

Has anyone here watched the Marvel television series *What If?*

It's based on the idea of alternate realities—universes shaped by different choices. The central question it asks is: *What if you had made all the right choices?*

Maybe in one of those realities, you're living your dream life—settled down with the perfect spouse, a peaceful home, maybe even in a monastery—filled with inner joy and spiritual peace. Everything is good, right, and beautiful.

But then there are other realities—shaped by different choices—and for most of us, it's *this* reality we live in now: often stressful, filled with struggle, uncertainty, and sometimes, pain. We wonder, *What if I had chosen differently? What if the world wasn't so broken?*

Last week, during a home pastoral visit, a parishioner told me about a conversation she had with a friend who shared with her the idea of the “Rapture”—a theology that teaches we are meant to escape this broken world. That we should lock ourselves away, avoid temptation, and just wait to be taken up to heaven.

But I can confidently say: Jesus never taught that. Nowhere in the Gospels does He say, *Run from the world*. On the contrary—He was sent into the world, and He sends us as well. He became flesh and lived among us. He healed, He taught, He loved, and ultimately, He *died* for this world.

That's the core message of today's Gospel—the Parable of the Good Samaritan.

A man is beaten and left for dead on the road. Two religious men—a priest and a Levite—pass by. They see him, but they cross over to the other side. They look away. They don't want to be delayed, distracted, or contaminated. They keep their distance.

Then comes a Samaritan. An outsider. Someone who should have despised the injured man. But the Samaritan sees not an enemy—not a Jew—not a stranger—but a fellow human being in need. Moved with compassion, he binds the man's wounds, pours oil and wine, lifts him onto his own animal, brings him to an inn, and pays for his care. He stays involved.

*That*, Jesus says, is what it means to be a neighbor.  
That is love.

The love Jesus calls us to isn't selective. It doesn't look away when others suffer. It doesn't stay silent when people are persecuted. It doesn't ask for race, religion, or politics before it helps. It gives itself—completely—even to the point of death.

So why do we struggle to love like that?

Because we often tell ourselves, *It's not my business*. We have our own problems. But injustice, when ignored, spreads like a virus. If someone can be treated unjustly today, anyone can tomorrow—including us.

As Christians, we have a deeper reason to care:

Christ died for every single person.

No one is excluded from the love of God.

No one is created without dignity.

No one is beyond our concern.

And Jesus made it clear: *We will be judged by how we treat the least among us*—the hungry, the poor, the sick, and the stranger. We cannot expect Christ to save us in the next life if we have failed to love Him in this one.

Now, here's where it hits home.

Most of us won't be called to Calcutta like Mother Teresa. Or to Molokai like St. Damien. But we *are* called to serve—right here, in our parish, in our ministries, and at this altar.

It may mean being an Extraordinary Minister of Communion or a lector. Helping with hospitality or the Saturday cleaning crew. Serving as a musician or joining the OCIA team.

Every act of service builds the Kingdom.

Now, let's go back to the beginning. I spoke of parallel universes and alternate realities. It may have sounded strange in a homily—but the truth is, there is only

*one* reality that is eternal, unchanging, and true. That's the reality we enter into every time we celebrate the Most Holy Mass.

In the Eucharist, heaven and earth are in perfect communion. It is the wedding supper of the Lamb—the celebration at the end of time when God and humanity are one. When we come to the altar, we step into the fullness of time, where all things are united in Christ and creation is restored.

We don't just witness this mystery—we taste it, receive it, and carry it within us. It becomes part of our very bodies.

The Mass is not an escape from the world—it is a vision or the reality of what the world is *meant* to become.

And so the Mass doesn't end with the final blessing.

When the deacon or priest says, "*Go forth, the Mass is ended,*" it's not a dismissal because it's over. It's a *commission*—because now the mission begins. To change the world into the reality we just encountered, the reality we just tasted, and the reality we've become: being one with God.

At this altar, we've seen the impossible become possible—bread and wine becoming the Body and Blood of Christ.

Now, we are sent to make that same communion visible in the world by:

- Healing the broken,
- Guiding the lost,
- Forgiving the sinner,
- And loving both God and neighbor.

So today, as we come forward to receive Christ in the Eucharist—under the appearance of humble bread—let us also recognize Him in the broken and humble faces around us.

And then, let's go forth and live the Gospel we've heard.

Let us be the Samaritan.

Let us be Christ to the world.

Let us build the Kingdom of God—right here, right now—by loving God and neighbor.

**Amen.**