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Leviticus 19:33-34 & Luke 10:25-37

"Who is My Neighbor?"

Leviticus 19:33-34

"When an alien resides with you in your land, you shall not oppress the alien. The alien who resides with you shall be to you as the native-born among you; you shall love the alien as yourself, for you were aliens in the land of Egypt: I am the Lord your God.

Luke 10:25-37

An expert in the law stood up to test Jesus. "Teacher," he said, "what must I do to inherit eternal life?" He said to him, "What is written in the law? What do you read there?" He answered, "You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your strength and with all your mind and your neighbor as yourself." And he said to him, "You have given the right answer; do this, and you will live."

But wanting to vindicate himself, he asked Jesus, "And who is my neighbor?" Jesus replied, "A man was going down from Jerusalem to Jericho and fell into the hands of robbers, who stripped him, beat him, and took off, leaving him half dead. Now by chance a priest was going down that road, and when he saw him he passed by on the other side. So likewise a Levite, when he came to the place and saw him, passed by on the other side. But a Samaritan while traveling came upon him, and when he saw him he was moved with compassion. He went to him and bandaged his wounds, treating them with oil and wine. Then he put him on his own animal, brought him to an inn, and took care of him. The next day he took out two denarii, gave them to the innkeeper, and said, 'Take care of him, and when I come back I will repay you whatever more you spend.' Which of these three, do you think, was a neighbor to the man who fell into the hands of the robbers?" He said, "The one who showed him mercy." Jesus said to him, "Go and do likewise." **The Word of God for the people of God. Thanks be to God.**

The news blurb was titled "Can't We All Just Get Along?" and opened with this statement "If humans never worked together in pursuit of common goals, society as we know it could not exist. It then posed these provocative questions:

What shapes cooperative behavior at the individual level? Do those factors differ between cultures? And just how prevalent is cooperation around the globe?"

The statement and questions were not in a religious journal or a newspaper article. Rather from the journal Science. It then went on to explain a recent study. Researchers from Germany "recruited more than 100,000 people from 125 countries to participate in a simple experiment.

After being randomly paired with another person from their country, each participant could decide whether to defect or cooperate. Defecting earned \$100, while cooperating only yielded \$70. If both players chose to cooperate, a \$400 donation was made to fight global warming. The results revealed that cooperation is widespread at the global level, with 69% of respondents choosing to cooperate rather than defect.”

The most striking part of the study to me however was this: Participants systematically underestimated their fellow citizens. “On average, they believed only 47% would choose cooperation.” This misperception was consistent across countries, ages, sexes, income and education levels, although the magnitude of the effect varied across countries. Cooperation rates were higher among individuals who were more patient, altruistic, and willing to take risks. The scientists conclusion was that “We are a more cooperative species than we think.” And their interpretation is that this pessimistic bias can undermine cooperation, since people were also more likely to cooperate if they believed that others would do the same.¹

We are a more cooperative species than we think. While this may have been a surprise to the scientists, it is not a surprise to me as a pastor. I see it every day in the way we live out our faith. The way we live out the scripture we heard this morning with the command: “You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your strength and with all your mind and your neighbor as yourself.”

Earlier this spring, we took the Path to Palm Sunday promise, as a group from PCO processed to the State Capitol. The promise was not just for those who did the walk. It was for anyone who believes that the values of compassion, justice, and welcome are too important to set down.²

The Promise asks three things of each of us: **Pray. Learn. Act.**
I will pray for healing and justice in my community, in America and the world.
I will learn about how today’s issues affect the county where I live.
I will act to serve God and my neighbor and to strengthen democracy.

The Path to Palm Sunday included these specific promises:

We stand with Jesus Christ in his love for all.
When others forget, we will remember the way of Christ.
We will feed the hungry, welcome the stranger, and heal the sick.
We will practice loving all our neighbors, including our enemies.

This morning we have an opportunity to live out this promise as we prepare meals for our neighbors at Advent House. May it be so.

¹ Peter Andre, Teodora Boneva and Armin Falk Homo cooperans: Understanding the nature of human cooperation. *Science*. 4 Jun 2026. Vol 392, Issue 6802 <https://www.science.org/doi/10.1126/science.aec9483>

² <https://mipalmsundaypath.org/promise>