

February 11, 2007 – 9 & 11 AM
Patchogue Church of the Nazarene

Do A Good Turn Daily **Luke 10:25-37**

Feb. 8 is the anniversary of Boy Scouts of America. Churches all over the nation set aside one Sunday service during February to recognize scouts and scouters (adult leaders) for their involvement in this God centered organization that teaches young men how to live in a way that should keep them “physically strong, mentally awake, and morally straight.” We hear the stories all the time and see examples in movies and even cartoons of the scout that helps the little old lady across the street, etc. Scouts are taught to “help other people at all times.” It is part of their practical training, and it is part of the oath they recite every time they gather together. Last year I gave the Scriptural references for each component of the Scout Law. This year I want to show you the Scout Oath.

“On my honor, I will do my duty to God and my country, to obey the Scout Law, to help other people at all times, to keep myself physically strong, mentally awake, and morally straight.”

This is the oath that every Boy Scout swears to at every Troop meeting in every location. I have not only tried to instill this into our young men, but I have had the privilege of seeing it carried out by Scouts in emergency situations and times of need. I have letters in my scouting file from people commending our boys for living out this oath.

I’ll share one such story now. We used to go for a week of summer camp every year. Most of the time we would go to Ten Mile River Scout Reservation. This particular year, when we arrived, the older boys (including my son Rob) wanted to go up to Indian Cliffs to check on the shelters they built the year before on a High Adventure trek. Up in this area there was a scenic overlook of the Delaware River called Picture Window, and there was the cliff that the more advanced boys learned rappelling on – it was a drop of about 80-100 feet at its peek down a rock bank to a landing below. When they got up there it was just dark and a couple must have been enjoying the privacy of this desolate area under the stars and the moon. They may have also been drinking too. As the boys arrived they saw the man fall off the lower side of the cliff and the woman started screaming. The scouts immediately broke into action. One was sent for help to the main building (about 2 miles down the road), another comforted the woman, and the others made their way down the cliff to help the injured man. They all knew the basic first aid treatments by heart, and each one took a different aspect of the assistance needed. They didn’t think about it; they didn’t stop to analyze the nationality or culture of the injured person. They saw a need and responded to it with full compassion and whatever means they had to help. One scout took off his shirt and ripped it into strips to make a sling or whatever else may have been necessary. They responded to the situation. Each one did whatever he could to help a person in need.

Today, with that in mind I would like to look at a familiar text in Luke’s Gospel.

READ – LUKE 10:25-37 – The story of the Good Samaritan – (p. 1006 or 1086)

We are very familiar with this story. In fact, there is a Good Samaritan law that protects us from trying to help someone in need and then getting sewed by them for making things worse (if that is possible). We are expected to come to the aid of the injured and needy. We are protected by law so we can do this. We are encouraged by God and scripture to actively attend to a neighbor in trouble. Right?

I was driving home one night on the LIE, and I saw a car on the side of the road. There was a man crouched at one of the tires and another man looking under the front of the car. I immediately thought I could pull over and see if they need help; it was so cold out. Maybe I can at least make a cell phone call for them and get help. While all this is going on in my head, I started thinking that it's late and Corinne will be expecting me home by a certain time. Everyone today has a cell phone anyway, don't they? Why were these guys looking at different things? Come to think of it, they might have been black or Hispanic or of some other racial or cultural group (you pick the one that makes you feel uncomfortable). If it was a lady all alone, I would stop, but then what if she claimed something inappropriate afterward. You know, it's much easier to just mind my own business anyway. A cop will stop soon or someone of like kind. I am fighting the clock anyway, and really can't stop right now. The problem is this; it not the first time I did this.

I read a story about a man who pulled over to help two men stranded on the side of the road. When he tried to help them, they mugged him, robbed him, and drove away. It was a set-up, a staged event to take advantage of the Good Samaritan. How safe is it to help our neighbor today? Where was God's protection for this man who was just trying to help? Are we really expected to just jump to the aid of everyone and anyone we see?

In our text (v. 30) a poor unfortunate man is mugged and beaten, robbed, and left for dead. First of all, the guy didn't have a chance. He was walking alone on this pass that leads from Jerusalem down to Jericho? What was he thinking? You can't go that way alone and feel safe. Doesn't he know where he is? People in this area will rob you without blinking an eye. Clothing was a valuable commodity in this time and culture. It was not uncommon, especially here, to be robbed of your clothes and anything else they could sell or use. So here our poor victim lies. He is left for dead on the side of the road – robbed and naked – how awful. Surely someone will help him!

Certainly a religious leader, like a priest would know the right thing to do. What is expected of us in our walk with God? Don't we turn to our religious leaders for answers to such questions? Verse 31 tells us that a priest happened to be traveling down that same road. What did he do? He passed the man by on the other side of the road! What? So, is it OK to bypass someone in need on the side of the road? Is this priest a good example? Well, let's look at things from a priest's perspective. A priest could not come in contact with a dead person or animal or they would be ceremonially unclean and not be allowed to serve in the temple activities for seven days. Did he have a legitimate excuse then? I mean, it was kind of against his religious training to go near the victim. NO?

Let's look a little closer at the text. It says he saw this man, this victim, while he was going down the same road. Well, if he was going down from Jerusalem to Jericho, that means he was on his way away from Jerusalem – away from the ceremonies at the temple – away from any concern about being unclean for seven days. So, what's his problem? Maybe he was thinking that his wife was expecting him home by a certain time, or maybe he had

many things to attend to and time was of the essence – we don't really know – he didn't stop. Maybe, he was able to legitimize his neglect of the victim for religious reasons – hmmm. You know, certain tasks may be beneath a priest to do. Someone else will help!

Verse 32 speaks about a Levite – a temple worker. “When he came to the place and saw him, passed on the other side.” Now a Levite may not be held to exactly the same level of ritual purity, but it is still an underlying concern. He might not want to defile himself. However, Jesus point in these examples is to leave them both without excuse. The point here is that both these Jews knew the law. They were both on their way back from Jerusalem. There was no legitimate reason why either of these religious Jews should not stop to help this fellow Jew in trouble, but they didn't. They “turned a blind eye” to the situation and passed him by – avoiding the issue by passing on the other side of the street.

It was as if the victim were a Samaritan or some other evil person lying there. Well along comes our Samaritan man. The Jews despised the Samaritan people. They felt scorn and disgust toward them as a people and as individuals. Our text tells us that when the Samaritan man saw our victim, he had compassion on him. Compassion – the Greek word is something I won't try to say, but it is where we get our word bowels or guts from. It is that inner thrust of motivation that causes a person to get up and do something about it - type of feeling. This despised Samaritan had or felt compassion on the Jewish victim and it motivated him to do something about it. He just couldn't walk by and leave this injured man without checking him out first. Compassion causes us to move in sacrificial ways toward others. It would cost him something to help the victim. He could just walk on by and no one would care, especially since he was a Samaritan and the victim was a Jew, but he just couldn't do that to a fellow human being. So, he stopped and sacrificed some of his own precious time to help. Seeing the injuries, he then sacrificed some of his own precious wine to disinfect the wounds, and he sacrificed some of his own oil to soothe the pain. He then put the injured Jewish man on his own animal and brought him to an inn and stayed there with him sacrificing more of his own time to care for this man. The next day, he sacrificed his own precious money to pay the inn-keeper to continue to care for this man with an open promise that he would pay any additional expenses if they arose (what an open ended vulnerability he set up for himself). Do you see the contrasts that Jesus is establishing in this story?

There was no such term imaginable to the Jews of this time as a “Good Samaritan.” The Samaritans were evil and despicable. In their righteous indignation, the Jews, especially the religious Jews, would never stop to help a Samaritan, injured or not. This is why Jesus' story is so powerful. He has this Samaritan dog take such pity on someone who would normally hate him, and he sacrifices all he has to come to his rescue where his own religious leaders couldn't be bothered. Jesus puts the question back to the one who asked it – Which one was a neighbor to this injured man?

One is not a true neighbor simply because we belong to the same culture or race or community or church. One is not a neighbor by default (by virtue of circumstances, or commonalities). A true neighbor must make him/her self a neighbor to another person. We must purposely be a neighbor to someone. We can't expect someone else to be a neighbor to us. A true neighbor takes the initiative – just like the scouts did that night at summer camp. That guy didn't expect or even want their help. In fact he ran away as soon

as they helped him to the top ledge. He was later arrested – and that’s a whole different story. We have to become neighbors to those around us and those who need help.

This religious lawyer set out to trap Jesus in a religious question. This man would never have entertained the thought of helping a Samaritan – he despised them. He had no compassion or any good feelings at all toward these people only hatred. When he asked Jesus his initial question, Jesus said to him how do YOU read the law?

There is another aspect to this parable. In the traditional Hebrew thought process, there was NO eternal life concept. Life meant long life on the earth – in the land that was the inheritance provided by the God of Israel. So, for him to ask Jesus in verse 25 – “what must I do to inherit ‘eternal life?’” was insinuating something that went beyond the normal Jewish law. He was trying to trap Jesus into teaching blasphemy or heresy by using Law.

Even still, the man answered correctly – for long life in the land according to the promise of God and the Law, and for eternal life. The heart of the Law and the heart of God’s will for us is to love the Lord with all that is within us and to love our neighbor. This is preached by Paul in his letters to the churches as well. **Gal 5:14 – *The entire law is summed up in a single command: "Love your neighbor as yourself."*** **Rom 13:10 – *Love does no harm to its neighbor. Therefore love is the fulfillment of the law.***

Good Samaritan joke from Good Morning and Sue’s experience.

Where do we get this kind of compassion to be a true neighbor to others, even those quite different than ourselves? How can we love others the way God would want us to? Knowing the Law, even knowing the Bible chapter and verse cannot make us more compassionate. When we truly love the Lord with all our heart, He puts His Spirit in us to change us, to sanctify us, and He puts His love for others in us.

There’s no such thing as free lunch – ever hear that? Love is going to cost you something. It’s going to cost you yourself. There is a sacrifice of self that is required in order to love as God would have us love. There is a sacrifice of all of ourselves to love God the way He really desires us to. Love is costly and requires sacrifice. How willing are you to really love God and love others? This is sanctification in the raw. God’s desire is for each one of us to gradually love him more and love others more at the expense of dying more to our own desires, will, and possessions. Just who is a neighbor to you? Do you love sacrificially, unto the Lord, in your daily actions toward others? Maybe the Scouts have something more spiritual going on than meets the eye. **Do a good turn daily!**

So the bottom line to Jesus’ parable is another reversal. He says to this uppity Jewish know-it-all – you got the answer right – now go and do likewise. This is His command to us who know the answer as well – Go and do likewise – Love God, and Love others. The more completely we love God, the more compassionate we will be toward others.