



Message from Pastor Scottie *July 2013: The Good Samaritan*

As a story teller I have my favorite parables Jesus told to teach and instruct. In our July lectionary (14th) is one such terrific tale, The Good Samaritan.

A young lawyer tests Jesus with a question and Jesus responds with the greatest summary of all his teachings and Holy Scripture. "You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, and with all your soul, and with all your strength, and with all your mind; and your neighbor as yourself." (Luke 10:27) "But wanting to justify himself, he (the lawyer) asked Jesus, 'And who is my neighbor?'" (Luke 10:29)

Good question. Who is the Lutheran Church of Our Savior (LCOS) neighbor? During the work done by the Call Committee and more recently work done by the Strategic Plans committee, this critical question was carefully explored. Some of the results may surprise you.

One myth is that only 'old' people live around us. In fact there are many youth. The other day eight high school young men from our immediate area played basketball on our courts. As I watched them from my office window this question of who is our neighbor spun across my mind. I'm a lousy basketball player. I've always been a klutz on the court and at age 60 much slower at being clumsy. Joining the group was not a good idea. But what and how could I serve my neighbor? I returned to my papers and pondered. A few minutes later there was a knock on the church door. A basketball player, stripped to the shorts and sweaty, stood holding a ball. He asked for some water. Gladly I invited him in and shared our water. As he departed I asked him how things were going. He faintly smiled and said, "Ok," but as he turned and headed to the door he half-whispered, "I haven't eaten in two days." I stopped him before he walked out the door and ran back to my office to fetch a candy bar for him. I keep a box of Payday candy bars for Sandi and me (our favorite). The boy's face lit up like a Christmas tree.

Back at my desk I thanked God for the opportunity to serve, howbeit, in so small a way and for only one person. Then came a second knock at the door. Two more youth asked for water. This was followed by a dribble of players seeking water. Each got a candy bar, also. We talked. One boy asked what this place was. Another asked if Lutherans were Christians. As a pastor I was in paradise. Then timidly they offered handshakes and began to share their names. I shared mine. Smiles exchanged we all returned to our places.

I suspect some folks would not be happy with my actions. After all, "feed a cat and it will return for more". Who knows what trouble these boys can cause? What if they get hurt and sue us? All fair questions and I suspect they will return. Actually, I'm buying more candy bars in hopeful expectation that they will visit again.

Reaching out to one's neighbor always bears some risk. The Good Samaritan knew that, but it never stopped him from touching the untouchable, getting involved in what was not his affair by society's' rules, and paying out for a total stranger.

This is even a stranger story when you consider that it was very possible the victim was a Jew. Jews didn't like Samaritans. The relationship was similar to our 'Jim Crow' days of separate, unequal, and prejudiced abuse. The Good Samaritan did the right thing for the right reason at the right time regardless of who it was because he felt loved by God. That's really the only real way people can cross such lines of prejudice and abuse to do the right thing is because someone else has loved them more. God's love for people births love towards others. That's what the empty cross cries out with.

So who is our neighbor at the LCOS? The answer is a diverse population, but eight of them gave us the chance to show our love from Jesus Christ recently. I don't know where this will go, but I'm excited and I hope you are too. Like the Good Samaritan, let us flow with God's love and do what Jesus would do. Yeah, it's risky, but love always is. Just ask Jesus the next time you pray or see a cross. See you in worship. -Pastor Scottie