**“Neighborly”**

Leviticus 19:9-18

Colossians 1:1-14

Luke 10:25-37

 Pentecost 5, July 9/10, 2022

“’Which of these three, do you think, proved to be a neighbor to the man who fell among the robbers? He said, ‘The one who showed him mercy.’ And Jesus said to him, ‘You go, and do likewise.’”

Grace to you and peace from God our Father, and from our Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ.

**Bridge**

Imagine that **YOU ARE accosted** (or **seized upon** and **grabbed**) physically or emotionally or mentally but suddenly or, maybe even, gradually and this against your will but maybe even submitted-to by your will. Maybe you a **victim** of things or people or situations … but maybe you are a **willful accomplice** of the abduction and its price upon you.

Imagine (on the **victim** side) that a dump truck swerves into your lane (straight at you) and aims itself at the front of your car and head-on hits you with the force of a fully loaded dump truck. It smacks straight into you with the force of seemingly two locomotives head-on and at speed, and what happens to metal and the fragility of physical bodies forced to deal with steel and collision that they’re not accustomed to is what the imagination does not wish to fathom.

Imagine the **blow you get** at the honest assessment of a doctor who tells you of a cancer that’s in you. **Imagine** identity theft or rape or an errant bullet that catches you from a distance and with no warning. Imagine police officers at your door to tell you of a body they’d found and identified as your son or daughter. Imagine being the driver of a dump truck who (for the hours and days and years after his negligence in smacking full-on into to a car with two people in it) wished (with every core of him) that he could have the moments just before that **back to redo**. Imagine parents taking their eyes off of their toddler at just the wrong moment. Imagine one cigarette that becomes a habit which, later, becomes lung cancer. Imagine parents that realize their complacency toward God that became their children’s unbelief. Imagine a husband’s neglect of his wife (taking her for granted) cursing him, then, with a divorced life lonely and regretting.

“A man was going down from Jerusalem to Jericho, and he **fell among robbers**, who **stripped him and beat him and departed, leaving him half dead**.” “Robbers” can be inflictions from, both, **without** and from **within**.

**Text**

Jesus’ telling of the Good Samaritan describes disasters in the existence of **even a lawyer**. He may not have seen himself (that lawyer) **so accosted and beaten / helpless to help himself as the man of the parable**, but **he** **should have**, since it’s inevitable that in some way, shape, or form the odds against him staying unscathed by tragedy or death he’d have to face is pretty much nil. There **are times** when, even, a **neighborly** **(Good) “Samaritan”** would be welcome by him … and it would be great of us to always know that we’ve had such a **Friend (a Savior)** who saved us in our need and is always ready and willing to be, still, our neighbor in an **abundant way**. Cause (most of the time) **we’re** “going down from Jerusalem to Jericho” (as that expression from the account calls it) and doing things sometimes dangerous in this life, trying to “make the best of them”, and **more alone endangered** than they might need to be.

Such was the case for a lawyer “trying to justify himself” and getting the chance to address Jesus on that. God’s Son, there in-fleshed as a man, was about as foreign to earth’s existence (“Samaritan”-like) as anything could be. God made man and there for a conversation with someone having something to ask Him, there He was. A Jew wouldn’t ask a Samaritan something since they think of them as “half-breed” / aliens. Jesus self-identified as that (a Samaritan person) to illustrate **NEIGHORLINESS** from the **Outsider He was** as **God incarnate come to save all people who needed saving**.

The (so called) **“best among them” mere mortals** was illustrated in contrast to the **divine Him**: a “priest” and a “Levite” (or it could have been a “lawyer” for the sake of the “lawyer”), but both and all of (what you’d assume to be) brothers and sisters and close buddies and earthly heroes and people that you would think you could count on **weren’t capable or, even, inclined to help more than minimally**.

**The FOREIGNER CAME AND WAS WILLING!!!!!!!**

**The FOREIGNER DID COME AND DID SALVAGE THE SITUATION!!!!!!!!**

This, really, is a story about **self-sufficiency** … and **that versus honesty**. In the cosmic reality of things (with eternal implications at stake rather than just temporal) the “robbers” are Satan and the fallen world that we live in and even our own sinfully-inclined flesh, those have **accosted us (and continue to wreak havoc)**. “Half-dead” is **fully dead spiritually** and a resurrection to a salvation, then, is the only intervention able to pull a beaten soul and body from where it lies on the side of the road of an eternal life that everyone’s going to face with one destiny or another. So those “beatings” **have already occurred (and still are hurting us)**. We’re born into the repercussions in an original sin yet add to it all by our own neglectful and even slipping-into-purposeful sinfulness. We’re not in the shape (in other words) that we can often fool ourselves into thinking we see of ourselves in our mirrors, and this “lawyer” (from Luke’s accounting of him) is **US** mostly in deceiving us of our own situation apart from recognizing the truth (look how easy it is for us to **not see ourselves as the half-dead man on the side of the road**). ….

By the **receipt of the neighborliness of Christ Jesus**, an “Inn” He puts us in makes us stronger under His directed care. Jesus, first, picked us up from the side of the road and, there, bandaged us (even **breathing life into us / a “re-birth”**) by sacrificial death and resurrection and baptismal connection, He carried us upon His own mount and laid us then in the protective and ever-strengthening bedroom and shelter of an “Inn” and with an “Inn-keeper”. He “**SHOWED MERCY**” like **ONLY** **HE COULD FOR AN ETERNAL PROBLEM, with a willingness to also build us for a life healthy in His Kingdom** and **saving usefulness likewise**.

**Application**

He said, “Go, and **do likewise**”. And who would be more willing to be neighborly than one’s knowing merciful neighborliness upon themselves? “Priests” and “Levites” and “lawyers” will be “Good”, even naturally, understanding themselves accosted but **saved** by the Samaritan who was saving Good to them.

The “lawyer” tried to justify himself: “**desiring to** **justify** **himself**, said to Jesus, ‘well, who is my neighbor?’” The wrong question was asked / the “lawyer” assumed the wrong scenario and could not “love the Lord God with all his heart and with all his soul and with all his strength and with all his mind, and **THEN** **his neighbor as himself**”. And He couldn’t because He **didn’t know what God had done for Him in saving HIM** / **HIM** on the side of the road, beaten and half-dead) and then Him (Jesus) healing him in an ongoing process the Savior still pays for and provides for. What’s to “**love**” if you’re not acquainted with **the degree to which “saving” was SAVING**?

Don’t, then, come out of this with just a **demand of the Law to be more neighborly to your neighbors**, but from the way Jesus intended it to a “lawyer” and arrogant “priests” and “Levites” and all others who heard this parable and still do: **knowing which one’s YOU in the story**.

And then open one limp and mostly-lifeless eye to Jesus knelt at your side having stepped from His path in the road to do all that was necessary in the ditch to save you, bearing you up and **carrying you** and **caring for you** in the literal care-place of a sanctuary. Then **appreciate** (with every core of you) **Him as the Good Samaritan** and you as either situational victim who He continues to save or you as self-induced struggler who He regularly has to intercept and re-build for life that’s eternal and joyful. Lay in the bed of the “Inn” thankful that you’ve **had a Savior** and do (now) still **have** **a Lord as you let Him assume that role with you**, walking then (as you can) and seeing others … and **helping**, noting “but **by the grace of God** **so have and do I go**”. In +Jesus’ name, Amen.