

SERMON FOR MORNING OR EVENING PRAYER
In the Interest of Social Service¹

Lessons:²

The First Lesson: Here beginneth the tenth Verse of the twenty-fourth Chapter of the Fifth Book of Moses, called Deuteronomy.³

“When thou dost lend thy brother any thing, thou shalt not go into his house to fetch his pledge. Thou shalt stand abroad, and the man to whom thou dost lend shall bring out the pledge abroad unto thee. And if the man be poor, thou shalt not sleep with his pledge: In any case thou shalt deliver him the pledge again when the sun goeth down, that he may sleep in his own raiment, and bless thee: and it shall be righteousness unto thee before the LORD thy God.

“Thou shalt not oppress an hired servant that is poor and needy, whether he be of thy brethren, or of thy strangers that are in thy land within thy gates: At his day thou shalt give him his hire, neither shall the sun go down upon it; for he is poor, and setteth his heart upon it: lest he cry against thee unto the LORD, and it be sin unto thee. The fathers shall not be put to death for the children, neither shall the children be put to death for the fathers: every man shall be put to death for his own sin.

“Thou shalt not pervert the judgment of the stranger, nor of the fatherless; nor take a widow’s raiment to pledge: But thou shalt remember that thou wast a bondman in Egypt, and the LORD thy God redeemed thee thence: therefore I command thee to do this thing.

“When thou cuttest down thine harvest in thy field, and hast forgot a sheaf in the field, thou shalt not go again to fetch it: it shall be for the stranger, for the fatherless, and for the widow: that the LORD thy God may bless thee in all the work of thine hands. When thou beatest thine olive tree, thou shalt not go over the boughs again: it shall be for the stranger, for the fatherless, and for the widow. When thou gatherest the grapes of thy vineyard, thou shalt not glean it afterward: it shall be for

the stranger, for the fatherless, and for the widow. And thou shalt remember that thou wast a bondman in the land of Egypt: therefore I command thee to do this thing.”

Here endeth the First Lesson.

The Second Lesson: Here beginneth the twenty-third Verse of the tenth Chapter of the Gospel according to St. Luke.⁴

“And he turned him unto his disciples, and said privately, Blessed are the eyes which see the things that ye see: For I tell you, that many prophets and kings have desired to see those things which ye see, and have not seen them; and to hear those things which ye hear, and have not heard them.

“And, behold, a certain lawyer stood up, and tempted him, saying, Master, what shall I do to inherit eternal life? He said unto him, What is written in the law? how readest thou? And he answering said, Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy strength, and with all thy mind; and thy neighbour as thyself. And he said unto him, Thou hast answered right: this do, and thou shalt live. But he, willing to justify himself, said unto Jesus, And who is my neighbour? And Jesus answering said, A certain man went down from Jerusalem to Jericho, and fell among thieves, which stripped him of his raiment, and wounded him, and departed, leaving him half dead. And by chance there came down a certain priest that way: and when he saw him, he passed by on the other side. And likewise a Levite, when he was at the place, came and looked on him, and passed by on the other side. But a certain Samaritan, as he journeyed, came where he was: and when he saw him, he had compassion on him, And went to him, and bound up his wounds, pouring in oil and wine, and set him on his own beast, and brought him to an inn, and took care of him. And on the morrow when he departed, he took out two pence, and gave them to the host, and said unto him, Take care of him; and whatsoever thou spendest more, when I come again, I will repay thee. Which now of these three, thinkest thou, was neighbour unto him that fell

among the thieves? And he said, He that shewed [SHOWD] mercy on him. Then said Jesus unto him, Go, and do thou likewise.”

Here endeth the Second Lesson.

Homily:

In today’s Second Lesson, Christ tells His followers that many powerful men have wanted to see and hear things that those followers had seen and heard. These powerful men did not have the faith that the disciples did. One of Jesus’ hearers had so great a knowledge of the Jewish Law that he is referred to as a lawyer. This lawyer asked Our Lord how he could obtain eternal life. Jesus asked him what he thought the Law had said. The lawyer gave something very similar to the Summary of the Law. He simplified all the teachings and Law into a mere two statements. Jesus advised the man that his summary was correct.

To make certain that he understood, the lawyer asked Jesus to be more exact. Jesus responded with a parable. It is one that we all know well, the parable of the Good Samaritan.

In this story, we are told about a man that came down from Jerusalem, which was the place of peace, and on toward Jericho. Jericho was known for its sin. This man fell among thieves. The man was good in nature but his human nature failed him. It was while he was with the thieves that he was beaten and his garments were stolen. While on beaten and naked on the side of the road, two of the best kinds of Jews passed him but did nothing to help him. Titles and position mean nothing to God if they are not accompanied by good deeds. The Law and its role as Tutor did nothing to heal the consequence of sin.

A Samaritan was an outsider and was not under the obligation of the Mosaic Law. They were despised foreigners in

the Holy Land. But this Samaritan was the only one that passed this poor broken victim and had any compassion at all for him. The Samaritan bound and cleansed this man's wounds. He put the man on his own animal because he was unable to walk the distance and then paid for his stay at an Inn. He paid the price for his respite. He was Christ-like in paying the wages for the other fellow's straying.

Our Samaritan not only pays once, but also advises the owner of the establishment that if more were owed, he would pay more on his next journey.

After His telling of the parable, Jesus asked our lawyer friend which one was the true neighbor. This time the lawyer understood. It was not the ones that stood strictly on the law, but the one that gave compassion. With this new understanding, Christ commanded him to go out into the world and to show the same compassion to all.

It is always better to err on the side of compassion than to crumble by sticking to the letter of the law. Our Church laws are given to us like the Law was given to the Israelites. They are meant to be tutors and guides.

It is the compassion of Christ Jesus that saved us. By continuing to have faith in Him who has compassion for us and by walking in that faith with His compassion that we are continually saved from sin.

When I have questioned the rules, especially when I have the opportunity to be compassionate, I hear a voice ringing in my ears. I am certain that it is the voice of God saying, "There isn't anything that cannot be fixed." This is especially true when things are done with the compassion of Christ.

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August 29, 2010

¹ This sermon was originally written on the Gospel at Mass on the Thirteenth Sunday after Trinity, 2010.

² *Psalms and Lessons for the Christian Year* (1943), THE BOOK OF COMMON PRAYER xxxiii (PECUSA 1928, rev. 1943).

³ Deuteronomy 24:10-end (KJV).

⁴ St. Luke 10:23-37 (KJV).

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