

**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.

The Words our LORD spoke to the Lawyer, as we heard them read from the Gospel of Saint Luke this morning, ought to make you stop and think, for that is the purpose of the Law of God—to make you think, to cause you to reflect on your sins, that, with a contrite heart, you may repent and live. The Law of God is not meant to save you, but is meant to show you your sins. Contrary to what you may believe, or what others may have taught you, the Law cannot help you, it cannot give you life; it can only bring you death. It binds your sins to you as surely as your skin enshrouds your flesh and bones.

*“But Pastor,”* you might protest, *“did JESUS not also say,” ‘... do this and you shall live’ when He answered the lawyer’s question?”* To which I must answer, *“Yes, that is what He said, but what did He mean?”*

To rightly understand this text, one must make God and His grace the focus of CHRIST’s answer. That is, one must understand that to inherit eternal life, one must also understand and believe that such an inheritance *is a gift* of God’s grace and not something to be earned or purchased by men.

St. Paul tells us in his epistle to the Christians in Rome, *“For Moses writes about the righteousness which is of the Law, ‘The man who does those things shall live by them.’ But the righteousness of faith speaks in this way, ‘Do not say in your heart, “Who will ascend into heaven?”’ (that is, to bring CHRIST down from above) or, “Who will descend into the abyss?”’ (that is, to bring CHRIST up from the dead). But what does it say? ‘The word is near you, in your mouth and in your heart’ (that is, the word of faith which we preach): that if you confess with your mouth the LORD JESUS and believe in your heart that God has raised Him from the dead, you will be saved. For with the heart one believes unto righteousness, and with the mouth confession is made unto salvation. For Scripture says, ‘Whoever believes on Him will not be put to shame.’”*

To inherit eternal life through the keeping of the Law, one must keep the whole Law all the time—never slip, never fall, never fail—something only one Man has been able to accomplish in all the sorry history of creation, and you are not Him. Therefore, to inherit eternal life, one need only to confess and pray, *“LORD, I believe; Help my unbelief!”*

Thus, we are not to seek to establish our own righteousness. Such an effort is a fool's errand, which will only result in being cast into outer darkness where there is nothing but the sound of weeping and the gnashing of teeth. Seeking to establish your own righteousness only cheapens the sacrifice JESUS made to save you. Do not do as the lawyer of our Gospel text and put JESUS to the test. Do not tempt the LORD your God! God loves you and He has sent His only begotten SON to rescue you from sin, Satan, and the grave. Do not despise God's love. Do not throw His gift away.

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 this 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. We love because that is what love does, that is what love is, and if love demands anything at all, it demands to be shared. Love does not search out this one or that one to be a neighbor; love is neighbor to all.

As we have heard this morning from the mouth of God Himself, the greatest commandment is to love God and your neighbor. But what does this mean? How is such love to be accomplished? To love God, means to do nothing—it means to simply receive His grace as the gift it is; to embrace His mercy and kindness as He bestows them. To love your neighbor means to do everything—to be to your friend, relative, acquaintance, or stranger—to simply be to your neighbor, what our LORD is to you—to love your neighbor, as our LORD has loved you.

Our LORD forgives your sins, raises you from the depths of hell, frees you from the grave, and gives you eternal life. As a result, you can now let that forgiveness, that life, that merciful healing, flow through you as love for your neighbor.

That is the lesson of the Good Samaritan. The Good Samaritan is the SON of Man who descended from Heaven and was born of human flesh of the Virgin Mary; who has ascended into Heaven, and sits at the right hand of God, our FATHER in Heaven. He is the SON of God who will return from Heaven to be our Judge, our Advocate, our LORD, and our SAVIOR. He is JESUS who feeds those He loves with the very Body He gave over to death so that we may inherit eternal life. He is the CHRIST who pours into you the Blood He poured out on the altar of the Cross for the forgiveness of your sins—for the forgiveness of all sins. He is EMMANUEL—God with us, who comes anointing you with the oil of faith, healing you, body and soul.

JESUS, seeing you beaten and half dead, you, whom no other before Him had been able to help, has come near to you to relieve your suffering by giving you His love. He binds up your wounds with His Medicine of Immortality—His Words and Sacraments—

and your sins He has carried to His Cross like a beast of burden. He has left you in the loving care of His Church where the HOLY SPIRIT, the Innkeeper and Comforter, teaches us to love God and neighbor even as we patiently await CHRIST's return.

Do not ask, "*... what shall I do to inherit eternal life?*" it is already yours! Eternal life comes by God's grace as a free gift of faith in JESUS, God's SON. Your Neighbor, JESUS CHRIST, gave His life that you may live eternally. Therefore, eternal life is already yours as an inheritance given to all those who see in JESUS, the SON of God, our SAVIOR and our LORD.

So come, receive a foretaste of your inheritance awaiting you in Heaven. Come and receive from the hand of this humble innkeeper the gift of immortality in the Body and Blood of God's SON.

*"Blessed are the eyes which see the things you see; for I tell you that many prophets and kings have desired to see what you see, and have not seen it, and to hear what you hear, and have not heard it."* Your God has chosen you to see and to hear and sent His HOLY SPIRIT to open your eyes to see, your ears to hear, your heart to believe, and your mouth to confess that JESUS CHRIST is your LORD.

*"What shall you do to inherit eternal life?"* Nothing! Nothing but receive the mercy of God. It is your inheritance. It is all yours through your Brother, JESUS CHRIST, God's own Son. Baptized into CHRIST, clinging to Him as your SAVIOR, you are the newborn of God, born again *"of water and the Spirit."* You are the adopted child of your FATHER in heaven. You are a member of the family of God and that means that all that is CHRIST's is now yours by way of divine inheritance.

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

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