

SERMON
 First Lutheran Church
 Aitkin, Minnesota

Luke 10:25-37
 Rev. Darrell J. Pedersen
 March 5, 2017

KIDS' MESSAGE

Good morning kids. First I wonder if any of you did anything with your "**For Jesus**" dollars. Did any of you think of a good place to give that dollar to Jesus by using it in some special way? **Examples**? Thanks for however you shared Jesus' love and care with your world this past week.

Now then, I have two pans with a **sponge in each**. I'd like you to pretend that these pans and sponge are like people. In this pitcher, I have some water. I'd like you to pretend that this water is God's love. Both of these pans are empty except for the sponge in each. Now, what can you tell me about how **God's love** and these **two people** can get together?

Can water (God's love) be **poured out** into the pans/sponge? Or does God wait for us to come to Him looking for His love? It can be poured! (**Pour into first pan.**) God poured his love out onto you and me when Jesus died for us on the cross. And God is still working to pour God's love on us this very day.

The sponge and pan – apart from God's love: dry, brittle, almost useless. It may look good, but it isn't doing any good. And can a sponge soak up the water/God's love? Yes!

With God's love (water) the sponge:

- Can soak up God's love whether it is dirty, old, new, torn. But it can soak up only so much of God's love unless some is wrung out someplace else (**sponge into the second pan.**)
- Can be used for good (cleaning) projects,
- If it doesn't continue to soak up God's love, it will soon be dried up and not helping anyone again,
- It's never too late for a sponge to start soaking up God's love as long as it's still a sponge.

Could you use a little more of God's love in your life? Do you have a little bit of God's love to pass along to someone else? God will help!

GOD'S LOVE - SOAK IT UP AND PASS IT ON! Amen.

ADULT MESSAGE

Why do some non-Christians look so much more like Christ than some Christians do?

Who are you? You just heard the story/parable that Jesus told in our gospel lesson for today. So which one are you? Jesus didn't just tell stories to entertain people. He told them so that they could see who they were. Who are you?

What about the **priest**? He was sort of a religious "big shot." He had an assured position, respect and authority. He knew the scriptures and God's will for people. He "kept" the law and judged others on how well they did at keeping the law. He was headed out from Jerusalem to Jericho, along a dangerous road. He was probably in no particular hurry since he was coming from the temple, not headed toward it for some religious observance. The priest saw the man who had been beaten half dead and robbed, but, the priest didn't stop.

What about the **Levite**? Is that you? He assisted in the temple. He might be kind of like a council member, choir or altar guild person today. He knew all the correct ritual, gestures, etc. which were connected with the proper worship of God. He saw the man who had been beaten and left half dead too, but, the Levite didn't stop either.

Along came the "**good Samaritan.**" Is that you? According to the Jews, he was the hated "**outsider.**" Think of your lowest "**scum of the earth,**" and that's where Jesus' listeners would have thought of this Samaritan. Samaritans were the Jew's next door neighbors, who had long before intermarried with people of other beliefs, pagans. Surely, Samaritans were unfaithful, traitors to God and to God's true people.

Yet, it was the Samaritan, in Jesus' story, **who stopped to help** the nameless man, probably a Jew, who lay beside the road. And it wasn't without risk to him either. This Samaritan was a man of some wealth obviously, since to have a donkey, wine, oil and a fair amount of cash on you in those days was rather rare. The Samaritan too was fair game for the dreaded robbers. And he didn't know this guy.

Did you see, he didn't just stop and offer to call the cops in the next town. He had compassion on the man. He did something. He gave first aid to the man, loaded him on his own ride, and, walked him off to the nearest inn (motel) to care for him further. Talk about "going the extra mile. Then the Samaritan risked more of his wealth on the innkeeper, paying in advance for the man's continuing care and recovery. He may even have saved the beaten man from slavery. Jewish law said that if somebody did a service for somebody else, they could make that other person serve as a slave until the bill was paid off in full. The Samaritan left the equivalent of two days pay with the innkeeper. Would you do that? And he promised to pay any additional expenses when he came back through. This guy risks his life and spends his money with **reckless abandon**. He saw the man who had been beaten and left half dead, and he stopped to help.

Maybe you're the lawyer who asked Jesus the question in the first place? He started out as a smart guy, "know-it-all" trying to put Jesus on the spot. He was the kind of guy who had it pretty well figured that he paid his own way. He knew what was going on, which end was up. Things got a little sticky when he tackled Jesus though.

Maybe he still figured he had the upper hand after he'd asked what he had to do to be saved and came back with what the scriptures say about loving the Lord with all your heart, soul, strength and mind – and your neighbor as yourself. Maybe he figured that that was no problem for him and just wanted to show off. Or, maybe he was getting honest with himself and realized that this was a very tall order and hoped maybe that he could narrow down his responsibility and make being "religious" a little more manageable? Maybe it was that he really wanted to try to get by with "doing" the bare minimum to be "good enough?" That's not you or I is it? Well, he got blown out of the water by Jesus' answer! Who is my neighbor? Everybody is!

Then who could be the good Samaritan? Who could show that kind of loving compassion, that kind of self-giving? I can't. Can you? Jesus, maybe he's the good Samaritan?

Who am I? Sometimes I'm each one of them, the priest, the Levite, the lawyer. Maybe just a tinge even, I am sometimes the good Samaritan.

But, surely, I AM THE ONE BEATEN AND LEFT FOR DEAD ALONG THE ROAD. . .

Satan and the world would be happy to see me and you done in. BUT, JESUS STOPPED FOR ME. As a matter of fact, there's even more to the story! The good Samaritan, Jesus, died to save my life, your life. Should I trust the one who has given so much? Should you? What do you think?

The lawyer asked, "**What shall I do to be saved?**" "**Love the Lord with all your heart, soul, strength and mind and your neighbor as yourself.**" Then he asked, "**How much** do I '**have to**' love?"

Jesus' response is that it is not a question of "religious acts," but of "lifestyle." Religious acts are something that you are "supposed to do." Lifestyle is "who you are." Lifestyle is the kind of a person you are. Acts become "just what I do." Is your life:

<u>"Have to?"</u>	<u>or</u>	<u>"Want to?"</u>
Talking minimums		- Talking extravagance
Keeping track		- Self-forgetfulness and carefree abandon
Bound by rules		- Free to love and be loved
Deserving		- Forgiven
No one will see if I don't		- God knows and I know
I earned my way		- I received a gift from the grace of God

We can't do "enough." But **Jesus did everything that is needed** for us. Now we are free to love the neighbor because we "**want to.**" **Why do some non-Christians look so much more like Christ than some Christians do?**

"Which one proved to be the neighbor?" "**Go and do likewise.**" Go and do likewise. Go and do likewise. . . That's what **living in faith** is all about – "**That all may know Christ's love**" – go and do likewise.

Jesus didn't just tell stories to entertain people. He told them so that they **could see who they were**, AND, so that they **could see how much God loves them.** How do you thank the one who saved your life? By loving, not just once, but forever. With joy and thanksgiving. Thanks be to God. Amen.

