

PCO – 7/6/2025
Psalm 25: 1 - 7
Luke 10:25-37

NT: introduction

Good morning

Thank you, Pastor Lisa and the session for your invitation to preach this morning and to help celebrate the Lord's Supper. It has been *a privilege* to become part of this faith community.

I am especially grateful for our worship theme this summer: the stories of our faith.

A memorable and meaningful story, don't you think, has at its core 3 important elements. 1) *it tells us something about ourselves*...be it a warm remembrance or harsh reminder; 2) a good story also *shines a light on our relationships with others*...broken, healed or thriving; 3) and finally a good story *invokes inspiration...challenge, even*, as it draws us into the narrative and asks that we live there awhile...together, inside all that is happening...to see and feel and learn what we can.

This morning we are presented with one of the best stories in all of scripture: the Good Samaritan.

LUKE 10:25-37

Side by Side

I grew up in a big...**loud**...often times chaotic house in a small, rural town in southern Illinois. A house always filled to overflowing with people and food, talking and laughing. Did I mention LOUD? Footballs thrown down the hallways, music playing on the stereo or band instruments being practiced and with every single television on - all the time. I did mention LOUD, RIGHT?

In truth, it was a wonderful childhood. At Christmas time there were never fewer than a couple of dozen of us under that roof (now almost twice that number). Large cuts of meat were in multiple rooms - because...well...that was what we did.

There was a big side yard, as well.

Back then it was the designated gathering spot for me and all my friends to play wiffle ball or football or kick-the-can. St. Polycarp Catholic Church sits directly opposite our house...with a tall bell tower. That bell rang every day at 6am noon and 6pm. That evening bell was, in truth, the sound meant to remind us all to head home for dinner.

For a couple of years around the age of 11 or 12, however...it meant something altogether different for me. It was time to meet my mother at the back stoop, help her with the tray of food and walk together up the alley to deliver the evening meal to my Grandmother Botsch...my dad's mom. She had slowly become bed-ridden with Parkinsons and was rapidly showing signs of dementia...and all that comes with that. Horrible.

As an 11 year old, the one block walk UP that alley holds so many magical memories for me. Tall tales to tell my mom about the amazing catch I had just made to win the game...or how Ritchie and I couldn't stop laughing about something silly. In my mind's eye...I was bouncing and spinning and running circles around my mom as we walked together toward grandma's house.

As you can well imagine, the walk back DOWN the alley was an entirely different experience. It was often filled with silence or awkward questions I had for mom about what was happening to grandma and why in the world was I the sibling that was chosen to take that walk and watch - at such a tender age - a loved one in pain and confusion...wasting away?

Why did mom think that walk was something we should do together?

What I do know is that no matter how hard those few minutes were in Grandma's bedroom - my mom *always held my hand on the way home*. She would look at me while we walked together and share a smile that was part tenderness, part sadness and part inclusion, I suppose...because we were taking this journey together...AND it was important.

I've come to realize over the years that, in truth, it was much more than important...*it was something that mattered*. She was introducing me to the truth that easy and hard live side by side; that happiness and sorrow often occupy the same space...and *we are meant to hold each other close* through it all.

A walk that we are called to take...and do so because we know that it matters, especially for the one who's hand we are holding.

Long ago on the road from Jerusalem to Jericho, a priest, a Levite and a Samaritan each took their own walk. It is not hard at all to find ourselves living inside this story...seeing and feeling it...as if we were on that journey ourselves.

It was probably hot...stupid hot...with our feet caked in dust and sore. Unlike any current road that's taken - this one was narrower, I'd imagine. The ditch where the battered and broken traveler lay was near enough to clearly see and hear every detail of his plight.

So shockingly close, don't you think - side by side – the traveler & the broken.

The priest, a member of the religious order that was charged with the sacred duty of maintaining and leading temple worship...a *leader of the faith* **fully aware** of the Judaic doctrine of caring for those in need...walked on by.

A Levite, like the priest, a member of the religious order but of lesser stature came next. His was the duty of keeping the temple in good standing and right order...ensuring that protocols, practices and traditions were properly followed.

He, too, walked on by.

And finally, a Samaritan. His community of faith was seen as apostate by the Jews...unclean, unholy, breaker of the faith and misguided in their understanding of scripture. To others...he was anything but good...an outcast, untrustworthy.

A priest who, in effect, says...

"what's mine is mine and I'm not giving any away".

A Levite who says...

"what's mine is mine and I have NO IDEA if I can trust you with any of it".

And a Samaritan who says, simply...

*"what's mine **is yours** and you are most welcome to it".*

We know how the story ends. It shines a light so brightly on who we are and how we value relationships *when living side by side* with plenty and want...with comfort and condemnation...power and powerlessness...with the undeniable tragedies that come from mistrust.

All side by side...sharing space in heart, mind, soul and strength.

The disparities could not have been more clear
to the one Jesus was speaking to that day.

And, as we all know, these moral, ethical and spiritual dichotomies are so much more important for us to take to heart – in the living of these days.

Exclusion...angry judgment...condemnation...indifference, even, to those with whom we live side-by-side...all must cause God to weep. As a people...as a nation...the thought that

‘what is ours - is ours and not for you’ has never been
so antithetical to faithfulness as it is today.

In many ways the entirety of scripture is centered on the singular point that the TWO GREAT COMMANDMENTS matter more than anything else: to love the Lord, your God, with all your heart, mind, soul and strength - and - to love your neighbor as yourself.

What’s mine is mine...even for the taking...
is *not a witness* to the mercy and grace and generosity of God.

That clanging bell is ringing out loud and clear, don’t you think: reminding us that it is time to go home...time to get closer to God and the discipleship God asks of us. It is time to rekindle that deep, meaningful space with the one who knows us by name. God is always asking us to be vulnerable enough in our faith witness that - *no matter what* –

our need to hold another’s hand is the road down which to walk.

Often it is hard work: embracing the stranger, loving enemies, stepping out into that space where ease and discomfort stand side by side. But it is the work that matters most. It is that sacred space we are called to inhabit – and it is a privilege *to make it **our home***.

Regardless of whether WE (double point) are the broken or the courageous soul...who puts aside doubt and fear and thoughts of scarcity...ours is to live out those two great commandments as best as we can...together.

*“Make me to know your ways, O Lord;
teach me that I may follow”, wrote the psalmist.*
Teach me to know, Lord...that I may follow...

Along my faith journey, for what it's worth...there are those we meet who know how to share...and they do it well and with joy. *But then...*we have the privilege of meeting others who have – somehow, someway – come to understand how important it is *to share with generosity*.

It seems to make their hearts sing.

And then...then there are those who share...and share generously...BUT have lived such a life as to show others to be GRACIOUSLY generous in the sharing.

May we strive to walk that road...

living side-by-side...hand-in-hand...choosing to say:

*“what’s mine **is yours**...and you are most welcome to it.”*

Let us pray...