

September 16, 2018

## ***"He who has ears, let him hear..."***

***"Which of these three do you think was a neighbor to the man who fell into the hands of robbers?" Luke 10:25-27***

***"Then the King will say to those on his right, 'Come, you who are blessed by my Father: take your inheritance, the kingdom prepared for you since the creation of the world. For I was hungry and you gave me something to eat, I was thirsty and you gave me something to drink, I was a stranger and you invited me in, I needed clothes and you clothed me, I was sick and you looked after me, I was in prison and you came and visited me.' Then the righteous will answer him, 'Lord, when did we see you hungry and feed you, or thirsty..." Matthew 25:31-40***

Last week we talked about how important it is for each of us who follow Jesus to use the talents and abilities and all the blessings that we have received from our God to do good. Sometimes we struggle, I think, with just what good it is we should be doing. God wants his children to do good but where and how and when?

I think a lot of us make this question a whole lot more complex than it really is. We wonder if God is calling us to serve the starving in some third world country, or to bring the gospel to some forgotten outpost in the middle of nowhere. But doing good is much easier and, I believe, much nearer than those callings might be.

A lot of our service is not just defined by what we do, but by our attitude about doing it. In his well-known parable of the "Good Samaritan" in Luke 10, Jesus talks about this challenge. A man traveling from Jerusalem to Jerich was attacked, beaten and robbed and left by the side of that busy road. Three different people came on the scene, but reacted in very different ways to the needs of this poor man.

The first to come by was a Priest who was more than likely on his way home after serving in the Temple in Jerusalem. He would have been recognized as a holy and upright man anywhere. But upon seeing this poor victim he crossed to the other side of the road and walked on by.

The second man who passed was a Levite, also probably on his way home after serving in the Temple. Like the Priest, the Levite would have been considered a very spiritual man, and, like the Priest, he walked on by this poor victim. The third man who came by was a Samaritan. He would have been widely condemned by nearly everyone in Jesus' day as a half-breed dog. But this despised and rejected man stops to render aid to this poor victim.



Jesus asks after this parable, ***"Which of these three was a neighbor...?"*** In this parable our Lord is, I think, teaching us to understand that being a neighbor, that doing good, is first about being willing to step up, to go the right thing. We are neighbor because we do neighbor.

In the final parable in Matthew 25 which we have been studying for a couple of weeks now, Jesus talks about the judgment scene when we will stand before God to give an account as Paul talks about in his letter to Rome. In this parable Jesus teaches us that judgment will be based on what we have done and it will involve the simple opportunities to do good which are right in front of us.

***"I was hungry and you gave me something to eat..."*** In this parable our Lord wants us, I believe, to understand that most good works are right there in front of us and only involve our

willingness to do the right thing. The question that both those on the right and on the left ask is enlightening. They all ask, "*When did we see...?*"

Using our talents and abilities and our blessings as God wants us to use them really only requires us to be open to the opportunities to serve that we see right in front of us. We do not have to travel around the world to do good. We can and must do good right here and right now.

All doing good really requires is that we are willing to become aware of the needs of those around us and that we are willing to step up and do the right thing. That really is what God wants of us and that really is, Jesus would teach, what he will ultimately hold us accountable for.

