

15th SUNDAY IN ORDINARY TIME; Cycle –C; July 13th 2025
Deuteronomy 30: 10-14; Colossians 1: 15-20; Luke 10: 25-37

Dear Sisters & Brothers,

In today's gospel passage we have a beautiful parable, '**The Good Samaritan**' exclusively found in Luke, which is as beautiful as his parable '*The Prodigal Son*.' These two parables are well accepted and appreciated by even the non-Christians.

It seems that the question of the scribe to Jesus, asking him as what he should do to inherit eternal life, eventually prompted Jesus to tell this parable. Of course, every pious Jew knows that observance of the Commandments is the only means to attain eternal life. And as a scribe or scholar of law he knows it better. Then why did he ask Jesus the question? Luke says that he wanted to test Jesus. In other words, the scribe wanted to know whether Jesus would be giving something new which is not found in the Mosaic Law. Knowing the cunningness of the scribe Jesus just repeats the most important and first Commandment, such as **"You shall love the Lord, your God with all your heart and with all your being."** But it is interesting to notice that Jesus added to this commandment a directive which God gave to Israel in **Leviticus 19:18b, "You shall love your neighbor as yourself."** As the scribe fully agreed with Jesus, he says, *"You have answered correctly, do this and you will live."*

Since he could not find fault with Jesus, the scribe asked another tricky question to Jesus- **"Who is my neighbor?"** No doubt, the scribe knew well about the Jewish concept of neighbor that only a person who belonged to the Jewish community could be the neighbor of a Jew and the non-Jews are his enemies. Answering to his question, Jesus threw a bomb shell in the Jewish camp giving a different concept of the neighbor. In this parable Jesus makes it very clear that the neighbor is not the one who belongs to our caste, race or religion or one's country. Our neighbor can be anyone who is in need of our help, in whatever form, at that particular time. In this parable it is clear that it is the Samaritan who helped the Jew who was wounded.

No doubt, other major religions too will agree with Jesus on his teaching of love of God and love of neighbor. But their concept of love of neighbor is very limited. They rather instruct their followers, *"You shall not do any harm to your neighbor which you hate to happen to you. So avoid hurting others."*

Please note, according to these religions their love of neighbor is expressed and limited just avoiding to do any harm to others. But Jesus is not satisfied with just not hurting somebody; rather he demands us to love our neighbor and express it through

positive actions. It is not that difficult to avoid doing harm to our neighbors; but very often it is a challenge to do something good for our neighbors, which involves sacrifice, goodwill and time. Very often we comfort ourselves with the attitude that I am not doing any harm to my neighbors at all.

In St. Matthew's gospel chapter 25: 31ff. which is the scene of the **Last Judgment**, Jesus is very emphatic that the judgment will be carried out according to one's action towards the neighbor, good or bad. He says, **"Come, you who are blessed by my Father. Inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world. For I was hungry and you gave me food, I was thirsty and you gave me drink, a stranger and you welcomed me, naked and you clothed me, ill and you cared for, in prison and you visited me."**

In the parable of the Good Samaritan, the priest and Levite didn't do any further harm to the wounded man. As they were busy they just passed the man. *So they were condemned not for some wrong they did, rather for something they didn't do. In other words their guilt lies in the fact that they refused to do the possible help they could have done to the victim.*

Mother Theresa says, **"Most of us are not called to do greater things; but all of us can do small things with great love."** Through the parable of the Last Judgment Jesus asks us to do something good to someone, even in a small scale. Once, a little boy was playing in the beach. He noticed thousands of starfish being stranded in the sand unable to move back to the water. Every wave which came from the sea pushed hundreds of them on the shore. So he felt pity and he started throwing them one by one back to the sea. An elderly man walking there noticed it and said to the boy, "Hey, little fellow, you are not going to make any difference. For, they are thousands in number. Go ahead with your play." The boy stopped and looked at the man; then he took another starfish and threw it back to the water and said to the man, **"Didn't I make a difference in that one's life."**

You may not be able to make a big change in the entire community where you live. But you also can touch at least a few lives in different ways. A short visit, a phone call, a smile, and an encouraging word, can add a little joy to someone. Jesus expects only that much. At the end when we stand before the Judgment Seat of God, he will ask you and I one question, **"You have been constructing so many things for you in the world. What have you constructed in heaven for you? Or what difference have you made in my brothers and sisters?"** If we can show to the Lord that we have touched a few lives and added a little joy to their lives, we are called **blessed** and eternal life will be ours.