

Text: Luke 10:25-37

Theme: "Anything for an Enemy"

Date: The Fifth Sunday after Pentecost, series C

July 10, 2022

I remember back in college where a school mate helped me with a major project that I was doing. I had told him that I would make it up to him someday and he replied to me, "I don't keep tabs on friends." Certainly, all of us would go out of our way to help a friend. Many of us would put others ahead of ourselves and help friends and family to a point where it would even cost us something or, in a rare instance, place us in danger. Yet, as much as we want to help others and be there for them, there comes a point where we can only do so much and we must live and look out for ourselves. That point will be different for everybody and will be different on the basis of how important someone is to our lives. For friends and family we will often go above and beyond the call of duty.

Certainly, we would do anything for friends or family, but what about doing something for a stranger. We would certainly use common courtesy and good manners and would help out as much as we can. We see someone in need and we want to do what we can for them. Certainly, we will help out, but the truth is that we will not give a stranger the same attention that we give to our friends or our family. We can look at the situation, feel sorry for the person and then say to ourselves that there is not much we can do and we move on not thinking too much about the stranger in need. When it comes to strangers and people that we know in passing, the time for thinking about oneself comes quicker than it does for family and friends.

Certainly, we would do anything for friends or family. We might do something for acquaintances and strangers, but how far are you willing to go and how much are you willing to sacrifice for an enemy. How much will you give of yourself to someone who has given you nothing but trouble since the day that you met him? How much will you sacrifice for someone who has said nothing but cruel and nasty things about you? Certainly, we are not inclined to do anything for an enemy. How do you react when someone who has treated you badly has something bad happen to him? What is going through your mind as he is experiencing hurt and tragedy. Perhaps we could talk about how what happened was horrible. We think about it for a minute and move on. Or perhaps we could even gloat a bit at the situation and say, "He had it coming, he got everything that he deserved." Help him after what he did to me, no way!

Yet, today Jesus tells us a teacher of the Law that to keep the Law perfectly, one must do anything for an enemy. Jesus tells the familiar parable of the Good Samaritan. A man fell into the hands of robbers and the man was lying there helpless about to die and there was nothing that he could do to save himself. Two strangers, a priest and a Levite, walked by. Perhaps they wanted to help but the road to Jerusalem to Jericho where this robbery took place was full of bandits and robbers. This rescue mission would just be too risky. They could get killed themselves. They thought of themselves first and did nothing for a stranger.

Next, a Samaritan passes by. The Samaritan is not the stranger, as we have often been led to believe, the Samaritan is the enemy. Good Samaritan would have been the ultimate

contradiction in terms. Jews and Samaritans hated each other and this hatred goes back about five hundred years. To make a long story short, the Samaritans created many obstacles to the Jews rebuilding the temple when the Jews returned from exile. Jews and Samaritans hated each other and this hatred was passed on from generation to generation. Do we not do the same today. Have we taught those who come after us to not like certain groups of people for whatever reason? This allows us to judge people when we do not even know them.

The Samaritan could have seen the Jew lying there and said to himself, "He had it coming. Anyone with half a brain knows that you do not travel on the road from Jerusalem to Jericho. Everyone knows how dangerous that it is. He did a stupid thing and now he is paying for it. Besides it is too dangerous. I could get killed. I have to call off the rescue mission because it is just too dangerous." But the Samaritan did not do that. He risked life and limb to save an enemy. He gave the life-saving treatment, took him out of the danger zone and took him to an inn, a place of safety.

The way that the Good Samaritan treated the man who fell into the hands of robbers is the same way that Jesus treats us. We have made foolish decisions that leave us spiritually dead. That means that we are in a position that we can't afford to be in and there is nothing that we can do to change our situation. And yes, we had it coming. God gave us Laws to keep us from hurting ourselves and each other. God gave us Laws so we could live the life that distinguishes us as God's people. But we have not treated God or those whom God loves kindly. We have been nothing but trouble for God since the day that He created us. We have not acted in such a way that we deserve His help and mercy. Jesus could have looked at our situation, turned the other way, looking out for His own interests and safety and said "He had it coming. He is getting exactly what he deserves."

But Jesus did not do that. We are lying there spiritually dead and Jesus comes to the rescue. And yes, Jesus put us ahead of Himself. To rescue us from sin is a risky venture. It did not mean that Jesus might get killed. To rescue us from sin Jesus would and must be killed. But Jesus did what needed to be done to rescue us from death and bring us to a place of life and safety. Jesus died on the cross and rose again from the dead. The cross makes it clear that Jesus will do anything for an enemy. St. Paul reminds us that, "For a good man someone might dare to die. But God demonstrates His love for us in this: that while we were still yet sinners, Christ died for us." Yes, Jesus will do anything for an enemy. Jesus does whatever it takes so that you may have eternal life. While we were still yet sinners, Christ died for us. This changes us from being enemies to being friends with God and of course, Jesus will do anything for a friend that is good for His friends.

The Samaritan rescued the man from death and brought him to an inn, a place of life and safety. That was certainly more than fair, more than enough, but the Samaritan went above and beyond even that. He paid for all the man's expenses. I wonder if the man every paid the Samaritan back. Would the Samaritan demanded payment or would he have said, "You don't owe me anything"?

Jesus has done so much for us and the good news is that we don't owe Him anything. Salvation and eternal life are Jesus' free gifts to us that He wants us to have. Yet, we do want to respond in

faith to what Jesus has done for us. We give Him our thanks and praise. The redemption that we have in Jesus Christ is the basis for the church's praise. We also want to go to the limit for everyone whether they be friends, strangers and yes, even our enemies. We will love our neighbor by treating him according to the Ten Commandments.

But we have not always been this way. We still have that bitterness that keeps us from doing anything for an enemy. And so we repent of our sin but then hear how Jesus does anything for an enemy. He put our lives ahead of His and He died on the cross and rose again. Now we go from being enemies to friends with God. And then we will enjoy the safety of eternal life in heaven.

In Jesus' name. Amen.