

TV Homily -15th Sunday in Ordinary Time - Year C 2007 - Lk 10:25-37

1. Back in the 1960s at the Lutheran Theological Seminary in Gettysburg, PA, a young seminarian had the task of preaching at the daily chapel service.
 - a. His text was the gospel of the Good Samaritan.
 - b. He read the gospel, paused and then re-read the gospel changing only one word.
 - i. Where ever the gospel read “Samaritan” - the seminarian substituted the word “Negro”.
 - ii. Now this was the 1960s! After the sermon the faculty was angry at him; but not only because he had mixed politics and religion.
 - (1) But also because as seminary professors they knew who the Samaritans were.
2. When we hear the word “SAMARITAN” we normally think of hospitals and religious orders; we think of people helping people in their hour of need.
 - a. But that word had a somewhat different meaning in Jesus’ day.
3. The Samaritans were a people who lives in the north of Jesus’ land;
 - a. They were the leftovers off the ten lost tribes of Israel intermarried with colonists brought in by the waves of Assyrian and Babylonian conquest.
 - b. They practiced a kind of “outta-town” Judaism; with their own customs, laws, temple, and sacrifices.
 - c. They considered themselves to be Jewish, but for Jesus’ own people they were unclean and dangerous.
 - i. For they did not follow the law. In fact for them to speak of a “good” Samaritan would have been a contradiction in terms.
4. Which is what made their inclusion in Jesus’ parable of the Good Samaritan so explosive.
 - a. For Jesus used this parable to answer a question about God’s Law.
 - b. Jesus had just affirmed that the heart of that Law was not any purity regulation or commandment, but the commandment to love; love God and love neighbor.
 - i. And then tells a story where a man, left half-dead by robbers is shunned by a priest and a Levite; but is cared for by of all people, a Samaritan.
5. ***Who was that victim’s neighbor?*** Jesus asked the people that day he first told the story of the “Good Samaritan”
 - a. For in a world where faithfulness meant following God’s law as perfectly as possible;
 - i. Jesus was saying that this unclean outsider, understood the heart of the law better than its official representatives;
 - (1) precisely because of the mercy he showed that half dead victim.
6. ***Who was that victim’s neighbor?*** Jesus asked those fresh faced seminarians that day when a young seminarian retold that story with one tiny difference.
 - a. I do not know whether that seminarian was ever ordained

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- i. But the fact that story was remembered and told to me almost 20 years later by a faculty member at Gettysburg
 - ii. who was present when it happened
 - iii. shows that for this faculty member at least
 - (1) that seminarian understood the heart of this parable better than his teachers.
7. ***Who was that victim's neighbor?*** That might be the question Jesus asked that day; but ultimately that is not the question he asks his listeners; that is not the question he asks us.
 - a. Who is OUR neighbor? That the question he asks. And with the parable of the Good Samaritan he suggests the answer:
 - i. and that is anyone who shows mercy, no matter
 - (a) who they are,
 - (b) what color their skin is,
 - (c) when they were born
 - (d) where they live
 - (e) how they worship
 - (f) or why they are here with us now
 - (g) Is neighbor to you and me.
 - b. Suppose it was your turn to preach that sermon that day; who would your neighbor be?