

Sermon- Our Saviors Lutheran Church - 7/14/19

Text- Luke 10:25-37

The Road of Life

Grace and Peace to you and from our Lord Jesus Christ. Welcome to one of the most familiar parables that Jesus uttered in all of the Gospels. The parable of the Good Samaritan. It begins with a rather religious guy asking Jesus a question. "What must I do to gain eternal life?" Nothing wrong with the question, although, one would have thought that since the guy was a religious person, he would have already been aware of the answer before he asked the question. So, here we have this ELCA person, probably from Neenah, confirmed in the faith, attends church at least most of the time, reads the Bible albeit sparingly, and is trying to lead a faith filled life. "How do I get to heaven? , she asks. And then comes the parable. A parable so familiar that even non-Christians are likely to have heard it and could retell the story.

I remember last year I told a story that relates to the parable. You were probably not here. Summer time worship is always problematic. But even if you were here, it is worth repeating. It's a true story, and didn't happen to me but it could have. Here it is again.

A couple was driving back from Northern Michigan University in Marquette, Michigan. They had just watched their son play a football game at the Superior Dome. They were in a great mood, their son had played great and NMU won. But, the trip home was never fun. Always some amount of snow on the roads, and it was usually a white knuckle trip because of the preponderance of deer lurking on the side of the road. Always looking for red near the road - the deer's eyes. All of a sudden, they see something red on the side of the road. They slow down, way down. It had to be a deer ready to bolt in front of their car. But it wasn't a deer. What was it? It was a three year old little boy wearing a red pajama top. The husband calls 911. They scoop up the boy, put him in their warm car and await the police. The boy falls asleep and the story has a happy ending. All is well with the boy and he is reunited with his family. Quite the story!

What questions might you have about the story? *** Pastor asks Congregation what questions they might have***

Interesting. Nobody asked if the couple were Muslims, or if they were immigrants, or if they were a gay couple, or if they were Viking fans. The point is that it didn't matter. What did matter is that they assisted.

So, what does this parable have to do with you and me. Let's get back to the parable. So, the ELCA person says what must I do to gain eternal life. Notice the word 'do' - all of us are still confused about the grace aspect. Jesus puts the onus back on the one asking the question. What do you read in the scriptures? The person answers perfectly. After all, this is an ELCA person. Then the person asks, "Who the heck is my neighbor?" Jesus probably smiled and then told the parable. A guy is attacked and left for dead on the side of the road. Two people see him and pass him by, a Priest and then a Levite. Or we could say a Pastor and a church council member. The first one didn't want to touch him. If he did he couldn't work in the temple. His day job. The second one was being cautious. What if it was a setup. Not really hurt but waiting to pounce on whoever stopped to help. Church council people tend to be cautious. That's why little gets done in many churches. Only the Samaritan stops to help.

You see, the parable is not about the victim or the two that passes by. Jesus makes the hero of the story, the Samaritan, the real focus. We all know how Jews felt about Samaritans. They thought that Samaritans were less than a whole person. Kind of like in our original constitution, blacks were given a 4/5 of a person status. The hero in the story is the illegal immigrant, the single Mom on welfare, the person who talks a foreign language, the guy who uses food stamps. It's as if Jesus is saying to every one of us, stop the prejudice, and see all of God's children as God's children.

What a great parable. Jesus is giving us a snapshot of what the Kingdom of God really means. He is saying there are some good illegal immigrants and some not so good. There are good homosexuals and some not so good. There are some good conservatives and some not so good. There are some good liberals and some not so good. There are some good Viking fans and some not so good.

Prejudice and judging people have no place in the Kingdom of God. We need to see all as children of God. And, perhaps most important, we must love all as Christ has loved us.

Can we do it? Of course we can. Jesus is helping us on our road of life!
Amen. Let it be so.