

**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.

How does one love God? Does one show his or her love for God with loud songs of praise, long repetitive prayers, the waving of hands, loud wailing, or the crying of tears? Is that how one shows his or her love for God? Perhaps we are to quote Holy Scripture making a great show of our knowledge of the Bible even as many hypocrites do.

Still, I remind you that even Satan quotes the Word of God and has far better knowledge of what Scripture truly means than either you or I. Yet, I do not know of even one person who would seriously believe or claim that Satan loves God.

Should we fast and tithe of all we have? Are we to wear our faith on our sleeves as it were, that all may know we are Christians by our love? Yet, even the heathens love, and if love is the indication of faith then our great love of sin should count for something, should it not? But of course, love of sin is not the love of God.

Holy Scripture commands that we love the LORD our God with all our heart, and with all our soul, and with all our strength, and with all our mind; and our neighbor as ourselves. The love of God and the love of neighbor cannot and are not to be separated. They are as one, even as JESUS and His FATHER are One. Therefore, to love God is to love our neighbor, for how can one claim to love God whom he has not seen if he cannot love his neighbor whom he has seen?

However, even this will not get one into heaven. One cannot inherit eternal life and the Kingdom of Heaven by the doing of the Law, even if that Law is loving God and neighbor, and that, my friends, is exactly what the lawyer asked when he inquired of JESUS, *“Teacher, what shall I do to inherit*

*eternal life?”* He may as well have asked, *“Which of God’s Ten Commandments must I fulfill to be saved?”*

You see, the love of God and neighbor is the summation of the Law. We know this to be true because JESUS tells us so with His own Words: *“On these two commandments hang all the Law and the Prophets.”* St. Paul reiterates the same in his letter to the Christian congregation in Galatia: *“For all the Law is fulfilled in one Word, even in this: ‘You shall love your neighbor as yourself,’”* and again in his letter to the congregation in Rome: *“For the Commandments... are all summed up in this saying, namely, ‘You shall love your neighbor as yourself.’ ...therefore love is the fulfillment of the law.”*

In our LORD’s parable of the Good Samaritan, the Law is reflected by the Priest and Levite, neither of whom could offer any help to the wounded man beaten and left for dead. No, seen, and perhaps their presence was even felt by the poor man as they passed by on the other side of the road, they offered no help, not because of indifference, but because of impotence. They cannot help because the Law is powerless to save but only accuse.

So it is that with the Law no one will inherit eternal life. For the Law declares *“You shall love the LORD your God with all your heart, with all your soul, with all your strength, and with all your mind, and your neighbor as yourself.”* That is the requirement of the Law and that is precisely what you nor I can do.

Thus, the Law of God can only lead to despair, for the Law can only strip away your false pretenses and your self-imagined, self-righteousness. It shows to you your corruption and mortality, and due to your inability to keep the Law, it cannot provide life, but in truth, only death. Therefore, the Law cannot care for you. It cannot heal or bind up your wounds. It cannot pay your debt of sin. The Law will not intercede with God for you. For that, you need a compassionate neighbor. For that, you need JESUS CHRIST.

This does mean that the Law is not good or that the Law should be ignored, for indeed our LORD does say *“...do this and you will live,”* and also, *“...till heaven and earth pass away, one jot or one tittle will by no means pass*

*from the law till all is fulfilled.*” The Law of God *is* good and for this reason God has written it upon your heart. We are obliged to fulfill it even down to the smallest detail and requirement—even to the most minute letter of the Law.

Faith in JESUS and love and care for our neighbor are, therefore, commanded. To the love and care of neighbor, we are to devote all we are and all we have. To do less carries a sentence of death, and because the Law of God is written upon your heart, you are without excuse; you cannot plead ignorance. Therefore, do this and you will live; reject this and you will die.

Thus, we find ourselves with a paradox concerning our salvation. The Law we must do, yet the Law is precisely that which we cannot do. For this reason, we are not without guilt. We want from the Law what it cannot give. We demand from the Law, life in exchange for our own efforts, and demand justification in exchange for our own merits. Yet, before God, all our works remain unclean and because of our sinful nature, we have no merit of our own before our Righteous Judge. We know this because it is the same Law of God that tells us so.

Still, we endeavor to convince ourselves that we *can* fulfill the Law’s requirements, but when we look into the mirror of the Law, gazing upon our distorted reflections, we know better. The good that we would do, that we cannot do, and the evil that we hate, that is what we do.

We know that the Law demands more than doing, more than keeping, for doing and keeping of the Law are done against our will. The Law of God requires fulfilling, to do its works with delight and love—to live a godly life with joy, without the very constraint of the Law, which due to our rebelliousness, is forced upon us.

Thus, to love only because of the command and fear of the Law is not love. In fact, to love only because of the command and fear of the Law is really to never have loved at all.

So as I said, we are left with a paradox. The Law of God cannot be ignored and yet it cannot save us. Instead, it leaves us dead on the dusty road we call life.

Still, while the Law leaves us for dead, we do have a Neighbor, a Savior, a Messiah, the SON of God who is JESUS, the CHRIST, and our LORD. Coming down from the heavenly Jerusalem, JESUS took on our flesh and deigned to follow us on the road from heaven to hell—a road we were on because we deserved it, and He, precisely because He did not.

You see, JESUS, being true God, left His homeland of heaven and traveled right to where you are by becoming a true man while remaining true God here on earth; here, in this foreign territory. He did not pass by on the other side of life; He did not remain at a distance. He did not ignore you. He came down and took into Himself human flesh and blood, having a human body and soul. He came, a stranger to a strange land, treated by those He was sent to save as if He were a hated Samaritan.

He willingly humbled Himself like this to bring you aid. He put Himself in your shoes. He made your problems His own. When you were set upon by every manner of demon that beat you with sin and temptation and stripped you of your righteous garments, leaving you naked, bleeding, and half dead—that is, leaving you physically alive but spiritually dead—JESUS came to save you. JESUS came to save *you* by dying for you, and this He would have done even if you had been the only sinner that ever lived.

JESUS came to rescue you and placed you upon His shoulders, even as the Samaritan placed the man on his own donkey, for JESUS came to bear your sin and your brokenness in His own Body as He hung on the Cross of Calvary to save you.

This animal, the donkey, calls to mind the donkey on which our LORD rode triumphantly into Jerusalem on the first Palm Sunday. There, JESUS put Himself into your position. He took your place on that lowly animal. He became as One weak and helpless. He willingly allowed Himself to fall into the hands of robbers; to be betrayed into the hands of sinful men, to suffer beatings at the hands of the powers of darkness, and to be crucified for you

between two thieves. He was stripped of His clothes so that you would be adorned in His righteousness. *“He [was] despised and rejected by men...wounded for our transgressions, bruised for our iniquities; the chastisement for our peace was upon Him, and by His stripes we are healed.”*

Through His death, you receive life. Partaking in His resurrection through Baptism, He carries you to the Inn, that is into the Church—the only place where the injured and dying may find true healing in CHRIST.

In the Church, JESUS orders the innkeeper, who represents His called and ordained servants—Pastors and keepers of the Mysteries of CHRIST, like me—not to hold back in dispensing the oil and wine of the Sacraments to penitent believers. JESUS gives to the innkeeper two denarii as a sign of His double forgiveness until the Day of His return. In this, He promises to pay whatever it takes to see to it that the wounded are completely restored to newness of life. There is no end, no limit, to His sacrificial mercy and love for He has kept His promise to pay the price for your healing in full.

Thus, there is nothing more for you to do, nothing that you can do, that you may inherit eternal life. The Law is fulfilled in JESUS who accomplished its fulfillment with joy, never counting the cost, but looking beyond the suffering of His Cross to the glory He would share with you in His resurrection.

In this way the price has been paid for your redemption and one day soon, CHRIST will return to the Inn to claim you; He will come again on the Last Day to bring His people into the unending blessedness of the Resurrection in both body and soul. Until that Day He pours the oil of faith over you and the Wine of His Blood into you and feeds you on the Bread of His Body to strengthen and preserve you.

You, like JESUS’ apostles, are blessed—even more so. You are blessed because your eyes *have* seen and your ears *have* heard that which the Prophets and kings wished to see and hear, the CHRIST, who is the Word made Flesh. That is whom you have heard this LORD’s Day and that is whom you will see upon the altar. That is whom you will see with your own eyes and look upon. This is the Word of Life manifested unto us that we may have eternal life with

the FATHER and His SON, JESUS CHRIST. Blessed are you, for you have heard that which the Prophets and kings longed to hear and the Good Samaritan, JESUS CHRIST, has come to declare to you, *“I forgive you all your sins.”*

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

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Rev. Raymond D. Parent II  
Our Savior Evangelical Lutheran Church  
Crestview, Florida  
9/11/22 A&D