

Sermon Preached at the Episcopal Church of the Holy Comforter
2701 Park Road, Charlotte, NC 28209
The Seventh Sunday after Pentecost, July 11, 2010
Year C, Proper 10 RCL [Amos 7:7-17; Psalm 82;
Colossians 1:1-14; Luke 10:25-37]
The Reverend Scot McComas, Interim Supply Priest

May the words of my mouth and the meditation of each of our hearts be acceptable in your sight, O Lord, for you are our strength and redeemer. Amen.

I dedicate this sermon to my colleague and friend, the late Reverend Dr. Carter Lofton, Deacon at Holy Comforter for fifteen years.

Today is known as Good Samaritan Sunday. Our Gospel reading is perhaps one of the most widely-known stories, not only to Christians but to those of other religions and to non-believers. We are taught from an early age to help others, especially those “less than fortunate.” Much of life’s success is a result of hard work but much is also gained from good luck. Some have experienced “lady luck,” other not so much.

We are to love God and love our neighbor. We are to be the Good Samaritan. When it comes to loving our neighbor, this is what many religions of the world share—a deep abiding sense of helping the poor. This is evidenced in what we read in our Psalm, “Save the weak and the orphan; defend the humble and needy; rescue the weak and the poor.” We are called to do the same.

As Christians, we have a personal faith in God, not a private faith. A *private* faith is one in which we come to church and get what we need spiritually and go home Sunday afternoon and that’s it. A private faith is thinking only of one’s self. A *personal* faith in God is one that transforms us and moves us to the point of compassion to help others, just as the Samaritan was moved to care for the man lying on the side of the road.

That’s why on Good Samaritan Sunday, our collect reads, “O Lord, grant that your people may know and understand what things they ought to do, and also may have grace and power faithfully to accomplish them.” Holy Scripture is rich with stories that remind us of things we ought to do. For many of us, the difficult task is found in the second part of the prayer, “the grace and power faithfully to accomplish them.”

One way to accomplish carrying for our neighbor is to try to live and breathe the Gospel with every aspect of our being. The Epistle reading from Colossians reminds us, “The gospel ... has come to you. Just as it is bearing fruit and growing in the whole world, so it has been bearing fruit among yourselves from the day you heard it.” The Gospel of Jesus Christ grows in each one of us. This may not happen overnight but over a period of time—just as it

takes time for fruit to ripen. To use that metaphor further, if one does not pick fruit from the tree in time, it will become rotten and unused.

Each has the potential to bear good fruit. Then we can, as Colossians suggests, "... lead lives worthy of the Lord, fully pleasing to him, as you bear fruit in every good work and as you grow in the knowledge of God."

As we lead lives worthy of the Lord, we are not to turn a blind eye to suffering but to go out of our way to help others in need. We are not to be the priest or the Levite in the story, but the Good Samaritan. We are obliged ethically to assist those around us. How we treat our neighbor says a lot about our own relationship with God.

Christians are to live out the ethics they see in Christ. Some states in the US have a Good Samaritan law on their books making it a crime not to assist those in need. The Good Samaritan story reminds us that we don't live in a vacuum; we are all interconnected as a community.

The Gospel reminds us that we coexist in this world. We are responsible toward self and others. We are to love our neighbor, not to dominate or control our neighbor. This also can be applied to how we treat our planet. We have focused on this in the Gulf of Mexico with the oil spill these last 83 days. Our planet certainly needs a lot of tender, pastoral care. We should do nothing for our own personal glorification or vanity. Humility and care are a part of being Christian.

With humility in mind, hear these words of John the Baptist when he spoke about Jesus saying, "He must increase, but I must decrease" (John 3:30). He must increase, but I must decrease. Just imagine if we could implement the words of John and allow Christ to increase in us more and more every day, as we decrease—as our ego decreases; as our pride decreases; as our hypocrisy decreases; as our need for domination and control decreases; as our need for power decreases. Then the Good Samaritan story would not seem too difficult for us because our focus will be more on Christ and others than on self.

So on this Good Samaritan Sunday, may each of us be renewed and encouraged today knowing there are plenty of opportunities around us every day to be the Good Samaritan. May we "lead lives worthy of the Lord, fully pleasing to him, as we bear fruit in every good work and grow in the knowledge and love of God" by caring for others and for all of God's Creation. Amen.