

## The Thirteenth Sunday after Trinity, A ✕ D 2009

**Luke 10:23-37** Then turning to the disciples he said privately, "Blessed are the eyes that see what you see!"<sup>24</sup> 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."<sup>25</sup> And behold, a lawyer stood up to put him to the test, saying, "Teacher, what shall I do to inherit eternal life?"<sup>26</sup> He said to him, "What is written in the Law? How do you read it?"<sup>27</sup> 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."<sup>28</sup> And he said to him, "You have answered correctly; do this, and you will live."<sup>29</sup> But he, desiring to justify himself, said to Jesus, "And who is my neighbor?"<sup>30</sup> 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."<sup>31</sup> Now by chance a priest was going down that road, and when he saw him he passed by on the other side.<sup>32</sup> So likewise a Levite, when he came to the place and saw him, passed by on the other side.<sup>33</sup> But a Samaritan, as he journeyed, came to where he was, and when he saw him, he had compassion.<sup>34</sup> He 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.<sup>35</sup> And 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.'<sup>36</sup> Which of these three, do you think, proved to be a neighbor to the man who fell among the robbers?"<sup>37</sup> He said, "The one who showed him mercy." And Jesus said to him, "You go, and do likewise."

*In the name of the Father and of the ✕ Son and of the Holy Spirit. Amen.*

1 Do this, and you will live: 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 love your neighbor as yourself. Easy, enough, you suppose, if your neighbor is your friend. But that's not the one to whom Jesus calls you to be merciful. "A man was going from Jerusalem to Jericho, and he fell among robbers, who stripped him and beat him and departed, leaving him half dead. Now by chance a priest was going down that road, and when he saw him he passed by on the other side. So likewise a Levite, when he came to the place and saw him, passed by on the other side. But a Samaritan, as he journeyed, came to where he was, and when he saw him, he had compassion. He 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. And 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.'"

2 You go, and do likewise. Jews and Samaritans were not natural neighbors. Even though they lived in proximity, they were violent enemies. This is not a friendly rivalry to be settled with an annual braggin' rights game, but a deep-seated hatred. More Bloods and Crips on the streets of L.A., Protestants and Catholics in Northern Ireland, Serbs and Muslims in Bosnia, Arabs and Jews in the West Bank, than Cardinals and Cubs fans in middle-Illinois. They hated one another and that hatred could easily boil over into violence. And it's the Samaritan, not the Jewish priest or Levite, who stops to help the beaten-nearly-to-death Jew on the road from Jerusalem to Jericho. Love your neighbor, your enemies, like this, Jesus commands. "You have heard it said, 'Love your neighbor and hate your enemy,' but I say to you, Love your enemies and pray for those who persecute you" (Mt 5:44). "Love your enemies and do good to those who hate you" (Lk 6:27).

3 "The command to love our neighbor demands that we rejoice over the good fortune of our enemies as over our own, and mourn at his misfortune as though it had happened to us. Yes, the Law of loving our neighbor demands, that we are just as concerned and pray just as earnestly for the temporal and eternal welfare of our enemies as for our own. We must concern ourselves more with having our offenders receive forgiveness from God for their sins against us, than that they apologize to us. Christ says in another place: 'But if you love those who love you, what credit is that to you? For even sinners love those who love them. And if you do good to those who do

good to you, what credit is that to you? For even sinners do the same' (Lk 6:32-33)" (Walther, OSG, 291). Love your enemies.

4 "True love would rather suffer injury than let his neighbor suffer injury. It is ready to help even if it becomes a burden, even if it has no abundance; even of that which it needs itself it must share with the needy. Yes, it is ready to stake goods, health, honor, and even life itself for his neighbor, if that becomes necessary" (Walther, OSG, 292). So St. Paul commanded, "Let no one seek his own good, but the good of his neighbor" (1 Cor 10:24). Do this, and you will live.

5 Who loves this way? Who is constantly willing to seek the good, not only of his friends, but also of his enemies, even at great personal expense? Which of you would gladly go into debt so that your enemy might prosper? Who among you would endure hardship to make your enemy's life easier? Who in this congregation would cheerfully allow himself to suffer injury so that an enemy might be protected? Who in the world would give up his own life so that an enemy might live? Only One, and it's not you.

6 By nature, you love neither your neighbor nor the Lord. In fact, your sinful nature makes you an enemy of God. Not a friendly adversary, not a distant friend, not estranged yet amicable neighbors. Enemies. Worse than Jews and Samaritans, Serbs and Muslims, Jews and Arabs, Blacks and Crips, Yankees and Rebels, angels and devils, sinners and a Holy Triune God are the kinds of enemies whose relationship often—no, always—boils over into violence.

7 Beaten to a bloody pulp and left for dead in a ditch is the best you could hope for, were it not for the coming of the One naturally your enemy. This Good Samaritan, the only Good Samaritan, is God-in-the-flesh, Jesus Christ. And He came to save His

enemies, all of sinful humanity. You cannot be middle-of-the-road when it comes to Jesus; there's no fence-sitting, no appreciating Jesus, no thinking of Him as a good teacher. Either you love Him or hate Him. And humanity hated Him. Stopping in the ditch to pull the dying mass of humanity out cost this Jewish Samaritan His life. And the tension boiled over into violence, to the violence of the cross. Humanity railed against the God-Man, arrested Him, abused Him, bound Him, beat Him, crucified Him, and killed Him. "Such an inner living heartfelt perfect love of one's enemies only One had, and proved it; Jesus Christ the Son of God. He always repaid evil with good, misdeed with kindness, cursing with blessing, in short, hatred with love. He shed bitter tears at the misfortune of his persecutors, prayed for his murderers, and gave his life on the cross for the salvation of all his enemies" (Walther, OSG, 292)

8 He gave His life for His enemies, the only display of true and perfect love the world will ever know. God died for humanity, the Sinless for the sinners. He died so that you might live. He pulled you from the ditch of death and gave you a new life, His life. Through the waters of Holy Baptism, He has brought you from death to life, joined you into His own death and resurrection. He continues to heal the wounds of your sinfulness with the oil of His absolution. He continues to cure and care with the wine of His Blood. And He carried you to the inn of His Church, where He has placed innkeepers over you to ensure your ongoing care and recovery. They keep applying His oil and Wine, continue to preach His life-giving Word and to deliver His forgiveness-bestowing sacraments. And He has promised His return.

9 And He has set you free to love others, even and especially your enemies, as He has loved you. Those who have been forgiven forgive. Those who have been loved

love. Those who have been reconciled reconcile. It's not a command anymore; it's a fact. Everything you do is clothed in the righteousness of Jesus. Every action toward your neighbor is a reflection of His mercy toward you. He has loved you in spite of yourself, loves you without regard for Himself. Go and do likewise.

*In the name of the Father and of the ✠ Son and of the Holy Spirit. Amen.*

*Soli Deo Gloria*  
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