

## Who Is Our Neighbor?

Eighteen years ago, on the eleventh of September, 2001, the worst assault that ever took place on American soil came to pass. And one of the problems is that the pain has not passed. This event was preceded by the heartbreak of Columbine when two young men entered Columbine High School and began shooting in April, 1999.

Shortly after the Columbine incident Peggy Noonan wrote an article in the Wall Street Journal entitled, "The Culture of Death." Please read carefully these lines: "The boys who did the killing, the famous Trench Coat Mafia, inhaled too deep the ocean in which they swam. (Our children are born swimming in polluted waters.) Think of it this way. Your child is an intelligent little fish. He swims in deep water. Waves of sound and sight, of thought and fact, come invisibly through that water, like radar; they go through him again and again, from this direction and that. The sound from the television is a wave, and the sound from the radio; the headlines on the newsstand, on the magazines, on the ad on the bus as it whizzes by - all are waves. The fish - your child - is bombarded and barely knows it. This is the ocean in which our children swim. This is the sound of our culture. It comes from all parts of our culture and reaches all parts of our culture, and all the people in it, which is everybody....

"And there's more. We forget, those of us who are middle-aged, that we grew up in a time of saner, less sick-making images and sounds. For instance, the culture of crime only began to explode in the 1960s. We have lived in it for 30 years, (that was 20 years ago!) and most of us turned out OK. So we think our children will be OK too. But they never had a normal culture against which to balance the newer, sicker one. They have no reference points to the old, boring normality. We assume they know what we know: 'This is not right.' But why would they know that? The water in which they swim is the only water they've known."

For twenty years this culture of death has been prevailing as expressed in mass killings and individual murders across our nation, mostly in our larger cities. We may ask what is going on? And what is the answer to the hate driven society that insults through the far too convenient "not-too-social" media? What is the answer for those in our culture that have no problem taking the life of her unborn and defending the right to do so? What is the answer to the unabated hate and anger that dominates many in our society?

In one word, the answer is JESUS!

Allow me to ramify. The greatest commandment of all as given to us by Jesus Himself is found in Mark 12:30: "And thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy mind, and with all thy strength: this is the first commandment." If we get this right, everything else will fall into place. In the very next verse Jesus said in Mark 12:31, "And the second is like, namely this, Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself. There is none other commandment greater than these." Love God. Love our neighbors. Those are the two most important commands in the Bible. In Luke 10:25 though 29 this dialogue is recorded and the primary and secondary commands to love God and

our neighbors is given. Then the inquisitive lawyer asked a question in Luke 10:29: "But he, willing to justify himself, said unto Jesus, And who is my neighbour?" The Bible tells us clearly, that the goal of the lawyer was not to receive an answer, but rather his goal was to receive a pass from Jesus to pick and choose his neighbors and for the decisions of moral conduct to be left up to himself, not the Lord. So, in answer to the question who is our neighbor, our Lord gave His answer in the form of a parable.

## I. THE ATTITUDE OF THE THIEVES: WHAT'S THINE IS MINE AND I'M GOING TO TAKE IT.

Luke 10:30

Exodus 20:17 says, "Thou shalt not covet thy neighbour's house, thou shalt not covet thy neighbour's wife, nor his manservant, nor his maidservant, nor his ox, nor his ass, nor any thing that *is* thy neighbour's." These two, not coveting and loving our neighbors, Paul tied together: "For this, Thou shalt not commit adultery, Thou shalt not kill, Thou shalt not steal, Thou shalt not bear false witness, Thou shalt not covet; and if there be any other commandment, it is briefly comprehended in this saying, namely, Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself" (Romans 13:9). What is behind the coveting, stealing and murderous attitude?

### A. Greed

Deuteronomy 23:24, 25: "When thou comest into thy neighbour's vineyard, then thou mayest eat grapes thy fill at thine own pleasure; but thou shalt not put any in thy vessel. When thou comest into the standing corn of thy neighbour, then thou mayest pluck the ears with thine hand; but thou shalt not move a sickle unto thy neighbour's standing corn."

### B. Envy

Proverbs 14:30: "A sound heart is the life of the flesh: but envy the rottenness of the bones."

Proverbs 27:4: "Wrath is cruel, and anger is outrageous; but who is able to stand before envy?"

James 3:16: "For where envying and strife is, there is confusion and every evil work."

## II. THE ATTITUDE OF THE PRIEST AND THE LEVITE: WHAT'S MINE IS MINE AND I'M GOING TO KEEP IT.

Luke 10:31, 32

Ecclesiastes 5:13: "There is a sore evil which I have seen under the sun, namely, riches kept for the owners thereof to their hurt."

I John 3:17: "But whoso hath this world's good, and seeth his brother have need, and shutteth up his bowels of compassion from him, how dwelleth the love of God in him?"

### III. THE ATTITUDE OF THE GOOD SAMARITAN: WHAT'S MINE IS THINE AND I'M GOING TO GIVE IT TO YOU.

LUKE 10:33-37

Proverbs 11:25: "The liberal soul shall be made fat: and he that watereth shall be watered also himself."

The answer our Lord gives concerning who is our neighbor, is basically, anyone in need.

A. There are those in need of a Savior

Luke 19:10: "For the Son of man is come to seek and to save that which was lost."

Romans 5:6: "For when we were yet without strength, in due time Christ died for the ungodly."

B. There are those in need of exhortation

Isaiah 50:4, "The Lord GOD hath given me the tongue of the learned, that I should know how to speak a word in season to him that is weary: he wakeneth morning by morning, he wakeneth mine ear to hear as the learned."

Hebrews 13:22: "And I beseech you, brethren, suffer the word of exhortation: for I have written a letter unto you in few words."

Conclusion:

There is a deep underlying message in our story. The world, flesh and the Devil have stolen from the victim. He has been stripped and left half dead. The representative of religion (the priest) passed by on the other side. Then the representative of the law (the Levite) also passed by. And religion and the law will never save a lost soul. But the good Samaritan, like Jesus, came to where the man was. He bound his wounds. He poured oil into the wounded man, a symbol of the Holy Spirit. Then the good Samaritan gave him to drink of the wine, a symbol of joy. He took him to the inn and paid the host money, a symbol of the earnest of our inheritance (Ephesians 1:14) and promised to return (John 14:2-4). "...Even so, come, Lord Jesus" (Revelation 22:20c).

-Pastor Pope-