

THE THIRTEENTH SUNDAY AFTER TRINITY

Text: St. Luke 10:23-37

IN THE NAME OF THE FATHER, AND OF THE ✠ SON, AND OF THE HOLY SPIRIT. AMEN.

What does it mean to *“love the LORD your God with all your heart, with all your soul, with all your strength, and with all your mind”*? In a sense, and this may surprise you, it means to do nothing. It means to let God be God. It means to receive from Him His grace and mercy. God Himself, is love, and you are the object of His love. He has loved you in such a way that He became man and was crucified for you that you may live. Therefore, love God by letting God be God. Let Him love you, for there is nothing you can offer Him that does not already belong to Him.

What, then, does it mean to love *“your neighbor as yourself”*? Only this, to do everything for him. It means to be to your neighbor as our LORD is to you. Our LORD has loved you by forgiving your sins, raising you to life in Him, freeing you from death and hell, and providing healing for your body and soul. He has loved you by placing your neighbor in your path that you may now return His love through love and service to your neighbor.

That is what we are to learn from JESUS’ story of the Good Samaritan, for in truth, this parable is not about what we do for God but what He has done, and continues to do, for us.

For we are the man left lying on the dusty path suffering from self-inflicted wounds—wounds that are the result of our sins, our lack of faith, our fascination with the things of this world, and the lies and promises of Satan and evil men.

We were near death. Indeed, we had no life in us until JESUS came near to us, cleansing our wounds with the oil of faith and the Waters of Holy Baptism. Then, binding up our wounds, He applied His Medicine of Immortality—His very Body and Blood.

Yet, even then He was not finished, for He has born your sins and your brokenness to Calvary, carrying them to His Cross as though He were a beast of burden, and when He was dead and buried, your sins were buried with Him in His tomb, never to be seen again.

JESUS is the love of God in human flesh. Our response to His love is to love our neighbor, to give our neighbor the same love and mercy our God and SAVIOR has so abundantly given to us without ever counting the cost. We are to love because that is what love does, that is what love is, and if love demands anything at all, it demands to be shared. And know this about love, love does not search out this one or that one to be a neighbor; love is neighbor to all.

Therefore, blessed are your eyes, for they have seen what many have desired to see and have not seen it. It is said that one's eyes are the window into one's soul. But I say to you, that they are not merely a window into which one may only peer, but as a metaphor for wisdom and understanding, as a metaphor for faith, as this is surely what our LORD meant as He spoke to His disciples, our eyes are a door into our heart and soul, and through that door walks JESUS, the CHRIST, the only-begotten SON of God, to create life-saving faith. Thus, to see, means to recognize JESUS as your LORD and SAVIOR, and to love means to share the Gospel, the love of CHRIST, with your neighbor.

Until the Gospel is “*seen*” by your neighbor, that is, before they hear the Good News of salvation in JESUS CHRIST, they cannot “*see*,” for the love of God can only be seen by faith, and “*faith comes by hearing, and hearing by the Word of God.*”

Therefore, blessed also are your ears, for you have heard what many have wished to hear, the sweetness of the Gospel of CHRIST. Hearing, you have believed, and in believing you are saved.

Thus, in seeing and hearing, in wisdom, understanding, and faith, you are made eyewitnesses of the majesty that is God, for you have heard with your ears and have seen with your eyes the sacred mysteries with which our LORD has saved you, calling you out of darkness into His marvelous light, and anointing you with life-giving faith. Indeed, such blessedness sets you apart, for there have been legions of men and women who have heard the same things you have heard, and have seen the same things you have seen, and yet, have refused to believe, and in refusing faith, have placed themselves outside the blessings of God.

This applies not only to patent unbelievers. It also applies to all who would pursue the Law with all its demands, seeking to please God with their self-righteousness. Thus, the question of the lawyer, “*Teacher, what shall I do to inherit eternal life?*” Yet, the question itself displays the irony of self-contradiction, for inheritance is not a matter of doing, but a matter of being. No more can one earn eternal life than one can earn an inheritance. One is *made* an heir, just as we have been made heirs of eternal life by adoption through CHRIST as the children of God, and only the love of God has the power to do such a thing.

Having learned this, we bow our heads and seek the grace and love of God with penitent hearts, asking that He forgive our lack of love and give unto us an increase of faith, hope, and charity. For we are called to be neighbors to all by our God who has created us all as equals. We are all redeemed by the same SAVIOR, JESUS CHRIST, and through Baptism we are all received into the same spiritual family with God as our FATHER. In this, we are one body having been joined together by our gracious and loving God Himself—“*one LORD, one faith, one Baptism; one God and FATHER of [us] all.*”

With eyes that see and ears that hear we realize that the parable of the Good Samaritan is enfleshed in JESUS CHRIST, God's SON. This means that our LORD's parable is prophecy as much as it is an illustration of the love with which our LORD has blessed us. His love for us compelled Him to suffer death that we may live, to pick us up from the dust of the grave and

pour into our wounds the oil of salvation and the Medicine of Immortality—His Word and Sacraments.

Thus, the parable of the Good Samaritan metaphorically depicts our salvation in CHRIST, for the heart of Holy Scripture is the love of God enfleshed in His SON, JESUS, who fulfilled the Law, and who, as the love of God in human flesh, *is the fulfillment of the Law of God in Himself*. As St. Paul attests, “... *love is the fulfillment of the Law.*” Our response to such love is to love our neighbor, to give our neighbor the same love and mercy our God and Savior has so abundantly given to us—not to earn an inheritance, not to purchase a reward.

This is right worship of our God, for as I said, we have nothing to give to God that does not already belong to Him. This is how we proclaim His glory—we love our neighbor as He has loved us. This is how we return thanks for all He has done.

Let us then, not ask, “*Teacher, what shall I do to inherit eternal life?*” Let us instead, freely receive God’s love and pray for God’s grace that we may return His love with love and service to our neighbor.

IN THE NAME OF THE FATHER, AND OF THE ✠ SON, AND OF THE HOLY SPIRIT. AMEN.

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