STUDY GUIDE & DAILY READINGS

Sunday, January 25, 2009

Resolutions that Matter (Week 3 of 4)

HAND

Luke 10:25-37

On one occasion an expert in the law stood up to test Jesus. "Teacher," he asked, "what must I do to inherit eternal life?"

"What is written in the Law?" he replied. "How do you read it?"

He answered: "'Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your strength and with all your mind; and, 'Love your neighbor as yourself.'"

"You have answered correctly," Jesus replied. "Do this and you will live."

But he wanted to justify himself, so he asked Jesus, "And who is my neighbor?"

In reply Jesus said: "A man was going down from Jerusalem to Jericho, when he fell into the hands of robbers. They stripped him of his clothes, beat him and went away, leaving him half dead. A priest happened to be going down the same road, and when he saw the man, he passed by on the other side. So too, a Levite, when he came to the place and saw him, passed by on the other side. But a Samaritan, as he traveled, came where the man was; and when he saw him, he took pity on him. He went to him and bandaged his wounds, pouring on oil and wine. Then he put the man on his own donkey, took him to an inn and took care of him. The next day he took out two silver coins and gave them to the innkeeper. 'Look after him,' he said, 'and when I return, I will reimburse you for any extra expense you may have.'

"Which of these three do you think was a neighbor to the man who fell into the hands of robbers?" The expert in the law replied, "The one who had mercy on him." Jesus told him, "Go and do likewise." *The Word from the Bible, the Amplified Bible*

The Good Samaritan

In order to justify himself, to find some way to escape the demands of the law, the lawyer raises a question, "Who is my neighbor?" In response to this question Jesus tell the story that is known as the "Good Samaritan."

Matthew, Mark and John do not include this story in their gospels. Yet this story unique to Luke has had great impact on the church. In every era of the church's history this story has guided our outreach to others.

The Parable

The road from Jerusalem to Jericho was a dangerous road. In the first century it was known for the bands of robbers who roamed the hills surrounding the area. Despite the danger, the man in the parable travels alone and consequently is robbed, beaten and left beside the road to die.

First a priest and then a Levite come along the road and do nothing to help the man. In the words of Jesus, they "passed by on the other side." These two represent the religious leaders of the Jews. Jericho was the home of many priestly families. Just why they refused to help the man in need was unclear. Perhaps they had just completed their duty in the Temple and were anxious to get home. Maybe they feared that the man was part of a trap. Possibly they were reluctant to associate with the lowly "people of the land." At the very least, they feared contamination from the dead that would keep them from their religious duties until they went through the rites of purification.

At this point in the story the Jewish listeners might have expected a layman to stop to give aid. The introduction of a Samaritan as the one who offers aid is shocking. Samaritans represented racial impurity and religious heresy.

The fact that the aid of the Samaritan was extravagant would have even been more inflammatory to the Jewish listener. Without fear of contamination or exposure to the robbers, this stranger treated the wounds, brought the unfortunate to the nearby inn, and left enough money to care for him. Oil and wine were believed to have curative and antiseptic value. Two denarii represented about two days' wages.

Jesus asked, “Which of these … proved neighbor to the man who fell among the robbers?” The lawyer’s question, “Who is my neighbor?” Now becomes an imperative for extravagant action for those in need. Loving neighbor as self.

Notice how each Character in the Parable uses their Hands

The Robber — His hand was first clinched in a fist and then formed to take what was not his. We are not told what his motivation was, but we can assume that he has no regard for human life. The robber takes what is not his, establishing himself as one who considers himself outside the care of the community. Everything within his grasp was fair game for him regardless the cost to others or himself.

The Priest and Levite — The Priest were those who performed the religious rites of the Temple. In Jesus day, this priest was probably the part of the Sadducee sect. The Levite tribe was responsible for the care of the Temple and the Temple priest. These responsibilities included singing Psalms during Temple services, performing construction and maintenance for the Temple, serving as guards, and performing other services for the priest as needed.

Their hands were clinched tight around their own possessions and reputation. Afraid that they might loose what they had, any compassion was set aside. The following of the law and their position of authority blinded them from the opportunity of opening their hands to someone in need.

The Samaritan – The Samaritans were despised by the Jews. In most cases, they followed Jewish law and rituals, but were not considered ritually or ethnically clean. Since the days of the return from exile, Samaritans had been rejected by the “pure” Hebrews because of their cooperation with the conquering armies of Babylon and Assyria. Here Jesus make the point to his “Jewish” listeners that following the law of love is different from the laws of ritual and practice.
The Samaritan’s hands were open offering help to the one in need. Without regard to his own safety he reached out to offer what was considered extravagant help.

Right now we all can offer a helping hand in one of the following ways:

Make a difference somewhere by choosing to offer your hands to help others in the name of Christ. Make a resolution that matters.

…with a LOCAL focus:

- The 5th Annual Trietsch Missions Clean Sweeps is going on now. Bring any craft or sewing materials (fabric, threads, crafting supplies) to the Connection Center. The Baptism Quilters will sort the donations for anything useful to Trietsch ministries (quilters, croppers, TEC, etc.) On Feb. 15, any leftovers are up for grabs, and then anything else will be donated to CCA.
- Christian Community Action (CCA) will have a truck parked on our campus on Sunday, February 8, to receive donations of non-perishable food items for their food pantry, and clothing, household goods and furniture for their re-sale stores.
- Carter BloodCare will have a mobile unit parked on our campus on April 19.

…with a REGIONAL focus:

- Christ’s Foundry Fellowship is a North Texas UMC Conference-sponsored outreach ministry to the Hispanic population in North Dallas. Andrew Forrest, an associate pastor with Christ’s Foundry, is available in the Connection Center today to show how Trietsch can be involved.
- Feed the Homeless on Easter. We will be assisting Big Heart Ministries of South Dallas, as we did at Thanksgiving and Christmas, outside Dallas City Hall.
- Habitat for Humanity is currently building homes in Denton and Sanger. Our contact is Roger Anderson (940-231-5825), who can direct your interest in assisting in this ministry.

…with a GLOBAL focus:

- Youth Mission Trips to Mexico and inner-city Dallas. Trietsch's senior high and junior high students give their spring break to help others. We can help fund these ministries by visiting the Youth table in the Connection Center during the month of February.
- Run a Race/Build a Church is a program that encourages runners to solicit sponsors, with proceeds going to building a new church in Mozambique, Africa.
- Jesus in Tennis Shoes is an opportunity for elementary-age children to draw pictures of Jesus in tennis shoes. While our adults will be running to raise funds for a new church in Africa, these pictures will be sold to our church family to include our children in the effort.
- Mozambique, Africa where Trietsch supports ministries with youth outreach, economic development, medical ministries, and leadership training. You can get involved by SUPPORTING:
    - The Mark Schultz Concert for Mozambique at Trietsch on Saturday, April 4.
    - Trietsch's Annual Silent auction will be held April 19 through May 3.
    - Spend three weeks in Africa on one of our Mozambique summer work teams.

Daily Readings

Please note: We begin the year by focusing our attention on the gospel of Mark. For the next several weeks we will move carefully through Mark's gospel following the message and story of Jesus the Christ. This is week three of our reading from Mark.

Monday, January 26 —***Read Mark 5:1-20***. In this passage Mark again tells a story of Jesus authority over the spirit world. Jesus and his disciples have traveled to the region of the Gerasenes. Jesus finds a man so out of his mind he is restrained by chains to keep him from harming himself. The man is possessed by a legion (1,000) of demons. In a moment Jesus cast out them out and leaves the man sane. As you read this story of freedom offer up to God the things that are holding you back. In what ways do you find your life chained?

Tuesday, January 27 — ***Read Mark 5:21-43.*** Now Mark wants us to know that Jesus is no ordinary miracle worker. While traveling to help a sick child, Jesus is delayed by another suffering soul. In the delay he learns that the child has died. Jesus responds, ***"Don't be afraid; just believe."*** In arriving at the home of this Jewish leader, Jesus calls the little girl back to life. Like yesterday, are there areas of your life that are dead? Do you need the life giving presence of Christ to bring new life to you?

Wednesday, January 28 — ***Read Mark 6:1-29.*** In this section Mark share three quick, unrelated stories – the rejection of those in his home town, the sending out of the disciples, and the beheading of John the Baptist. Mark wants us to know that Jesus is the Christ – John the Baptist is not the Christ. Nothing can stop the grace, love and power of Christ – not the ruler Herod and not the unfaithful of his home town. This power he gives to those who follow him. Are you ready to receive the power of Christ in your life?

Thursday, January 29 — ***Read Mark 6:30-44.*** When Jesus feeds the 5,000, he shows both his compassion for those who follow him and his authority to meet our every need. In our culture of fear and anxiety we are starving for meaning. Jesus not only offers bread for these who are hungry, but a spiritual bread that feeds our soul. Can you open your heart to let the Christ feed your inner hungers?

Friday, January 30 — ***Read Mark 6:45-56.*** In calming the seas, Jesus seems to confuse his disciples. They are looking for miracles of this world. They bring the sick and the hungry to Jesus. They are yet to realize the eternal gift that Jesus brings as the Son of God. Can you look beyond your needs in this world to accept the eternal gift that Christ brings? What do you need to release to accept that gift?