

Thirteenth Sunday after Trinity
08/25/2013
Shepherd of the Hills Lutheran Church
Luke 10:23-37
David McMinn

Grace, mercy and peace from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ. Amen.

The Word of God for our consideration this morning is from the Gospel according to Saint Luke the 10th chapter.

He'd heard Jesus speak. He'd heard Jesus say, "*All things have been handed over to Me by My Father, and no one knows who the Son is except the Father, or who the Father is except the Son and anyone to whom the Son chooses to reveal Him.*" This Jew, this man who knew the letter of the Scriptures was about at his breaking point. Jesus testified that He was the Son of God. He testified that the Father is only known through Him. This was blasphemy to this pious man, this keeper of the law of Israel. This man knew God is one and certainly isn't some drifter from Nazareth who knew enough Scripture just to be dangerous.

At this point, though Jesus implied that He is of the same essence as the Father (something we confess in the Nicene Creed every Sunday) and the man stays silent. He seethes no doubt, but for a minute he holds his tongue. If he had heard the next words of Jesus they would have pushed him right over the edge. "*Turning to the disciples [Jesus] said privately, "Blessed are the eyes that see what you see! For I tell you that many prophets and kings desired to see what you see, and did not see it, and to hear what you hear, and did not hear it "*"

Noah, Abraham, Moses, David, Solomon, Isaiah, Jeremiah and more spent their careers speaking the Word of God to people. They spoke of the Lord

and His mercy. Abraham and his descendants spoke of the Lord's Savior who was to come from his bloodlines and would be a blessing to the whole world. David was promised that a coming Heir would sit on his throne and judge the nations with equity. The prophets and kings longed for the arrival of this Messiah, this Savior. They believed the promise of the coming Savior. They had God's faith.

But they all died before they saw the promises of God fulfilled in Jesus Christ. The disciples were indeed blessed to see Him with their own eyes. Here was the Promise of the ages before their eyes. BUT, they were even more blessed to hear Him with their own ears. They were above all men, blessed. But the lawyer, seething from his jealousy for his false religion, wasn't so blessed, at least not with faith. He saw and heard Jesus but he had no faith in the One he saw and heard. He resisted faith.

The lawyer had the opposite of faith. He had anger against Christ for His stand against and contrary to the lawyer's religion of laws. A religion of laws is a religion of death. The Law always condemns. But the religion of Christ is life. He came to give life. He is the Lord and Author of life. But the lawyer was blind to that fact. So he tested Jesus to see if He could find something to hang Him on and get Him out of the picture.

So this expert of the Law asks Jesus, "*Teacher, what shall I do to inherit eternal life?*" What must I do? That's a Law question. It's an arrogant and self assured question from this lawyer. He was a law keeper and he was about to show Jesus his prowess in keeping the Law.

You're Lutherans. You know this man's question is bad, it's an evil question. We can do nothing to save ourselves. Christ came to earth exactly because we couldn't do anything to inherit eternal life. We're lost and condemned on our own. We confessed just a little while ago exactly that. If justification is left up to us, if it's based on what we do then it's condemnation for us all.

So Jesus answers him and since the man asked a law question Christ gives him a law answer. *"What is written in the Law? How do you read it?" And he answered, "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." And He said to him, "You have answered correctly; do this, and you will live."* Learn this man's answer to Jesus' question. Jesus' question is equivalent to our often posed question "What does this mean to you?" It's a good answer, at least to what is meant by the 10 Commandments for him personally and everyone else generally. But it's a horrible answer about how to be saved.

In Ezekiel God says, *"I gave them my statutes and made known to them my rules, by which, if a person does them, he shall live."* So God says we can be saved by keeping His rules. So why is the man wrong in what he asks then? And why is he wrong in his answer to Jesus, not regarding what the commands means, but in his abilities to keep them? Because just like you he can't keep the Law. He can't keep the rules. Jesus says, "Do it." To you He says keep My Law. The man arrogantly and pridefully gives the answer to what the Law means

to him and thinks he can keep it and keep it perfectly, which is the demand. So Jesus affirms his answer, *“Do it and live.”*

But what part of the Law is the hardest to keep? See Jesus says *“Do this and live”* and the lawyer thinks a bit and it hits him, “Uh, oh.” He wants to justify his own life and his own practices. The lawyer himself said, “Love God and love neighbor”. But now he thinks about it and it might not be quite as simple as he thought. To justify himself he says, “And who is my neighbor?”

What does that tell you? Well it tells us at least a couple of things. First it says that he thinks he has the first table of the Law satisfied. See the 10 Commandments are divided into two tablets or sections. The first is the section that deals with us and our lives before God. You shall have no other gods before Me. You shall not misuse the Name of the Lord your God. And you shall remember the Sabbath Day by keeping it holy. Those three commandments tell us what we are to do before God. The next 7, honor father and mother, shall not murder, shall not commit adultery, shall not steal, shall not bear false witness, shall not covet house or wife, all deal with our neighbor.

By asking “And who is my neighbor?” the man is saying I’ve got the first table, the God table down pat. Really? Who did the man fear, love and trust the most? Let’s see, he thinks he can get to heaven by his own merits, “What must I do to inherit eternal life”. He’s misusing God’s Name to try and trap the Son of God. God stands before him in the man Jesus Christ and he tries to trap Him with His own Law. He fails at the first two commands and yet he’s more worried

about the last 7 that deal with his neighbor. And he's thinking, "I'm pretty good with neighbor, at least those I like...but wait. Who is my neighbor?"

Let's think about that. Let's take me for instance. When I'm having a good day, I might appear to fulfill the Law of God with my closest neighbor, my wife. But maybe not so much with the IRS man, or the manic driver, or the rude woman on the phone or the person who dinged my vehicle. Who is my neighbor?

This man who thinks he deals with God rightly knows he doesn't measure up with his neighbor. It's why he asks the question and who is my neighbor. So failure to love neighbor means...he doesn't measure up to God. He just doesn't get it. God demands perfect obedience to his Law in all its parts for self justification. Close enough...isn't. God demands perfection.

We usually think of Jesus' story here as being a story about being a good neighbor. But that's not exactly right. It's really about keeping the Law of God perfectly.

"But he, desiring to justify himself, said to Jesus, "And who is my neighbor?"³⁰ Jesus replied, "A man was going down from Jerusalem to Jericho, and he fell among robbers, who stripped him and beat him and departed, leaving him half dead. ³¹Now by chance a priest was going down that road, and when he saw him he passed by on the other side. ³²So likewise a Levite, when he came to the place and saw him, passed by on the other side. ³³But a Samaritan, as he journeyed, came to where he was, and when he saw him, he had compassion. ³⁴He went to him and bound up his wounds, pouring on oil and wine. Then he set him on his own animal and brought him to an inn and took care of him. ³⁵And the next day he took out two denarii and gave them to the innkeeper, saying, 'Take care of him, and whatever more you spend, I will repay you when I come back.' ³⁶Which of these three, do you think, proved to be a neighbor to the man who fell among the robbers?"

³⁷He said, "The one who showed him mercy." And Jesus said to him, "You go, and do likewise."

See this story Jesus tells is about two people ought to hate each other and three who ought to love each other. The priest and the Levite ought to love the man in the ditch. It's understood that he's a Jew like them. They should've stopped and helped him because he was forgiven just like them, by grace by God. But they don't. Bloody beaten men can't be touched lest one become unclean. They had duties waiting. They couldn't waste time getting their clean condition back. The man was worth getting dirty for. They weren't going to be made unclean by this beaten and left for dead Jewish man.

But the Samaritan should have hated the Jewish man and vice versa. That's what our Old Testament was about. Even then there was enmity, hatred between Samaria and Jerusalem. But the Samaritan does what's not expected. He loves the beaten man unconditionally and works to heal him. He fulfills the Law of God, both tables, perfectly.

Who does that? Who can do that? You know...the Samaritan is nothing other than a picture of Christ and how He fulfilled the Law. He's an example for us, but that's the least important part of the story. Jesus being the example will not save you. You don't need someone to emulate. You need someone to justify you. You need someone to satisfy the Law for you.

See you're the beaten man. Satan has robbed you. He has taken all love of God and neighbor from you. He leaves you with no faith. Isn't that what Satan does? Isn't that what he does in Eden to Adam and Eve? He dupes them out of their faith and places hatred between them and between them toward God.

You're the man. You're the one stolen from and left for dead, helpless, unable to save yourself. But along comes this Outcast. Along comes Christ who is rejected by His own people. He sees one of His people, one of those who by nature hate Him. This person in the ditch is beaten and bruised and all but dead. What does Jesus do? Count the cost? No. Instead Christ has compassion. He sees that the man is without hope and gives him some. The man is robbed of his life. Jesus gives it back. The man is sick with sin. Jesus binds his wounds and takes him somewhere (here) where he can be cared for until He returns. He brings you here to be healed by Word and Sacrament. You're the man in the ditch. Jesus is the Samaritan. You're the sinner. Jesus is your Savior. In Him alone you're justified and righteous before the Father.

The story is about Christ keeping the Law perfectly for you, yes, and then freely giving you the merits He earned by His life and death. Word and sacrament deliver the merits of Christ to you.

So what about the Law? Keep it. I can't stress that to you enough. Keep it. Don't slack off on even the smallest Law. Keep all 10 Commandments sweating blood to do so. It's what God demands of us. It's our response to His love. But don't ever think you've done it well enough to merit God saving your hide...it just isn't so.

Instead believe that Jesus came to this world exactly because you couldn't keep the Law perfectly. Hear the Word. Confess your sins. Confess your failures. Receive the salvation Christ gives to you here. Jesus came to this world to forgive your sins and for His sake you are forgiven. Amen.