

5th Week After Pentecost
July 9/10, 2022 Sermon

We all have our reasons. We recognize justification, but do we desire justice? If it is in our realm, we may seek it, but do we look at the world with the eyes of the Lord in mind? In this world of reasoning, of justification, of seeking what is right in our minds, do we dare to stop and seek what is actually right, that is, the way the Lord of all creation intended things to be or are we content with things the way they are?

Seek the Lord while He may be found. Know that He has knocked at the door of your heart. Salvation is not just about those who are good being separated from those who are bad. We tend to self-justify and compare ourselves to others. Of course, if we do this, to whom are we comparing ourselves? Are you like Christ? Are you making your standard the Lord God who came in human form to accomplish for us what we could never accomplish for ourselves?

Since the days when Jesus walked the earth, there have been many who have tested the Lord, seeking for the easy way to have eternal life – a life they imagine and on their own terms – because eternal life is written in our hearts. Jesus spoke in parables in part, as a timeless means of making a point, but also as a means of weeding out the ungodly from those who would hear and heed His teaching.

What must I do? We stand before the Lord and God has created us with a desire that is not fulfilled in this world. He gives us the answer. Listen and learn. Yes, it competes with our desire for how we want things to be, but it is the reality of how things are that matters.

A complete stranger is mugged, wounded, and incapacitated. Those whom you think would be the ones whose profession is based upon compassion stepped to the other side of the road. The least likely, the kind of person everyone enjoyed hating was the one who responded. Who is it that has responded in your life? Has a complete stranger aided you? The answer is yes. At one point in your life, there has been someone who has done the right thing without your ever being aware of it. There are so many who, unseen and unheralded, go about doing the right thing because it is the right thing to do.

The heart of love is a heart of compassion. Others who help just because help is needed. Is that not at the heart of every ministry? It is not doing so you can get, but doing the right thing because it is the right thing to do. This also speaks of the human heart as God created it. We all know how to love those whom we love. That love, small though it might be, is a reflection of God's love. He has placed His love in our hearts. Human greed, avarice, and selfishness can get in the way. We segregate and think only in terms of our own. But the question behind this, which Jesus answers is that we are not our own. We have been redeemed by God. Whom we are to love, are all of those who have been created in His image. And who are these? Every person you ever have or ever will meet. These are they whom Jesus tells us is our neighbor.

There are all the “isms” in our world which get in the way. Jesus said it plainly, “Love your neighbor as yourself. Who is my neighbor? Whomever you are near.

At this point in the story we can easily see that Jesus is telling us more. Though God chose to become one of us and walk with us, we beheld Him and rejected Him as an outsider. How often are you in fellowship with the Lord? He is, each and every day, maligned and attacked by those who reject Him. He is mocked and ridiculed. We often step to the other side of the road rather than be bothered with a confrontation. Look at how the Lord reacts. An outsider, even to His own family, He binds us up and takes us to a place of refuge. Look at what He does concerning the cost. “Whatever is needed, I will repay.”

In this world of sin, where humanity has rebelled against the One who created them, He considers the cost of what He is doing worth it. While we were in rebellion against Him, He paid our ransom so that we could have the ability to have a relationship with the One who made us. “Whatever else is needed,” He promises. What great love is this?

When asking the question of which of the three was a neighbor to the mugged man, the answer was and is obvious. If there is a need and we have the opportunity to meet it, we are to go and do likewise. It is hard in this world because the very one who may hate you may be the very one who needs your help. Are you willing to do things the way the Lord instructs? This is a hard question. Do not be quick to respond with your lips, but respond with your actions.

Beyond simple things that cause us to think about what it means to help another, we are reminded that the Lord is always up to something. Everything has meaning. Our good and gracious God has created a marvelous world that reflects His goodness. He has given us the offer of salvation and in those small and sometimes large things that we do in our lives, He continues to shape us in the image of Christ. Kind, compassionate, and always looking to the Father, we are encouraged to go and do likewise. All who respond to Christ are receiving the love which He has intended from the beginning. When we share that love, we too grow as the opportunity for others to join the body of Christ grows.

This world remains under the cloud of darkness, always seeking and never finding. This world rejects the One who made it, but desires the good things which flicker in all of creation. The invitation into the love of God is not just for the few, but for the whole world. What is to be overcome is the self-desire to meet the desire on our own terms, be our own person, and be in control of our destiny. None of these things are possible.

Sometimes we are the one who has been mugged by life’s circumstances. Sometimes the Lord sends one of His willing ones to meet the need of a stranger. The cost, never counted, is born by the One who calls us through His grace into a living a vibrant life, the likes of which those striving in the world are unable to comprehend.

All shall be as the Father intends. We are yet in the struggle of this age of rebellion, the although the battle rages on, the war is over. Do not fall back into previous things when what you desire is before you. Look for those places, by the Lord’s leading, where you may grow in the image of Christ and taste the better portion.

It does not matter where we come from. Amos, a rancher, was called and equipped by the Lord to be a prophet. We know where we have been, but look the other direction. Look where the Lord is bringing you, us, all who believe. I do not think we are able to even begin to imagine what our good and gracious Lord has in store. Yes, we will experience trials, tribulations, and setbacks. As happened to some of the apostle’s, we may lose all this world gave us. But what is that compared to what God has promised? Be encouraged and be of good cheer. Christ has come along when we were as good as dead, brought us to health and assured that He will pay whatever it takes to see us home.

It is easy to get carried away with all of the things going on around us. From the calamities in our families to the mayhem in our world. The Lord knows of all of these things. Greater is He who is in you than all of the things we may experience. Keep your hearts and minds on Christ and if the opportunity arises, be willing to take the chance, not cross the street, and meet the need of a stranger. You never know what the Lord will do for you as you are doing what you will do for the stranger. Through all things, the Lord will grow in us the image of Christ. May you be blessed with an adventure this week. Amen.