

WORSHIP FOR SUNDAY, AUGUST 14, 2022

Pacific Presbyterian Church and First Presbyterian Church of Union, Missouri

20th SUNDAY in ORDINARY TIME

GATHERING

PRELUDE

CALL TO WORSHIP

One: We come together to sing God's praises.
All: **We come to share the joy of the Lord.**
One: So come, brothers and sisters, come in joy and thanksgiving.
All: **We come to worship our Lord.**

***OPENING HYMN** "Come, Christians, Join to Sing" GtG 267

1. **Come, Christians, join to sing:**
Alleluia! Amen!
Loud praise to Christ our King:
Alleluia! Amen!
Let all, with heart and voice,
before his throne rejoice;
praise is his gracious choice:
Alleluia! Amen!

2. **Come, lift your hearts on high:**
Alleluia! Amen!
Let praises fill the sky:
Alleluia! Amen!
He is our guide and friend;
to us he'll condescend;
his love shall never end:
Alleluia! Amen!

3. **Praise yet our Christ again:**
Alleluia! Amen!
Life shall not end the strain:
Alleluia! Amen!

(continued...)

**On heaven's blissful shore
his goodness we'll adore,
singing forevermore:
Alleluia! Amen!**

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UNISON PRAYER OF CONFESSION

God of compassion, we sing our ‘Alleluia’s...and we confess before you that we have sinned. We have passed by our neighbors, and ignored opportunities to show them mercy. We have pursued selfish aims in our daily business. We have harbored uncharitable thoughts toward our enemies and friends. We who have been taught the law of love practice instead the law of self-interest. Free us from our selfish ways; and forgive us, we pray, for the sake of Christ who came to bind up the wounds of all your people. Amen.

SILENT CONFESSION

ASSURANCE OF PARDON

One: The God of grace loves us unconditionally, restoring us to health and to wholeness.

All: **Thanks be to God!**

One: In Jesus Christ, we are forgiven.

All: **Thanks be to God!**

THE PEACE

One: The peace of Christ be with you.

All: **And also with you.**

(From your seat, a brief sign of peace may be shared: a wave of the hand, a nod of the head, etc.)

THE WORD

SCRIPTURE READING Luke 10:25-37

LUKE 10:25-37 (Common English Bible)

²⁵ *A legal expert stood up to test Jesus. “Teacher,” he said, “what must I do to gain eternal life?”*

²⁶ *Jesus replied, “What is written in the Law? How do you interpret it?”*

²⁷ He responded, "You must love the Lord your God with all your heart, with all your being, with all your strength, and with all your mind, and love your neighbor as yourself."

²⁸ Jesus said to him, "You have answered correctly. Do this and you will live."

²⁹ But the legal expert wanted to prove that he was right, so he said to Jesus, "And who is my neighbor?"

³⁰ Jesus replied, "A man went down from Jerusalem to Jericho. He encountered thieves, who stripped him naked, beat him up, and left him near death. ³¹ Now it just so happened that a priest was also going down the same road. When he saw the injured man, he crossed over to the other side of the road and went on his way. ³² Likewise, a Levite came by that spot, saw the injured man, and crossed over to the other side of the road and went on his way. ³³ A Samaritan, who was on a journey, came to where the man was. But when he saw him, he was moved with compassion. ³⁴ The Samaritan went to him and bandaged his wounds, tending them with oil and wine. Then he placed the wounded man on his own donkey, took him to an inn, and took care of him. ³⁵ The next day, he took two full days' worth of wages and gave them to the innkeeper. He said, 'Take care of him, and when I return, I will pay you back for any additional costs.' ³⁶ What do you think? Which one of these three was a neighbor to the man who encountered thieves?"

³⁷ Then the legal expert said, "The one who demonstrated mercy toward him." Jesus told him, "Go and do likewise."

PRAYER FOR ILLUMINATION

SERMON "The Parable of the Good S(teward)AMARITAN" by Pastor Bill Vincent

The quintessential stewardship passage. "Stewardship?" you say. Yes, the parable of the Good Samaritan is the quintessential stewardship passage.

Last week, we defined the basic issue addressed in the parable. Not that of the lawyer's question, "Who is my neighbor?" But the question actually addressed by Jesus, "How can I be a neighbor?" We show ourselves to be neighbors by demonstrating *compassion* in *caring for* another in response to genuine *human need*.

The parable of the Good Samaritan – maybe we should call it the parable of the neighborly Samaritan – can be used as a *paradigm* for our life as a Christian. It describes in its own way the essentials of our life of Christian discipleship.

Another way of saying that is to call this the quintessential stewardship passage.

Now, to elaborate on what I mean we must first divorce ourselves of the ill-formed and ill-informed notion that stewardship has only to do with money.

Former director for stewardship education of the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.), David McCreath, has written,

...in the Bible, "steward" means "overseer" -- a person charged with the responsibilities for managing the household on behalf of the owner. The first

responsibility of the steward was to ensure that the resources of the household were fairly shared by all its members. Therefore, as stewards of God's creation -- God's household -- our responsibilities involve much more than giving money. They involve us in compassion and justice, in peacemaking and hunger relief, in rights for women and environmental protection. Our broadened understanding of stewardship brings us back to our Biblical roots of discipleship. (Mission Yearbook for Prayer and Study, PCUSA)

Stewardship is the care and wise use of all that we have been given. And our faith states clearly that everything we have and everything we are is a gift from God. As one hymn states in its opening words,

***All things are Thine; no gift have we,
Lord of all gifts, to offer Thee.***

(Words by John Greenleaf Whittier, 1872)

Our talents and abilities and inner resources; the *very* breath of life; everything we possess – they are all *ultimately* gifts, including our money.

Yes, stewardship includes our money, very definitely; not as a substitute for nor to be substituted by time or energy. But stewardship is more than just money, much more. It includes money *and everything else*, including the self.

Christian stewardship, then, is the invitation to perceive all of life and all the things of life as gifts from God, to care for all of life, and to use all the resources at our disposal to love the Lord our God with all our heart and soul and strength and mind, and our neighbor as ourself.

And that is *precisely* what the neighborly Samaritan did. So that the parable illustrates how we are to be good stewards.

Notice what all the Samaritan does to show mercy/compassion to the injured man.

He literally goes out of his way to help. He was traveling along on his own journey with his own timetable, his own destination. But when he notices the injured man, he stops, and changes direction, changes timetable, changes his destination. He interrupts his own travel plans in order to help.

His helping cost him inner feeling. As we mentioned last week, this response of compassion meant “his heart went out to” the injured man. He allowed himself to feel for another. That takes energy. That involves risk. That makes one vulnerable. That exposes oneself...and offers oneself.

He shared his expertise, offered his knowledge and experience. He was willing to offer and use his skill in knowing how to bind up the wounds of someone injured: 1st Century first aid. And that cost him his own resources, using his own oil and wine.

The Samaritan allowed himself to be inconvenienced. The whole episode was an inconvenience. Not only “going out of his way,” but he gave up riding on his own animal and walked instead, so that the injured man could ride.

His helping cost him time and energy. For he took care of the man. And that involved his time and energy and attention and himself.

And he committed his money to the endeavor: he put his money where his mouth was, he put his money where his heart was. Not only did it cost him money to begin with in using his

own oil and wine and the cost for an extra person's stay at the inn, but he also paid the innkeeper "two full days' worth of wages." And he committed himself further when he said he would pay *whatever* the innkeeper spent in addition to care for the injured man.

Would we do this? In our life as individuals and as a community, are we willing to be inconvenienced, to go out of our way, to commit our time and energy and money and resources and expertise, to risk our inner feeling, all in order to care for others in response to their genuine human need?

The Good Samaritan teaches us *how* to be good stewards. Demonstrating compassion by caring for another in response to genuine human need – that is good stewardship. It is caring for all of life by seeking to alleviate pain and suffering, to heal brokenness, and to better the quality of life. It is using the resources at our disposal to love our neighbor as ourself, to love our neighbor by being a neighbor. It is also therefore perceiving all of life and all the things of life as gifts from God to be used to the ends that please God, namely loving neighbor as self.

The parable illustrates the how of good stewardship, the how of Christian discipleship – by being a good neighbor.

But there is more.

For by seeing ourselves in a *different* role in the story – in a role other than that of the Samaritan – the parable also illustrates the why of good stewardship.

Robert Chase, commenting on the parable, writes,

An alternative way to read the Good Samaritan might be to identify with the Jew in the ditch. The Jew in the ditch: the very phrase is disquieting. Yet, can we not empathize with the one who has been mercilessly mugged by life and left to wallow in the gutter of personal misery?

... the Good News in Jesus' parable [is that] the merciful presence of God was made manifest to the Jew in the ditch in the person of the outcast Samaritan. Grace became incarnate. (Stewardship Devotions booklet, PCUSA)

Beaten down by guilt and prejudice, *mugged* by life's little cruelties, *cut and left to bleed* by envy and jealousy, and finally *weighed down* by our many burdens, we are in our own ditch. But God does not pass by on the other side, leaving us to lie in the dust and die alone. *God comes to us* in our ditch in the form of Samaritans and Jews, through acquaintances and strangers, family and friends, and even enemies. And "grace becomes incarnate."

So, as a response of gratitude, realizing God's love to me through others, I desire to be a neighbor to others.

But more profoundly still, we love neighbor as self because God has come to us in our ditch and ministered to us in our need, through the life, death, and resurrection of Christ. God in Christ bent low into our ditch and lent a helping hand: a hand that gives us a way out of our ditch of self-destruction, a hand that offers us freedom from the bondage of sin and our self-serving ways, a hand that offers us victory over death and the promise of new life.

In the person of Jesus Christ, God binds up our wounds and offers us new life.

Love divine...to earth come down;

("Love Divine, All Loves Excelling" words by Charles Wesley, 1747)

one hymn puts it. And another says,

**O Love divine, that stooped to share
Our sharpest pang, our bitterest tear,...**

("O Love Divine, That Stooped to Share" words by Oliver Wendell Holmes, 1859)

And as we sang just this morning in our first hymn,

**[Christ] is our Guide and Friend;
To us He'll condescend...**

("Come, Christians, Join to Sing" words by Christian Henry Bateman, 1843)

To us he already did condescend, bent low. And then offered himself upon a cross to give up his life, in order that we might receive life.

Our response in the Christian life – our response in being good stewards, and thereby being good neighbors – is the response of gratitude for the love of God in Christ Jesus our Lord. That is the foundation of it all – of our understanding of ourselves, of our understanding of our purpose in life.

We love the Lord our God with all our heart and soul and strength and mind because God first loved us. We love our neighbor as ourself because God was first a neighbor to us.

The parable of the Good Samaritan: the quintessential stewardship passage, describing the basis for our stewardship and discipleship: our *gratitude* for God's love toward us in lifting us out of the ditch; describing also the challenge for our stewardship as a response to the love of God and a response of love for neighbor: the good, wise, loving use of our time, money, resources, and person in the love of and care for others. As Carnegie Calian, former President of Pittsburgh Theological Seminary once wrote,

**Stewardship ... impl[ies] ... the wise dedication of time, talent, and resources
as our response to a gracious God.** (Panorama: A Newsletter of PTS) [emphasis added]

Because God has come to me in my own ditch, I am moved to reach out to others in theirs and be their neighbor. God has had compassion for us. We are to have compassion for others. It is that simple. It is also that profound.

***HYMN** "God, Whose Giving Knows No Ending" GtG 716

- 1. God, whose giving knows no ending,
from your rich and endless store,
nature's wonder, Jesus' wisdom,
costly cross, grave's shattered door:
gifted by you, we turn to you,
offering up ourselves in praise;
thankful song shall rise forever,
gracious donor of our days.**

(continued...)

2. **Skills and time are ours for pressing
toward the goals of Christ, your Son:
all at peace in health and freedom,
races joined, the church made one.
Now direct our daily labor,
lest we strive for self alone.
Born with talents, make us servants
fit to answer at your throne.**

3. **Treasure, too, you have entrusted,
gain through powers your grace conferred:
ours to use for home and kindred,
and to spread the gospel word.
Open wide our hands in sharing,
as we heed Christ's ageless call,
healing, teaching, and reclaiming,
serving you by loving all.**

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***AFFIRMATION OF FAITH**

**In life and in death we belong to God.
Through the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ,
the love of God,
and the communion of the Holy Spirit,
we trust in the one triune God, the Holy One of Israel,
whom alone we worship and serve.**

**We trust in God,
whom Jesus called Abba, Father.
In sovereign love God created the world good
and makes everyone equally in God's image,
male and female, of every race and people,
to live as one community.
But we rebel against God; we hide from our Creator.
Ignoring God's commandments,
we violate the image of God in others and ourselves,
accept lies as truth,
exploit neighbor and nature,
and threaten death to the planet entrusted to our care.
We deserve God's condemnation.**

(continued...)

**Yet God acts with justice and mercy to redeem creation.
In everlasting love,
the God of Abraham and Sarah chose a covenant people
to bless all families of the earth.
Hearing their cry,
God delivered the children of Israel
from the house of bondage.
Loving us still,
God makes us heirs with Christ of the covenant.
Like a mother who will not forsake her nursing child,
like a father who runs to welcome the prodigal home,
God is faithful still.**

**In gratitude to God, empowered by the Spirit,
we strive to serve Christ in our daily tasks
and to live holy and joyful lives,
even as we watch for God's new heaven and new earth,
praying, "Come, Lord Jesus!"**

(from A Brief Statement of Faith, Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.) Book of Confessions)

PRAYERS OF THE PEOPLE

One: God of compassion...
All: ...hear our prayer.

THE LORD'S PRAYER *(Contemporary)*

**Our Father in heaven,
hallowed be your name,
your kingdom come,
your will be done,
on earth as in heaven.
Give us today our daily bread.
Forgive us our sins
as we forgive those who sin against us.
Save us from the time of trial
and deliver us from evil.
For the kingdom, the power,
and the glory are yours
now and forever. Amen.**

OFFERING

Invitation

Reflection

**Unison Prayer of Dedication*

O marvelous Lord, we are grateful for your encompassing love. You provide for our every need. You minister to us through the community of faith, strengthening our bodies and spirits. As we have received from you and the hands of others, make us instruments of your love and grace. Amen.

SENDING

***CLOSING HYMN “We Give Thee but Thine Own” GtG 708**

1. **We give thee but thine own,
Whate'er the gift may be;
all that we have is thine alone,
a trust, O Lord, from thee.**
2. **May we thy bounties thus
as stewards true receive,
and gladly, as thou blessest us,
to thee our firstfruits give.**
3. **The captive to release,
to God the lost to bring,
to teach the way of life and peace:
it is a Christ-like thing.**
4. **And we believe thy word,
though dim our faith may be;
whate'er we do for thine, O Lord,
we do it unto thee.**

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***CHARGE AND BLESSING**

One: ...And let the gathered people of God say...
All: ...Amen.

POSTLUDE

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