

In the Name of the Father, and of the ✠ Son, and of the Holy Ghost.

“Go and do likewise”, the Lord commanded the lawyer. But what the Lord commanded was impossible for the lawyer. It is impossible for any sinful man. Sinners are interested first in themselves, not in others. Sinners are selfish. Sinners are jealous. Rather than helping others, they crave what others have. They capitalize on the weakness of others, they seek gain from others’ loss. So the very Word of God the Lawyer quoted, and rightly, is the very Word that condemned him.

He desired to earn eternal life for himself. Faith knows better. But that was his question to the Lord: “What shall I do to inherit eternal life?” He knew the Scriptures. He rightly gave answer to the Lord’s question. “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’s what the Scripture teaches. That is a description of the life of faith.

But the Law is never satisfied. It needles and pokes and prods, seeking violations. That is the job of the Law. And the lawyer’s second question to the Lord reveals his inability to do what the Law requires, his inability to keep the Law: “And who is my neighbor?” He sought a loophole. He looked for the easy way out. If the definition of “neighbor” could be narrowed, he could claim to have kept the Law. And seeking to circumvent the Law, he showed that he is not capable of the love the Commandments require.

It is not necessarily that the lawyer was more devious than other men. It is rather that the flesh, your flesh, the flesh you received from Adam, seeks loopholes. It seeks to excuse sin, to minimize sin, to make sin seem acceptable. The fallen flesh desires no savior. That offends its ego. The fallen flesh would rather save itself. And your flesh has been no different.

So the Lord teaches the man with the account of the Good Samaritan. And those Words, the description of the badly wounded man, the priest, the Levite, the Samaritan and their actions, are Words aimed at your flesh as well, that they pierce your flesh and enter your heart, and that you learn what true goodness is, what true love is, from whence comes your help, in whom you should trust for your healing, to whom you should look for salvation.

Most men hear the account of the Good Samaritan and immediately reject that they are like the priest or the Levite. The fallen flesh has a high self-opinion. Men think of themselves as being basically good. But truth be told, each of us has passed by those in need. Each of us has looked away at pan-handlers in intersections hoping to avoid eye contact with them until the light changes. Each of us has failed to give to support the hungry, the homeless, and the needy.

Still, we don’t see ourselves as the priest, who avoids the wounded man. We don’t see ourselves as the Levite, who failed to stop and help. Some see themselves as the wounded man, in need of help. Some see themselves as the Samaritan, the one who shows mercy. But we are not the wounded man, because he was, according to Scripture, half-dead.

And each of us has been completely dead, dead in transgressions, not half-dead, but fully dead to God. And if we see ourselves as the Good Samaritan, we stand with the inquisitive lawyer and seek a loophole in the Law, which proves that we are incapable of the love the Law requires.

The account of the Good Samaritan is a lesson in love. Of love every man is neighbor, even those we despise, even those we count as unclean, those we would never touch, those we would never associate with. To love them, even our enemies, is perfect love. And that is the love the True Good Samaritan shows to you. For it is Christ who was beaten and crucified, but no one came to His aid. He was left in the ditch of the garden tomb, lifeless.

He did it for you. He suffered and died to give you life. He who enjoyed the bliss and majesty of heaven crossed the over the road between heaven and earth to save you from your sins. He took on your flesh to become your neighbor, to show you a love that surpasses all love.

It is Christ, the One counted by men as unclean, reckoned by both priest and Levite as a blasphemer and a fraud, it is the same Christ that came to you when you were dead in your sins. It is Christ that sees you and has compassion, the very compassion that He was denied. He bandages the wounds of your sins, vesting you in His perfect righteousness. That you be saved, that you live, He pours out upon you His Holy Mysteries, the Gospel in tangible forms, the Holy Sacraments.

He washes you with the water of regeneration and renewal of the Holy Spirit. The Wine He pours into you is the Blood that He shed for you. He wraps you in the gleaming vestment of His righteousness. He brings you into His Holy Church, the Inn of Salvation, the place where He makes Himself present in Word and Mystery, that you be kept steadfast in faith in Him until He returns. And He calls and ordains mere men, working through them to bring His Saving Word and Gifts to you.

Your Lord, the One who has saved you, the One who has brought you into His Holy Church, has promised to return for you. He will come again, visibly, and the whole creation will confess Him as God and Lord. But He is not a God afar off. He comes to you today as you hear His Word, and the Holy Spirit works and strengthens your faith. His Gifts are administered by the steward of His Mysteries, not two denarii, but two elements: bread and wine, which are His Body and Blood, that you believe, eat and be healed.

And knowing the love and mercy of Christ, faith extends love and mercy to others. You hear Christ, you receive Christ, you are filled with Christ. You see the earthly signs of His heavenly Gifts. Your faith sees Christ in water and bread and wine.

And blessed are the eyes which see what you see, and the ears which hear what you hear, for saving faith loves 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. So it is you, dear Christian, that inherit eternal life.

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