

“Love Sunday”

The Rev. Drew Willard  
UCC at The Villages, FL  
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Luke 10:25-37

Everybody knows what a ‘good Samaritan’ is – You know, right?

Somebody who helps people.

There is an auto club called ‘The Good Sam Club’ – to help RVers on the road,  
and there are ‘good Samaritan’ laws to protect people from being sued  
when they stop to help, and things still go wrong.

So, the ‘good Samaritan’ has become part of American culture  
though not everybody may know the story or that it comes from the Bible,  
or that Samaritans were a despised minority in Jesus’ day.

Most people may not know Samaritans still live in northern Israel,  
including Nazareth the town where Jesus grew up as a Galilean Jew  
and therefore, a minority himself and probably picked on because of it...

I am going to be telling you Jesus’ parable of the Good Samaritan,  
but first let me give you the background for this story:

It was told towards the end of Jesus’ journey to Jerusalem  
and to his destiny of crucifixion and resurrection.

Following the death of John the Baptist, Jesus’ decision to go to Jerusalem  
was set in motion, so he sent messengers ahead to prepare the way.

When Jesus and his followers approached a certain Samaritan town,  
his disciples James and John reported that the people there  
were not going to welcome them.

The disciples then asked if they should pray for God to send down  
fire from heaven like Elijah did, to punish them,  
but Jesus turned around and said to them,

‘Don’t you know what Spirit you are about?

The Son of Man came to save people and not to destroy them.’

So, they moved on to the next town, and soon after,

Jesus sent out a larger group of 72 – and not just to find a place for the night.

He sent them out to be missionaries and told them

not to bring any extra clothes or money – and not talk to others on the road...

Now that is an odd detail in this story,

but it ties in with what contemporary Christian theologians are saying about  
how the early Christian church spread throughout the Roman Empire...

Jesus wanted them to stay focused on going to the householders, the farmers,  
the big estate owners and – in the process, heal the divide  
between the homeowner and the homeless caused by  
the Romans’ extortionate financial practices.

Jesus used hospitality, generosity, and love to heal as well as plant community.

Willard, p.2

When the 72 returned, they said,

“Lord, even the devils yield to us because of your name!”

Jesus responded by saying,

“I saw Satan fall like lightning from heaven”...

Christian writer Elton Trueblood suggests that what Jesus meant was,

“I *am watching* as Satan is being thrown down  
as fast as lightning falls from the sky” –

meaning that this *was happening*

because Christ’s followers were now doing what he had been doing:

Healing, casting out evil spirits, teaching and praying,

singing, and telling the stories of the Kingdom that is coming.

Then Jesus was caught up in the Spirit, praying and thanking God that it is  
through regular people that the Good News is being shared.

Inspired by Luke 10:25-37 91

**NOW LOOK HERE!**

**A LAWYER GOT UP TO CHALLENGE HIM, SAYING,**

**“RABBI, TEACHER, WHAT MUST BE DONE TO OBTAIN ‘LIFE ETERNAL?’”**

**SO, JESUS SAID TO HIM,**

**“WHAT IS WRITTEN IN THE LAW? HOW DO YOU INTERPRET IT?”**

**THEN, HE ANSWERED SAYING,**

**“ ‘YOU SHALL LOVE THE LORD YOUR GOD**

**WITH ALL YOUR HEART AND SOUL**

**AND WITH ALL YOUR MIGHT AND MIND.’**

**AND YOU SHALL LOVE YOUR NEIGHBOR AS BEING LIKE YOURSELF –**

**AS BEING KIN, AS BEING FAMILY.”**

**SO, JESUS SAID TO HIM,**

**“THAT’S THE RIGHT ANSWER. DO THIS AND YOU WILL TRULY BE ALIVE!”**

**BUT THIS FELLOW WANTING TO MAKE HIS POINT,**

**SAID TO JESUS,**

**“SO, WHO IS MY ‘NEIGHBOR?’”**

**PICKING UP ON THIS OPPORTUNITY, JESUS SAID,**

**“THERE WAS A MAN WHO WAS COMING DOWN**

**FROM JERUSALEM TO JERICHO WHEN HE WAS AMBUSHED BY THIEVES.**

**AND THEY PLUNDERED HIM OF EVERYTHING**

**AND BRUTALLY BEAT HIM, LEAVING HIM TO DIE.**

**BUT BY CHANCE, A PRIEST WAS COMING DOWN THIS ROAD;**

**YET WHEN HE LOOKED AT THE MAN,**

**HE CROSSED AROUND THE OTHER SIDE.**

**AND ONCE AGAIN, A RELIGIOUS PERSON WAS COMING DOWN THE ROAD,**

**BUT WHEN HE LOOKED AT THE MAN, HE JUST CROSSED AROUND, TOO.**

**THEN, A SAMARITAN,**

**WHO HAPPENED TO BE TRAVELING THROUGH THERE,**

**APPROACHED HIM, BUT SAW THIS PERSON**

THROUGH THE EYES OF COMPASSION AND HAD MERCY UPON HIM.  
THIS FELLOW DRESSED UP THE MAN'S WOUNDS  
BY POURING ON OIL, FLOUR, AND WINE.  
THEN, HE PLACED THE MAN ON HIS OWN DONKEY,  
AND LED HIM TO AN INN, WHERE HE TOOK CARE OF HIM.  
AND WITH THE NEXT DAY, HE TOOK OUT TWO DENARII, ABOUT \$40,  
TO GIVE TO THE INNKEEPER, AND SAID,  
'TAKE CARE OF HIM AND WHATEVER YOU SPEND IN ADDITION TO THIS,  
I WILL REPAY YOUR ADVANCE TO ME UPON MY RETURN.'  
WHICH OF THESE THREE, DO YOU SUPPOSE,  
BECAME A NEIGHBOR TO THE ONE  
WHO HAD BEEN ATTACKED BY THE THIEVES?"  
AND THE LAWYER SAID,  
"THE ONE WHO HAD ACTED MERCIFULLY TO HIM."  
THEN, JESUS SAID TO HIM,  
"GO AND YOU DO THE SAME."

Parables are meant to be applied to the present time of each generation,  
so in this way they are always relevant.  
Jesus' listeners were Galilean Jews, but this story also works  
with American Christians as the wounded person, and the 2 who pass him by,  
while a Muslim could very well be in the role of the good Samaritan.  
Notice that the thieves are ultimately of no consequence.

The takeaway lesson is this – in the end, love is what makes the difference in life  
and it is the real standard by which we will be judged.  
Seminary professor and Biblical storyteller Richard Swanson says,  
"our differences make us useful and interesting to each other."  
Behold how wonderful those differences are  
and how interesting when we share those differences, together.

Behold how good and how pleasant it is for people to dwell together;  
Behold how good and how pleasant it is for people to dwell together  
In unity, in unity. La-la-ly, la-la-ly-la-la-la, ly-lah!  
In unity, in unity. La-la-ly, la-la-ly-la-la-la, ly-lah! [Repeat]

Amen

In the Christian tradition of Advent we light a candle each Sunday  
in anticipation of Christmas when Christ was born –  
like other festivals of Lights such as ‘Hanukkah and the Hindu’s Dinali.  
The first week is about hope, the second is peace, today is love,  
next week will be joy, and Christmas Eve, we light all four and the central,  
white pillar candle representing Christ.  
So, this is “Love Sunday” and this year we are celebrating  
with our Jewish and Muslim friends.  
Now, this is technically a protestant Christian service of worship –  
which gives us the flexibility to incorporate different forms and styles –  
so long as we don’t compromise on substance.

More traditional Christians such as Roman Catholics and the Greek Orthodox  
have very specific liturgies that don’t allow for this kind of experimentation.  
I suppose Southern Baptists could, but the language of their prayers  
is generally specific to Christianity.  
The United Church of Christ – with its commitment to inclusive language,  
open-minded theology, ecumenical and interfaith outreach,  
is particularly suited for providing a sacred space  
for Judaism and Islam as a meeting ground to worship God together.  
We Christians of the UCC are serving today, in the role of “Plus Sign”  
for the sake of the Jewish and Muslim people,  
shining like a Star between the Sun of Judaism and the Moon of Islam.  
We are allies to bring hope for peace in our world  
by demonstrating love as a joyful alternative...