

*This morning's gospel is the parable of the Good Samaritan. As the lesson is read, please listen for something in the lesson that stands out for you. Something you have not heard before.*

Neighbor March 5

My brother David loved cars.

Loved them from the time he was very young.

Back then he often 'practice driving'.

It was adorable to see him kneeling

on the front seat of my parents Ford Falcon station wagon--

Eyes peering through the big steering wheel.

We were visiting my grandparents one spring...

maybe it was for Easter.

Their house was on Wausau, Wisconsin's east hill ---

Their driveway a steep, 100-foot long uphill grade

with a small, flat parking area on top.

Our car was parked at an angle to the right of the garage.

David was in the front, pretending to drive – driver's door open.

And somehow he got the car out of Park.

It began to slowly roll back.

I don't remember how I got there

or from which direction I came all these years later,

But a 9-year old me

dove into the well of the driver's side floor,

Slammed my hands onto the brake

And **stopped the car.**

David was crying.

I was screaming for help.

And fortunately, my parents heard us and set things right.

*Some things you just do without thinking*  
**when it's your brother.**

This morning's lesson of course wasn't about helping a relative.  
It's the story of *a legal expert*  
trying to show off how good he is

And *a parable about a hurt man*  
being left for dead by his brothers in faith  
and being helped by someone *the crowd* **would least expect.**

*We can all think of examples where we have helped a neighbor...*

- The woman in the U of M parking ramp who was unable to find her car
- The man trying to back into the elevator with a borrowed scooter
- Moving a board off the road so someone doesn't hit it.

Often, bible study discussion about this parable focuses on  
*Why these devout men –*

*priests on their way to the temple in Jerusalem,*  
didn't stop to help the bleeding man.

**What an un-un-neighborly way to act!**

But, a neighbor to these travelers  
would normally have been seen as a fellow Israelite,  
or possibly based on Lev. 19,  
resident aliens living in Israel.

*Neighborliness* would not have extended to  
Samaritans, Syrians or Gentiles.

The community at Qumran overlooking the Dead sea  
Left writings that speak of this.

They explicitly called for love for **the “sons of light”**,  
(meaning members of the community)  
and hate for **the “sons of darkness.”**

*Their meaning is clear: you were to give to or share with **the devout**  
but not help the sinner.*

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We've all done it, haven't we;  
Seen someone up ahead sitting against a building  
*Wearing a dirty coat, holding a cardboard sign and a cup.*

*We've all had the same thing go through our minds...  
The same 'push me - pull you' thoughts...*

*...I know I should give something...  
And then the usual -  
but he might use it for something not good for him...  
*But I should help him...*  
But the smallest bill I have in my wallet is a 20.  
*But I'm supposed to be the Good Samaritan.**

And, by the time we've gone through these emotional gymnastics  
We've already passed the guy... and are on our way.  
**Phew, that was tough - but it's over now.....!!!**

///*For the Lawyer facing Jesus that day,  
and the rest surrounding the pair,  
The fact that the Levite passed on the other side  
**was no surprise given tradition.***

**The same for the priest.**

*What was scandalous, what would have turned heads,  
Is that *Jesus made the good guy in the story* **a Samaritan.***

It was an outsider who was compassionate,  
A ne'er do-well Samaritan who stopped,  
a sinner who wouldn't have been helped by anyone...

*who not only stopped and bandaged his wounds,  
not only poured oil and wine as medicine on the wounds,  
but, picked him up, placed him on his own animal,*

*Who took him to a public inn, and cared for him overnight.  
And, then he left him in the care of the innkeeper  
with the equivalent of 2-day's pay  
and promised to repay him when he returned  
if the bill was more.*

### **How outrageous was this story?**

*It would be as if you walked by your brother lying in a ditch,  
And the person you'd least expect... you know the one  
.....a homeless beggar, maybe,  
**was the one who provided him the help.***

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*Loving God and Loving our neighbor  
are the **two greatest commandments**,  
*but the question here is 'who is my neighbor?'**

*For Jesus, the true neighbor is one  
who is willing to look past the differences  
that traditionally divide people  
and **loves others unconditionally, extravagantly and without prejudice.***

### ***Authentic spiritual life***

*is not defined by ethnic, national or **religious heritage**,  
but **by love for God and for others.***

***Salvation*** is not defined by

works,  
but authentic acts of love

That are **a natural outgrowth of faith.**

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**We all know the parable of the good Samaritan.**

The secular world knows it too,  
And has even designed 'Samaritan Laws' to protect passersby  
who mean well in an effort to help someone in need.

We also know the Law the Lawyer recites  
when Jesus asks him how he Interprets scripture.

*Love the Lord your God with all your heart, soul, mind and strength  
and love your neighbor as yourself.*

*Take a moment and think,*

**Not** of the time you last helped a neighbor in need ---  
But of **the last one you passed by**, ignored...  
*Even though he or she could really have used your help.//*

**It takes courage.**

*Courage to love our neighbor.*

Particularly the one who is not like us -

Who looks different, who doesn't keep her house or yard up,  
Who has signs and rainbow flags in the yard.  
Who grew up with the wrong last name  
Or in the wrong zip code.

**It takes courage.**

**To have compassion as Jesus calls us to...**

**Courage to love our neighbor as much as we love ourselves.**

AMEN

LBW 492 O Master, let me walk with you