

Trinity XIII

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[0 : 00] In the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost. Today we have on our minds those that lost their lives on 9-11.

9-11 was a horrific tragedy, a sobering event that, I don't know about you, but it still seems unreal. But it brought a divided country together, at least for a short time.

Coming out of the COVID pandemic, I don't know of anyone who would say that our country is more united now than before March of 2020. To the contrary, our division has been showcased by various acts of civil unrest, where cities have been looted, shops, even a church set on fire, and the call for justice continues.

It has been highlighted again in the recent returning of Roe back to the States. And it is most apparent in our schools and educational institutions, where there has been an attempt to redefine marriage and gender based on personal psychology rather than factual biology.

Many Christians feel as though we are living in the end times, where civil war, financial collapse, and cultural ruin is the forecast for our future.

[1 : 44] So what are we to do in the midst of such turmoil, cynicism, and pessimism that is all around us?

Some think that putting cute little Bible verses on social media memes will somehow make people want to come to Jesus. I highly doubt it.

Others want to indulge in the bumper sticker wars, putting their faith next to their taillights on their cars. Others want to listen to commentaries who believe just as they do in order to be reminded that they're on the right side of the culture wars.

But here in our gospel text of Luke chapter 10, I believe we are given an alternative, a better way. And it's one that's desperately needed today.

Our gospel text contains the story of the Good Samaritan. This story is pretty familiar to most people, even people that have not been raised in the church.

[2 : 52] But let me just remind you of the story briefly here from Luke chapter 10. A scholar of the Torah, that is the law of God, asks Jesus a question.

And the question is, teacher or rabbi, what shall I do to inherit eternal life? Jesus turns the question back to this lawyer asking, what is written in the law?

What is your reading of it? And the man rightly states, you shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, with all your soul, with all your strength, and with all your mind.

And your neighbor as yourself. Jesus responds by saying, you are correct. Do this and you will live. But the scholar presses further by asking, who is my neighbor? Now, this is an important question for all of us to ask ourselves.

[3 : 58] And Jesus answers the question, but he does it by telling a story. And the story is about a man who was coming down from Jerusalem to Jericho.

Now, Jericho was over 3,000 feet below Jerusalem, where the temple was located.

And as this man made his way down to Jericho, he was robbed. He was beaten. He was left for dead.

And two men passed by this beaten man. And they weren't just two men. One was a priest who may have just finished his duties in the temple.

And the other was a Levite, that is, a man who assisted and helped in the temple. Both of these were religious men. And they both passed by.

[5 : 01] Passed by this helpless victim without offering any assistance. The priest in this story was actually adhering to the letter of the law.

That said that a priest, that is, he was not to touch anything dead or about to die. We read about this in Leviticus, in portions of Leviticus chapter 21, especially in verses 1 through 4.

I'll read just a portion. This priest was strictly adhering to Levite.

Leviticus, believing that this beaten man was either dead or he was about to die. But the law of God was never intended to simply be a checklist of rules to follow.

That was never its intent. Remember that the greatest of the commandments is to love God and to love neighbor. The very thing we say every Sunday when we begin our liturgy.

[6 : 33] The opposite of this callous, this very selfish response, is depicted by, of all people, a Samaritan. Now, Samaritans were the bitter enemies of Israel.

A lot of people were the bitter enemies of Israel. They were one of them. And they were descendants from the northern tribes of Manasseh and Ephraim, who had intermarried with Gentiles after Israel had been conquered by the Assyrians in 722 B.C.

They were therefore considered unclean sellouts, who did not have pure Hebrew blood and pure Hebrew lineage.

Samaritans were looked at like dogs. And yet, it is this despised Samaritan outcast who is moved with compassion for this beaten man.

Not the priest, not the Levite, the guy that was the outcast. The language of being moved to compassion is the exact same language we read about in Luke chapter 7, when Jesus meets the widow of Nain, who had just lost her only son to death.

[7 : 57] And our Lord, the text says, was moved with compassion, and he raised up the widow's dead son from death to life. We also read about this compassion in Luke chapter 15, in the story of the prodigal, how the father is moved to compassion, and he runs out to meet his son.

This Samaritan becomes the example of mercy in this story. And his kindness and his mercy depicts the very love, the very action of the Savior of the world.

You see, folks, we are the ones like the one in the ditch. We are the ones beaten, left for dead.

We are the ones who experience the hurt, the pain, the deception from the devil and his demonic followers, as well as giving in to our own selfish desires.

But our Lord does not leave us for dead. He does not ignore our plight, the very opposite. Jesus is the great high priest who does not walk by ignoring us.

[9 : 15] He takes our sin, our death upon himself at the cross. He is the one who willingly was defiled so that we might now be purified, partakers of his righteousness, his holiness.

He was the one who died, who rose again in order to carry us into the inn of the church, where our wounds are bandaged, where we are washed, where we receive the medicine of immortality in the Holy Eucharist.

And now our Lord commands, not only this scholar, not only this lawyer, but all of us, go and do like lives.

Be people of mercy, not people of noise. Be people of action, extending mercy to the fallen, not just people that are sitting around griping.

Listen carefully, dear friends. The greatest antidote to the fear, the anxiety, the uncertainty of what's happening all around us and in our country is not to dwell on the mess and go further and further into depression.

[10 : 54] The best medicine for our souls is to receive God's mercy in the Holy Eucharist and then to allow the Holy Spirit to transform us so that we now become agents of mercy.

That's what it means to be the church. It means to be the very body of Jesus. It is so important that we understand what we're called to do and be as Christians.

We are to be people of mercy, not ignoring those who are broken, not passing by because we have more important things to do, nor is it to sit around and just talk about this politician or what's happening in the world as though that's as far as it goes because you know who that affects.

It does not affect the world. It affects us. We are to be people of mercy, looking for ways in sharing the love of God, transcending the noise of our culture, pointing people to a different path, not the path of freaking out, but the path of life.

And we do this as we rise above the fray and the noise and we seek to be selfless neighbors, extending the love of Jesus Christ to others.

[12 : 27] That's what it means to be the church. That's what it means to be the hands, the mouth, the feet of Jesus Christ. We should engage our hearts and minds in the solution, serving others by

sharing the love of God found in Christ because he is our only help.

So as the words from our collect of the day remind us, Almighty and merciful God, of whose only gift it cometh that thy faithful people do unto thee true and laudable service, grant we beseech thee that we may so faithfully serve thee in this life that we fail not finally to attain thy heavenly promises through the merits of Jesus Christ, our Lord.

Amen. In the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Ghost. Amen.