

Connecting with the Sunday Readings

Fifteenth Sunday of
Ordinary Time

Gospel Word
Luke 10:25–37

This Sunday offers a double treat. First, Jesus affirms the two great commandments of Judaism: love of God and love of neighbor. They remain the centerpiece of his teaching. But there is one small addition. The lawyer asks this question in reference to life after death. Jesus places the commandment in the present. Do this, and live right *now*. Good point.

Second, to underscore the radical nature of his understanding of neighborly love, he presents one of the most remembered stories in the entire Bible, the Good Samaritan. Does this go beyond the original understanding of neighborly love? Absolutely. During his lifetime on earth, Jews and Samaritans were not exactly friendly neighbors, although they lived in close proximity. They were bitter enemies. The Samaritans were once Jews but they intermarried with foreigners during an earlier period of history. Also, they had been boycotting worship in Jerusalem for centuries. In this story of the Good Samaritan (which in itself would be two words that Jews would never connect) Jesus pushes the *meaning* of a neighbor to the extreme. Once again, we witness the amazing ability of Jesus to teach profound truths through compelling stories.

Living the Word

We travel a path from knowing to doing. No one in today's Gospel reading lacks for knowledge of the good. They could probably recite the two great commandments, just as we can. But does our knowledge lead to action? This is always the great religious question. Paraphrasing a popular song of a few years back, *love, love, love, if you say that you love me, show me!* The acid test of authentic love is how much it flows into action.

Most of us probably follow the two great commandments. Where we often fall short is when we try to be practical about their implementation. We love within practical constraints. And maybe that's all right. But there may be times when we are called to have the practical give way to the impractical. And it's hard to predict when this will happen. People jump into icy waters to save drowning victims. People visit prisons to offer some companionship to the incarcerated. Recently canonized, Saint Damien offered his ministry to those inflicted with leprosy. Parents adopt children "no one else wants." These things happen. Be on the lookout for opportunities where true compassion can be shown. This is the kind of attitude God has toward us. God is always looking for sinners in order to show merciful love. Jesus said that's the basic reason why he came, to show the extent of God's love. There are no limits or boundaries to God's love. The story of the Good Samaritan shows us there should be no boundaries for our love.

One-line Prayer

God of compassion, help us to recognize times when there is need and give us the courage to go beyond the practical. Amen.

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A Gospel Word for the Home

Luke 10:25–37

Traveling the path from knowing to doing is lengthy. No one in today's Gospel lacks knowledge of the good. They can all recite the two great commandments. They learned them when they were young and they probably thought about them often. But did their knowledge penetrate the way they lived? This is always the great religious question. Paraphrasing a popular song of a few years back, *love, love, love, if you say that you love me, show me!* The acid test of authentic love is how much it flows into action.

Toward the end of the Gospel, the Good Samaritan is described as having compassion. His generous response to the wounded traveler is completely compassionate. Not only does he provide first aid, but he also takes the man to where he can heal, and to use an image we can relate to, he leaves his credit card number and tells the innkeeper to use it to pay for whatever is necessary to help. Might the innkeeper add a few dollars for himself? It's possible, but who's counting? The compassion of the Samaritan is without limit or calculation. Is he a bit crazy? Maybe. Having genuine compassion can seem almost frivolous to a society like ours that always wants to know the cost.

Parent Survival

Do parents ever follow the example of the Good Samaritan? Or to put the question a bit differently, are parents among the best examples of being Good Samaritans? While there are no scientific studies of this, it is not hard to claim that they are exactly that. Parents know what it means to be truly compassionate. Parents know of times when they had to stop at the side of the road to help a wounded child, or teen, or even a young adult. They know what it means to go beyond any calculation in helping. How much does it cost to be a good parent? It really can't be reduced to that kind of figuring. In some cases, it takes everything.

This is not to expect parents to be martyrs for their children. Parents need to care for themselves if they are to continue doing the same for their children. Can't you imagine the Good Samaritan after he has taken care of the wounded traveler say to the innkeeper, "How about a cold one for me? Why not?" Still, parents do well not to underestimate the importance, and the *full Christian meaning* of their generosity on behalf of their children. Being a good parent and a Good Samaritan may overlap a lot.

Car or Meal Talk

Given the clarity of the story of the Good Samaritan, ask your children to name any Good Samaritans they know or know about.

One-Line Prayer

God of compassion, help us to recognize times when our family might need to be a Good Samaritan to someone in need of our help. Amen.