

American Lutheran Church of Sun City

First Lesson: Deuteronomy 30:9-14
Second Lesson: Colossians 1:1-14
Psalm 25
Gospel Lesson: Luke 10:25-37

The Fifth Sunday after Pentecost
July 10, 2022

“Egg Coffee” Sermon by Pastor Paul Campbell

The grace of our lord Jesus Christ, the love of God, and the communion of the Holy Spirit be with you all.

Oh Lord God, your mercy delights us and the world longs for your loving care. Hear the cries of everyone in need and turn our hearts to love our neighbors with the love of your son Jesus Christ, our savior and lord. Amen

Today we're going to focus on Luke's familiar story of the Good Samaritan. Now before you say to yourself – I've already heard you mutter it and roll your eyes – before you actually say it out loud, something like, “Great, one more sermon on the good Samaritan! I've heard this before. What else can be said?” Hopefully today I can put it in a little bit of a different context, and I'm going to go through *four steps* in the sermon that may help us. We're going to start with an important definition of **compassion**. Now in our text this morning you heard the word *mercy* that can also be translated as compassion. We're going to spend a little bit of time on that, just so we understand what that word is all about. And then we're going to move to the **Biblical context**, to see how this fits into the in the scriptures and then we're going to transition to pondering **who is our neighbor**. And then, if you've seen the title of the sermon, you know that we're going to end up with **egg coffee**.

I polled some of the people yesterday after the Saturday service and asked them if I got from the good Samaritan getting beaten to egg coffee. The reviews were mixed, so hang in there – I'll do the best I can.

The Samaritan showed **compassion**. That word comes from a Latin word that got into the Greek, but it is a combination of two separate words *com*, *c-o-m*, meaning “with,” so with is that word. And then *passion* literally means “suffering,” and so we talk about the *passion* of Christ. Have you ever wondered what is the *passion* of Christ when he's going to the cross? Well, it is his *suffering*, it is him being whipped and stripped and the crown of thorns being put on his head and being crucified – *that* is the *passion* of Christ. When you put those two words together you get the word **compassion**. What it literally means, then, is the *sharing* of suffering. The sharing of suffering.

Now when we think of the word *sharing* we can think of a meal that we share, food with each other. We can think of donating money to world hunger or donating something with the food shelf. That's great, that's good. *Serving* a meal to a hungry person at a shelter, on the other hand, gets closer to compassion. It takes this caring to another level and gets closer to sharing suffering. The understanding of empathy seems to come close to explaining the difference. Emotion researchers – and there are people who are emotion researchers – generally define empathy as the ability to sense one's other person's emotions coupled with the ability to imagine what someone else might be thinking. Compassion takes this emotional connection to a much deeper level.

Many of us have been with someone who is dying or maybe the family of someone who is grieving the death of someone else. In many cases in this way we are sharing their grief, sharing their suffering, and this is the one of the most amazing concepts and capacities of the Stephen ministers that we have in our congregation. In fact it is written in one of their periodicals that their primary responsibility is to ensure that no one suffers alone. To ensure that no one suffers alone, that's compassion that is the true definition of the word! Sharing someone's suffering is personal and it reaches deep inside of who we are. It is the answer to suffering. Like I said, empathy comes close but not quite all the way.

In his Book of Joy, which I've used before and will use again, Archbishop Desmond Tutu helps us out. He says one of the differences between empathy and compassion is that while empathy is sharing and experiencing the emotions of others, compassion is more of an empowered state when we want what is best for the other person. So that's a little introduction.

Now the **Biblical context**. It's very important that we understand how the Samaritan was regarded and how that plays out in this drama. Luke is very specific in the story that it was a Levite and a priest who ignored the beaten man. A Levite is a Jewish man from the tribe of Levi, and by their definition they were superior in their own minds. A priest was a highly regarded Hebrew Jewish male. These are the two people that Luke wants to make perfectly clear ignored the man who was beaten. And then there's the Samaritan. You can see on the map that Galilee is at the top, Judea and Samaria are right in the middle. Judeans and Galileans considered themselves to be *true* Jews. They did not think that about the Samaritans. Even though they were Jewish by their own definition they did not meet the criteria of the other folks because they did not worship in Jerusalem. You look at Samaria on the map, and right there in the middle of the territory is Mount Gerizim, and that is where the Samaritans would worship. Because of that the other Jews thought that they were inferior. So that is what Luke is talking about. It isn't the Levite and the priest who think that they are big shots, it is the people who Jesus was talking to that looked down on them.

So it's very important that Luke draws that connection. Luke uses the word compassion three times in his gospel. The first two times it is Jesus who is the god agent, the person who is showing compassion, sharing suffering. The third time is with the Samaritan. If you play that out in terms of Luke's logic, what he is saying is that the Samaritan is the Christ object. It is the Jesus object. It is the little Christ in this story, and that's you, that's me. The word Christian means little Christ and WE are called to be that person. *It is the very definition of who we say that we are.*

So now with the understanding of what compassion really is and some biblical context, we can move to the question of **who is our neighbor**. Jesus asked the question, who was a neighbor to the man who fell into the hand of the robbers, and this is where it gets personal and very contextual. To follow up on my sermon topic from last week, this is where it gets a little messy in our lives. The neighbor is the one who shows compassion, mercy. Most of us would put ourselves in that category, or at least we would want to because of our faith. For the most part we want to care for and journey with those around us who are suffering in any way. For the most part we are and we try to be even more compassionate people.

But I want to take a risk here and share my observation there seems to be a negative energy in our society at this time that we need to pay attention to. We can look at the gun violence. You can hardly turn on tv and not see gun violence. We are aware that somewhat in daily discourse we see that there is a lot of not compassionate actions going on, and it's a problem. We can get some clarity about this now when we think about the society context of the good Samaritan. The Jewish community back in that day in Judah and Galilee considered themselves to be the true Jews and

that's how they justified their hatred. They felt quite superior. The Jewish people back then were tribal in nature. There were the Galileans and the Judeans, and then there were the Samaritans that didn't count, but they were tribal in nature. And I believe that we have some tribalism going on now and we give it different names. We call it racism, classism, agism, and different political names – all of those kinds of things. And there are those who gather together forming a tribe, in effect, because they think the same. They think it's okay to have prejudice and hatred because the rest of the tribe thinks that too.

It's no excuse for not showing compassion to our neighbor, however, simply because they are different.

I must admit that in our house the most important button in our entire house is the mute button on the remote control. If I didn't have my mute button I would have to be in therapy right now. It is one way that I can block out the noise of all that hate, all that tribalism as I would like to call it. This is not a political statement, it's not a judgment about anything. But it is where we use negative language. When anyone uses negative language that is contagious. Negative language breeds negative language.

We are God's people of compassion love, joy, peace, harmony. We bring other people to the light of God and this again is where Bishop Tutu helps us out. This is very interesting. "*Compassion* also seems to be contagious. When we see others being compassionate, we are more likely to become compassionate and this is what the expert researchers call moral elevation." Tutu says there's a ripple effect. "In other words, experiments with large numbers of people show that if you are kind and compassionate, your friends, your friends friends, and even your friends friends friends, are more likely to become kind and compassionate." This is what we're called to do, this is what we're called to be.

And now I get to the title of the sermon, **egg coffee**. How many of you know anything about egg coffee? Well, there's a few of you. Egg coffee is a tradition in northern Minnesota where Donna and I were. It was almost sacramental – well, without any words from Jesus, but it was a very special gift. If you go down to the church basement and there's egg coffee you know something special is going on. I'm thinking about a funeral service we had for a lady, she was everything a wonderful church lady should be. She helped people, she had a huge family. We held the service upstairs in the sanctuary and then we went downstairs and there was the group of the kitchen women who were making the egg coffee. You boil a pot of water, and when you have just the right amount of coffee grounds you crack an egg in there and you mix it all together. Then you throw the grounds in the hot water and it is almost a miracle because the grounds are suspended just long enough to brew the coffee. Then you get all the way down and the grounds sit on the bottom of the pot, right? So that when they dish out your coffee it is pristine, it is clear. It is just absolutely amazing.

That's compassion for those people. They knew and the family knew of this lady that they were sharing her suffering because it's only in that kind of way that they would do egg coffee. It was it was a little bit of a reward, but it was also like I said almost sacramental and liturgical, and any other church word you want to use. It is what they were and it was their understanding of compassion.

So the story of the Good Samaritan reminds us to resist the tribalism that the Jewish people were encountering, and actively – *actively* – live a compassionate life. To answer the lawyer's question in the gospel of Luke, who are the neighbors? *We* are the neighbors. We are the helpers. We are the lovers. We are the little Christ, and we are the ones who can use our positive energy to energize all those around us to become compassionate. God gives us that gift.

And that's the good news. Amen.