to the man who encountered thieves?”**

Again a right answer, ***“The one who demonstrated mercy toward him.”***

Through the lens of this passage I was thinking about the world we live in and my head was spinning thinking about suicide bombers – truck bombs – and the names of two men, Alton Sterling and Philando Castile who were killed in far flung parts of our country and the fallout from their deaths. I was still trying to wrap my head around Orlando when I got an email at 9:44pm Thursday night as the Dallas tragedy was unfolding with these words, “The stuff that is going on is scary and heartbreaking. Why is the world so angry?”

On Friday morning I had to learn 5 more names – Brent Thompson – Patrick Zamarripa – Michael Krol – Michael Smith and Lorne Aherns. And then I stopped – just couldn't take it. The list of names of lives lost keeps growing and growing – why? The simple answer is – violence begets violence – always has – always will. And while trying make some sense out of all that is going on in the world I tried to package it up nicely (not possible) or at least neatly (also not possible) with Jesus' teaching the story of the Good Samaritan.

Not so many minutes ago, I asked you why the priest and the Levite may well have picked up their pace as they walked by the beaten traveler on the side of the road. Lets revisit that, because I believe it will shine some light on our world today. And as you think of why they passed by and walked faster – I would also like you to think about the Samaritan – and why he stopped. **Thoughts?**

I believe it has to do with fear. Fear is the common thread in the passersby and it is the tool of the terrorists. And for the record – anger and fear are first cousins. People most often become angry when they have lost something or feel like they are losing something. But back to fear as the driver of the bus. The Samaritan I have to believe was afraid to and rightfully so – what's to say the same folks who robbed and beat the traveler weren't there waiting for their next victim? Bear in mind this traveler is not wearing anything distinguishing in terms of clothing – so our Samaritan friend could not have recognized him as neighbor by sight – there was something inside and that something was compassion.

So what does compassion and overcoming fear look like in the second week of July 2016? So glad you asked! Join me in Parker County, Texas at the Court house where 8 prisoners in a holding cell have just watched the guard they were talking to slump over in his chair unresponsive. First there was shouting for help but no one answered – then as a group they broke down the door of the holding cell and rendered aid to their captor – the guard. Fear would have held them in the cell and the guard would have died. Mercy and compassion drove them to put themselves at risk to save the guard's life.

“He's a good man,” Kelton said. “I watched him die twice. It never crossed my mind not to help whether he's got a gun or a badge. If he falls down, I'm gonna help him.”

Then Jesus said, “Go and do likewise.” And the world or at least a small part of it will more closely resemble the Kingdom of God. Amen.