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Luke 10:25-37

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The first thought that went through his mind was simply,

- ‘I’m saved.’

- Help had arrived.

- I’m saved.

- Through swollen eyes,

- the half dead man

- saw someone - a priest he thought -

- coming down the road.

- Surely this priest would be his salvation. - -

- His joy,

- however,

- quickly turned to bitter disappointment -

- as this priest passed by as if he hadn’t seen him.

- Where’s he going?

- Why isn’t he stopping?

- Why isn’t he walking toward me?

- If he could have cried out,

- ‘Wait! - Stop! - Help!’,

- he would have screamed at the top of his lungs, -

- but he was too weak to manage much more than a whisper

- and then in an instant,

- the priest was gone. - -

- The moment of hope

- was replaced by a tidal wave of fear. -

- He wasn't going to make it after all. - -

- Then, just when he was about to give up, -

- he saw another person approaching -

- a Levite, it seemed. -

- Surely, the Levite would stop to help, -

- but alas -

- he too moved on past

- with barely a glance

- in his direction. - -

- Hopelessness began to set in. -

- 'Why? Why weren't they helping?'

- He knew somewhere in the back of his mind -

- that there were reasons. -

- Perhaps they were in a hurry to get home. -

- Perhaps they didn't want to become unclean.

- Perhaps they didn't associate with folks

- like him.

- Perhaps they were worried about being robbed

- themselves. -

- Certainly they must have had their reasons, -

- but that didn't change the fact

- that he needed help -

- and they not only didn't help,

- but actually went out of their way
- to avoid helping - -
- never even speaking a word.

- They may have claimed to be people of faith,
- but a lot of good it was doing him now, -
- in his moment of need. - -
- These two were definitely not putting their faith into action.

- As he lay there dying, -
- he glimpsed another man approaching, -
- but he
- didn't even dare to hope that this stranger might help. - -
- As he approached, however, -
- he didn't seem to be moving away. -
- If anything,
- he seemed to be moving closer. -
- Most likely he was just trying to get a better look -
- to see how bad things were -
- before heading on his way. - -

- But then it happened, -
- this stranger leaned down, -
- compassion filling his face. -
- This stranger reached out -
- said something about help -
- and started tending to his injuries. -
- This stranger -

- was bandaging his wounds

- and before he knew it,

- these strong, gentle hands were lifting the half-dead man

- onto an animal. -

- The rest of the day was a kind of a blur. -

- At some point they reached an Inn. -

- He was given a room and cared for. -

- It was only later that the wounded man learned -

- that it was a Samaritan - who had helped him. -

- Truthfully, he hadn't thought much of Samaritans before that day. -

- Samaritans were different -

- different customs -

- different beliefs,

- different homeland.

- In the past, he might not have given a Samaritan the time of day, - -

- but now he was going to have to reconsider that opinion -

- for this Samaritan proved to be full of compassion, -

- generous, and kind. -

- Without this Samaritan, -

- he would have never made it off the road. -

- He couldn't have asked for a better neighbor. -

- Maybe he should get to know a little more

- about these Samaritans. - - -

- Now we don't know hear any more about the Samaritan

- or the fully-healed man in this parable.

- Jesus has made his point. -

- Despite the fact that Jesus poses a questions,

- it is obvious -

- which of these three travelers

- was the neighbor

- in the story. -

- It is obvious

- which of these three travelers -

- Loved the Lord with all their heart

- and their neighbor as themselves. - -

- The Samaritan -

- saw a person in need and took action to provide assistance.

- The Samaritan

- didn't seem to worry about the technicalities of the law, -

- about ritual cleanliness, -

- about good order,

- about whether this was a close neighbor or hated enemy. - -

- The Samaritan embodied the spirit of the law, -

- sharing love and mercy, - -

- caring for a neighbor in a time of need. - -

- And in the process,

- the story of this Good Samaritan helps us to discover one component

- of a faithful life, - -

- putting what you believe into action. - -

- As we see when we imagine the story

- through the eyes of the half-dead man, -
- the actions of the travelers make a statement about what is important to them. -
- Did you notice,
- none of the travelers actually says a word in Jesus' parable, -
- but their actions speak volumes about what they believe. - -
- Without a word, -
- the first two travelers made it clear that their priorities
- were more important than the dying man.
- Without a word,
- this Samaritan witnessed to what it meant to love your neighbor. -
- Now most of us,
- won't encounter a dying person on a side of a road,
- at least I hope we won't, -
- but each of us
- can witness to what it means to be a follower of Jesus
- through the way we live our lives -
- just as this Good Samaritan did. - -
- We can
- witness to what it means to love your neighbor
- as God loves us -
- through the decisions we make -
- when we encounter the hurts and traumas
- that are far too often present in our world.

As we see in the story of the Good Samaritan,

- our faith and our life need to be fully integrated journeys,-

- not parallel roads -

- that never intersect. - -

- Our faith and life

- need to be fully integrated

- so that what we say is reflected in the way we live

- and the way we live is supported by what we say. - -

- For if we say

- we love our neighbor,

- but ignore them in a time of pain -

- then our words ring hollow.

- But if share Jesus' command to love our neighbor,

- and then we share compassion with someone in need, -

- we respond to a difficult situation with kindness and grace, -

- we let God's light shine through us, -

- then we speak loudly

- of God's desire to love and bless the whole world, -

- we speak loudly

- of God's abundant mercy, - -

- we speak loudly

- of God's compassion and caring. - -

- And in the process,

- we create the opportunity

- for God's word to be experienced and heard. - -

When we bring grace and forgiveness and radical welcome to our interactions in the world,

- we create the opportunity

- for someone to discover what a difference God's presence can make

- in one's daily life.

When we bring an openness to listen and a willingness to see the harm caused to others,

- we create the opportunity

- for God's grace, -

- God's unconditional love, mercy and forgiveness, -

- to bring healing and wholeness to a broken, half-dead life.

- For the good news we know as people of God is that

- while we were still half-dead,

- Jesus, our Good Samaritan,

- reached out to us

- and saved us, - -

- giving us the promise of eternal life with God, -

- and providing us with the help we need to get healthy

- and get back on the road of life,

- and inviting us to join in God's mission to love and bless the whole world

- by come near to those who are hurting

- to share the generous, healing love of God

- with all those

- who feel beaten up by our world.