

Good Shepherd Lutheran Church
February 21, 2021

Greetings brothers and sisters in Christ.

Here is information about how to set up an appointment for a COVID vaccine using the phone.

Tower Health 484-659-3000

Monday morning at 9:00 they will be enacting a new service. This phone line will be for people 65+ with technology challenges. 484-659-3000. This number will get them on the waiting list and they will be called when vaccine is available. Further, the intent will be that they should be contacted at three week intervals, just to let them know they still have a place in line. This service will verify that the patient does not have a Tower Health My Chart account – to weed out the people trying to jump into a different line.

Office of the Aged 610-478-6500

They will also take your information and contact you when a vaccine is available. Deb White did share that all information regarding any health issues is helpful, so please be prepared to share your health information..

If you have prayer request, please send them to me so that I can include them in my weekly newsletters.

Yours in Christ,
Pastor Denise

Home Phone 610-750-6432
Cell/Text Phone 610-858-8187

Luke 9:51-56; 10:25-37

A reading from the 9th and 10th chapters of Luke.

⁵¹⁻⁵⁴ When it came close to the time for his Ascension, he gathered up his courage and steeled himself for the journey to Jerusalem. He sent messengers on ahead.

They came to a Samaritan village to make arrangements for his hospitality. But when the Samaritans learned that his destination was Jerusalem, they refused hospitality.

When the disciples James and John learned of it, they said, “Master, do you want us to call a bolt of lightning down out of the sky and incinerate them?”

⁵⁵⁻⁵⁶ Jesus turned on them: “Of course not!” And they traveled on to another village.

²⁵ Just then a religion scholar stood up with a question to test Jesus. “Teacher, what do I need to do to get eternal life?”

²⁶ He answered, “What’s written in God’s Law? How do you interpret it?”

²⁷ He said, “That you love the Lord your God with all your passion and prayer and muscle and intelligence—and that you love your neighbor as well as you do yourself.”

²⁸ “Good answer!” said Jesus. “Do it and you’ll live.”

²⁹ Looking for a loophole, he asked, “And just how would you define ‘neighbor’?”

³⁰⁻³² Jesus answered by telling a story. “There was once a man traveling from Jerusalem to Jericho. On the way he was attacked by robbers. They took his clothes, beat him up, and went off leaving him half-dead.

Luckily, a priest was on his way down the same road, but when he saw him he angled across to the other side. Then a Levite religious

man showed up; he also avoided the injured man.

³³⁻³⁵ “A Samaritan traveling the road came on him. When he saw the man’s condition, his heart went out to him. He gave him first aid, disinfecting and bandaging his wounds. Then he lifted him onto his donkey, led him to an inn, and made him comfortable.

In the morning he took out two silver coins and gave them to the innkeeper, saying, “Take good care of him. If it costs any more, put it

on my bill—I’ll pay you on my way back.’

³⁶ “What do you think? Which of the three became a neighbor to the man attacked by robbers?”

³⁷ “The one who treated him kindly,” the religion scholar responded.

The Word of the Lord

Thanks be to God.

Sermon

Grace and Peace to you from God our Father and Jesus Christ our Lord and Savior. AMEN

Let us pray

Compassionate God,
How easily you love those who look unlovable to us! How readily you welcome undesirables into your home! How slow we are to follow your example. Turn our hearts toward all who are considered outcast, shunned, and unclean so that we may love our neighbor without pity or apathy, for the sake of the one who became flesh to cleanse the world of sin and death forever, Jesus Christ our redeemer. Amen.

The story of the Good Samaritan is a story that is so well known by all of us. The stranger who helps the one who has been beaten and thrown into a ditch to die.

And this week as I reflected on this passage, I have been challenged to look at this story not as lesson of how we should help those in need, but I have been challenged to look at this story from three different perspectives. From the perspective of the priest and the Levite who walk on by, from the perspective of the Good Samaritan who stopped to help the man, and then maybe most importantly from the perspective of the man in the ditch.

The story starts by telling us that a Jewish man walking on this road from Jerusalem to Jericho had been hijacked, beaten and stripped of his belongings and thrown into a ditch along the side of the road to die.

Jesus then precedes to tell his listeners, who themselves are

Jews that two fellow Jews saw the injured man and passed him by. And although we want to quickly pass judgement on their actions to not stop and help, let us walk a few steps in their shoes.

These two Jewish religious people were heading home from Jerusalem on a road that was not considered safe. So, for a moment put yourself in a place where if you were walking alone you might fear for your safety. You don't linger, you walk quickly, you just want to get through this part of your journey unscathed.

So, what are the thoughts that run through your head when you see this man that has been beaten and may even be dead lying in the ditch along the side of the road?

Are you thinking that perhaps the men that hurt him still lurk somewhere in the bushes and you might be their next victim? Do you think that you do not

have the means to save him? Is there really anything that you can do without risking your own life? Your answer is no and so you continue on your way.

The Samaritan is also traveling on this same road. What might be different for this man when he encounters the injured man on the side of the road? The Samaritan, for whatever reason is not caught up in dangers that may be lurking around him. The Samaritan, for whatever reason is focused on doing what he can to save the man's life. The Samaritan finds something to bandage his wounds and takes him to a place where he will be cared for until he is recovered and restored back to health.

And now the man in the ditch what did he experience? He too was walking on this road just like the religious men and the Samaritan, maybe he was fearful to be on this dangerous part of the road, maybe he was not. But regardless, the first people that he met on the road beat and

robbed him, the next people who he encountered ignored him and just walked on by, and the last person he encountered helped him.

What the man from the ditch saw in the Samaritan was a man who put his own life on hold to attend to his wounds and then took him to a safe place where he would be cared for until he recuperated.

What the man in the ditch saw in the Samaritan was a lifeline that was now by the grace of God being offered to him; not necessarily because he had done anything in his life to warrant being saved, but because that is what God does through the acts of a loving neighbor, God restores life.

What the man in the ditch experienced was God working through the hands of not just any man, but through the hands of a man that under different circumstances, the man in the ditch would have disrespected

and avoided just because he was different, just because he hailed from a different nation, and just because he had a different perspective on life.

Now to place this story in context, Jesus told this story after he and his disciples had traveled through the region of Samaria and had been denied hospitality, which was considered very offensive.

During Jesus time, it was customary even when traveling in a foreign land for the people of the villages to open their homes and offer travelers a place to sleep and something to eat.

So, this was a real insult to Jesus and his disciples when they were denied hospitality as they traveled through Samaria.

Shortly after this refusal of hospitality from the Samaritan people is when Jesus was asked by one of the religious men who were traveling with him,

“Teacher, what do I need to do to get eternal life?”

Jesus answered, “What’s written in God’s Law? How do you interpret it?”

The religious man answered, we are to love the Lord our God with all our passion and prayer and muscle and intelligence—and we are to love our neighbor as well as we do ourselves.

Jesus responded “Good answer! Do it and you’ll live.”

Uncertain as to what Jesus was really advising him to do, the religious man asked “and just how would you define ‘neighbor’?”

Which lead to Jesus telling the story of the Samaritan that went out of his way to help the Jewish man who had been beaten and thrown into a ditch. The religious man acknowledged that the Samaritan, the one who had treated the wounded man with compassion was indeed the neighbor.

This was certainly an answer that puzzled the religious man

for Samaritans were foreigners, how could they be the ones that the descendants of Abraham have been commanded to love.

Which tells us that Jesus’ definition of neighbor is much more expansive and much more inclusive. For neighbors are not limited to the people we live with, work with or even pray with.

Neighbors are the ones who throw us a lifeline when we are down. Neighbors are the ones feed us when we are hungry and stand up for us when we are suffering from unjust practices and systems. And neighbors are the ones who love us even when we are unlovable.

And when we meet a Jesus kind of neighbor, like the man in the ditch encountered the Samaritan, then through the loving actions of our Jesus neighbor, we get to experience the amazing grace, the relentless mercy and the unconditional love of God. AMEN

Blessing

May
The love of God,
The light of Christ,
And the joy of the Holy Spirit
Abide with you on this day
and forever more.

AMEN