

The Root of the Gospel is Mercy

July 10, 2016 - Fifteenth Week of Ordinary Time – Luke 10:25-37

As we move into the fifteenth week of Ordinary Time, we hear the story of the Good Samaritan. This “feel good story” is about one enemy caring for his adversary. It makes us feel warm and fuzzy. However, it is important to note that at the root of this story, as any other gospel story, is the call, to all of us, to actions of mercy. It’s not about feeling good. It’s about doing the right thing.

On a recent trip to Delaware to visit my daughter, we encountered a difficult situation. As we turned into the parking lot of the grocery store, our lane was blocked by what appeared to be two large sacks of garbage. Cars were driving around the “pile” in the lot. I suddenly realized that this was not garbage. It was a human being lying in a very vulnerable position in traffic. I wasn’t sure if the person was dead or alive. I called 911.

As cars drove around this person, and a few people looked at him from a distance, I decided to get out of the car to go see what was wrong. Lying face up was a gentleman, probably my age, disheveled and obviously under the influence of alcohol or drugs. I bent over and asked him his name. He said to me, “I’m Fred.”

Fred and I have been on different tracks in life. I have had incredible privilege, loving parents, education, a loving husband, children and, now, grandchildren. God has blessed me. I am grateful. I don’t know Fred’s story. I can only imagine that whatever his life story, he was at this moment in time, sad and broken and alone.

One woman kept yelling at me to get away from him. She said that he was crazy and that he might scratch me or hurt me. Others stood at a distance watching. People drove right past us and ignored the situation.

The great thing that happened was that I was joined by a man in a business suit, a nurse just heading into her shift at work and one of the store employees who all stopped to help. We were all genuinely concerned about Fred. At one point, as we waited for the emergency responders, Fred looked up at all of us around him and said, “I love you guys.” The man in the business suit said, “We love you, too, Fred.” I wonder how long it had been since Fred had heard those words?

Jesus says in the gospel today, **“You shall love the Lord, your God, with all your heart, and with all your being, with all your strength, and with all your mind, and your neighbor as yourself.”** The scholar then asks Jesus, **“And who is my neighbor?”**

I think his name is Fred.

Blessings!


Sue Schettler