

Compassion can never be forgotten

c-c-15th Sunday of OT - 2022

Like most of you, I have heard hundreds of people giving various presentations.

Most I don't remember. But I do remember one point very clearly.

The presenter was talking about love, and he noted that the opposite of love is not hate.

The opposite of love is indifference.

I have thought about that statement for years, and have coming to realize it is true.

When preparing couples for marriage, one of the steps I do with them is fill in some paperwork.

One of the questions I ask them is

“Do you acknowledge that your marriage requires a positive relationship with God?”

I explain that the positive and negative is not to be seen as love and hate.

Either you have a positive relationship with God and you love him,

or you have a negative relationship with God and you hate him.

Positive and negative should be seen as something verses nothing.

Each of you have a relationship with your spouse, you love them, or hate them,

you all have a relationship with me, you love me or hate me,

each of you have a relationship with Trudeau, our Prince Minister, you love him or hate him..

But none of you have a relationship with my brother John who lives in Los Angeles.

You don't love him or hate him, there is simply nothing there.

To have a relationship with God implies that there is something there.

Hopefully that relationship is a loving relationship.

But I have met people who have a mad-on towards God.

They are continually angry at him.

But if you were tell them that God doesn't exist, they would get extremely defensive.

There is no question in their mind that God exists...it's just that they are mad at him.

This is why I love the line from the book or Revelation,

“I wish that you were either hot or cold, but because you are lukewarm,

I am about to spit you out of my mouth.” (Rev 3:16)

Or put in words of that speaker. “I wish that you were either cold or hot.

but because you are indifferent, I am about to spit you out of my mouth.”

When it comes to our faith we cannot be indifferent.

This is what the story of the Good Samaritan is all about.

The actions of the Priest and the Levite are not evil.

They show the man no malice or ill will towards the victim.

Instead they show complete indifference.

Rather than being disturbed by contact with him, they walk on the other side.

They remain at a safe distance and are indifferent to his plight.

They saw a fellow human being in trouble and they did nothing to help.

The Church would call this the sin of omission,

“When we should be doing something, but do nothing.

Interestingly, in the confessional, I rarely hear someone confess the sin of omission.

It is almost as if we have convinced ourselves that a sin is only a sin

if we have done something, and more specifically done something wrong.

But we can also commit a sin if we are indifferent towards someone, or something.

Jesus spells this out very clearly in his parable.

For Jesus the Samaritan is the model of mercy.

He is not good because he has money to help, he is good because he has the eyes to see.
To really see.

The Priest and the moral-teaching Levite, who should be able to see, pretend he is not there,
and walk on the other side of the road.

The Samaritan not only sees, but judges, and acts.

Now I need to make a footnote here.

There may be a reason why the Priest and Levite do not help the man.

The man who fell into the hands of robbers was going from Jerusalem to Jericho...
in a sense going away from God.

The Priest and Levite were going to Jerusalem, going towards God...
probably to offer sacrifice at the temple.

However, if they got any blood on their hands,
it would render them unclean and they could not offer sacrifice.

So in order to offer sacrifice they did not help the man.

Now on one hand these may seem logical,
but compassion towards another human being is something we can never neglect.

Although the priest and the Levite were religious people they were without compassion.

A religious person without compassion is a contradiction.

In a sense their religiosity makes them indifferent to the victim.

But that is just another way of saying, "They are selfish."

Remember what Jesus says elsewhere, (Mt 23:23)

"Woe to you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! For you tithe mint, dill, and cummin,
and have neglected the weightier matters of the law: justice and mercy and faith.

It is these you ought to have practiced without neglecting the others."

In helping the injured man, the Samaritan breaks almost every religious and social law in the book;
but it doesn't matter.

The virtues of mercy and justice enable us to see all sorts of things more clearly...

To see even the civic and religious laws that obstruct the justice of God.

One of the things I like about our Christian faith is that it is not just about "Me and Jesus."

Ours is a communal faith where we are called to love our neighbour, just as we love our God.

Whatever you do to the least of my brothers, or sisters, you do unto me.

If we were to update this parable to today's world, the man might have been set upon by robbers,
but he could also have been injured by a great many other things.

He could have been injured by drugs or alcohol.

He could be a victim of abuse, or the residential school system.

He could be a refugee of a political system that discriminates against him.

He could be a victim of the war in Ukraine.

He could have been injured by the whole social welfare system that we have set up.

There could be any number of reasons why he is injured...and if we are not careful—
we can come up with an even greater number of religious or civil laws
why we don't have to help.

It's not my responsibility.

The government should help "Those people."

We have hospitals for them.

I am only one person.

Why don't they just get off their butts and do something.

I'm on vacation.

Really the only question that is important is,

"What reason do we have to pass on the other side?"