

Luke 10:25-37

The story of the Good Samaritan demonstrates clearly that there are three different attitudes...three different mind-sets in the world. The robbers in the story demonstrate the first attitude: "What's yours is mine." Because this was their mind-set, they took everything from the man who was walking from Jerusalem down to Jericho. The Priest and the Levite demonstrate the second attitude: "What's yours is yours, and what's mine is mine." Because this was their mind-set, they did not get involved with the poor victim lying in the road. They passed by on the other side. The Samaritan demonstrates the third attitude: "What's mine is yours." Because this was his mind-set, he sacrificed both time and money to help that poor man.

Now we need to be careful here because the temptation is to look at this story through the eyes of the Law and not through the eyes of the Gospel. The lawyer who asked Jesus, "And who is my neighbor?" looked at everything in life through the eyes of the Law. "What good thing shall I do to inherit eternal life?" was his original question. He had no use for God's grace and forgiveness. He was going to enter heaven his way—by performing some good deed according to the Law. If you and I take his mind-set, we will see this story of the Good Samaritan as a story which teaches us what we need to do to enter into heaven. We will be tempted to think that if we have the attitude of the Good Samaritan, "What's mine is yours," then we are on the road to heaven.

Actually we are on the road from Jerusalem down to Jericho. If we're going to compare ourselves to one of the characters in the story, we need to place ourselves with the man who was robbed and beaten—because his story is our story. The story begins with this man encountering robbers, and so does ours. Our first encounter was not with other people, nor with God; it was with the most ruthless robber of them all—the devil. Even before birth he robbed us of everything. All of God's good gifts, including our place in heaven with Him, Satan took from us, because his attitude is always, "What's yours is mine!" The man in the story was not just robbed however; he was also beaten to the point of death. Indeed, he would have bled to death had no one stopped to help. And such is our story. We were born spiritually dead, and on our own, we would have perished forever.

And no one and nothing in this world can help. The Priest and the Levite saw the poor man. They clearly understood the condition he was in. They knew what had happened and what would happen if the man received no help. Why didn't they help? Because they had no compassion. There was no mercy within their hearts, and so they passed by on the other side.

Their attitude, "What's yours is yours, and what's mine is mine," pretty well describes the world in which we live. The world cannot restore to us what Satan took from us. There is no mercy in the world. You can live in it for a while. You can get an education and a job. You can eat the food it produces; enjoy its music, sunsets, and sandy beaches, but in the end, you and I will leave this world exactly how we entered it—we were born with nothing and we leave with nothing. Just as the Priest and Levite did not help the poor victim in the road, so no one and nothing in the world can help us. The world does not have grace and mercy to offer. The world does not have eternal life to give. It can only pass us by on the other side and say, "What's yours is yours, and what's mine is mine."

If we're going to be helped, that help must come from God. His attitude is always, "What's Mine is yours." He is full of mercy toward helpless sinners like us. His nature is to sacrifice Himself for us, and this He did on the cross of Calvary. Jesus is the Good Samaritan. That man's journey led him to the man lying in the road, and Jesus' journey led Him to us—robbed and beaten by Satan, dead and dying, helpless to save ourselves—Jesus felt compassion in His heart when He saw us. He came to us in Holy Baptism. He poured on us the healing gifts of His grace and He brought us to His Church where He takes care of us, commanding the innkeeper to minister to our needs until He returns.

The Priest and the Levite demonstrate that there is no compassion in this world, but the Samaritan teaches us that compassion is what God is all about. Even though the Jews hated the Samaritans, that Samaritan helped that broken, bleeding man lying in the road. Even though we, by nature, hate God and were in fact His enemies at birth, Jesus came to rescue us from the power of the devil and restore to us God's gifts of life and salvation. The story of the Good Samaritan is not about you and how you must live. It's about Jesus who lived, suffered, died, and rose again for you; and how He, therefore, is your Good Samaritan who does everything which needs to be done in order to bring you to heaven.

Reading this story, it's important to take note of who is doing the action. It's not the man lying in the road. He is the recipient of all the action. He's stripped, robbed, and beaten by the robbers. And he is helped by the Samaritan. The robbers acted to destroy him; the Samaritan acted to save him. The Priest and the Levite didn't act at all to help, but the man in the road could not act; he could do nothing to act on his own behalf. Again, that's our story. We do not save ourselves by what we do for God or for others. He saved us by acting on our behalf. As Luther says, "We are beggars before God." We are recipients of His grace and mercy, and this story of the Good Samaritan teaches us this truth.

Now having been saved by our Good Samaritan, what will our attitude be... "What's yours is mine?"... "What's yours is yours, and what's mine is mine?"... or, "What's mine is yours?" Consider the man rescued by the Good Samaritan. Even if he had helped no one before in his life, don't you think that from now on he would be a "neighbor" to those in need? What about us? Which of the three attitudes do we generally show in our lives?

Sadly, I think that we are sometimes conduits or channels of Satan's, "What's yours is mine" attitude. We covet what others have. We may not see ourselves as robbers, but when we are lazy on the job, or when we put forth little effort into our schoolwork, we are taking from others what does not belong to us. Often we display a "What's yours is yours, and what's mine is mine" attitude. We just want to be left alone. When the church needs to elect members to serve, we pass by on the other side. When we're called on to sacrifice time and money to help a neighbor in need, we easily find an excuse. The attitude of the Priest and Levite has taken up residence within each one of us. We don't have much compassion within our hearts. We think that our agenda is the most important; our schedule is busiest; our needs are most urgent, and others will just have to wait.

The good news is that this story is not about us, it's about our Good Samaritan and what He does for us. And what He does for you is to forgive you. Even though our lives are a broken, bloody mess, He pours out for you the cup of salvation, and in this cup His blood is the covering for all of your sins. Jesus comes to you in His Supper not because you are so good and decent, but because you are a broken sinner. The Samaritan came to help the man

on the road for no other reason than that he could not help himself. Those people who don't think they need Jesus' grace and forgiveness are not usually found here where Christ comes to us in Word and Sacrament. But if you are here because you need your Savior, then rejoice, because He is here for you. He does not reject you for your many sins. He is not repulsed by your attitude—selfish though we are.

As the Samaritan got his hands dirty and bloody by helping the man in the road, so Jesus' hands are here covered with blood for your forgiveness because your Good Samaritan, Himself, was robbed and beaten by Satan. On the cross He took your place in the road. He was left for dead by His Heavenly Father. And He did truly die, for you, and He rose again so that now He is here to give you life. Jesus beat the Robber at his own game. He overcame the sinful world for you. And He forgives you, His dear baptized child.

And through you, Jesus is a Good Samaritan to others. When you help a neighbor in need, it is Christ the Good Samaritan who is acting in grace through your hands. When you show love and kindness to others; when you serve in the church and in your community, your Good Samaritan is acting in mercy through you. When you show a "What's mine is yours" attitude, it is Jesus in you who is displaying His compassion through you to those around you.

The Good Samaritan, therefore, walks the streets and sidewalks right here in Augusta, Missouri wherever you display Christ by how you live. He is the Good Samaritan who has saved you. He is the Good Samaritan who, through you, is reaching out in mercy and compassion to those around you. Amen.