

15th SUNDAY IN ORDINARY TIME; Cycle –C; July 10th 2022
Deuteronomy 30: 10-14; Colossians 1: 15-20; Luke 10: 25-37

Dear Sisters & Brothers,

In the synoptic gospels, (the gospels of Matthew, Mark and Luke) parables are the most powerful tools Jesus uses to convey the great messages. These parables include proverbs, metaphors, allegories and incidents taken from the daily lives of the people in the area. We find more than 33 parables in these three gospels. 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.*'

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. If Jesus went with something different, then the scribe could accuse him of not following the Mosaic Law which is a serious violation. But Jesus kicked the ball into his court and made him repeat what is said in the Mosaic Law. So he 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 the scribe added to this commandment a directive which God gave to Israel in **Leviticus 19:18b**, "**You shall love your neighbor as yourself.**" Jesus too didn't have any disagreement with his saying. Jesus 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 gentiles are his enemies. Answering to his question, Jesus threw a bomb shell in the Jewish camp giving a different view 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 and expressed in a negative way, in the sense that one should not harm the neighbor. For instance, Judaism says, *“What is hateful to you, do not do to your fellowman. That is the Law and the rest is commentary.”*

Islam says, “No one is a believer until he desires for his brother that which he desires for himself.”

Hinduism holds: “This is the sum of duty that you shall not do to others which would hurt you, if done to you.”

Buddhism: “Hurt not others in ways that you yourself would find hurtful.”

*Please note, according to these religions **just avoid hurting others and that is enough and you are fully justified.*** But Jesus is not satisfied with not just hurting somebody; rather he demands to love your 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.* So theirs is the **sin of omission not commission.** In the parable of the rich man and Lazarus, the rich man didn’t do any harm to Lazarus. But still he was condemned for the very reason that he omitted or refused to do the possible help he could have given to Lazarus. Very often we are concerned only about what sin we committed and never think about what good we ignored or could have done. **The sin of omission is as grave as the sin of commission.** In order to attain eternal life we should do all possible help to someone who is in need; we need to make a positive difference in somebody by our kind words and charitable acts. Just abstaining from hurting our neighbor will never give us eternal life.