

Saint Thomas of the Air Church
Trinity XIII
September 6, 2020
rmcneely+

Love thy Neighbor as Thyself

Our Nation celebrates labor day this weekend.
Perhaps subdued this year by
 medical orders
and smoke from the fires in Northern California,
it will be for some a conclusion of this extraordinary Summer
 A short trip to the mountains or the shore
 A favorite recreation
 Camping, a family barbecue
 A picnic
 Or just a day off from work

For some it will be a reminder of the loss of a job
 The desperate search for work
 The worry and anxiety
 about putting food on the table
 and a roof overhead.
 How to exist until businesses can return
 to what they were last Spring.

For some, anxiety about re-opening a business
 And concern for workers who had to be laid off.

For Christians, it is a reminder that mankind once lived free of
labor
 With God
 In a garden of plenty

The Genesis story of the Garden of Eden
 And the Fall
 Our labor was the consequence
 of the original sin of Adam and Eve

For Anglicans labor day is a reminder
 That our work is a blessing from God
 Our careers, professions, trades and our labor
 Not only provides our necessities
 But our labor allows our self-reliance, self-determination
 Freedom from the tyranny of poverty
 Freedom from the oppression of fear and uncertainty
 Freedom to be the masters of our own fate
 And freedom
 to become the people God created us to be.

For many our labor is a source of personal pride
 In a job well done
 An opportunity to express the best that we can be.
 For a treasured few our work is occasionally an opportunity to
 serve others.

For us here at St Thomas of the Air Church
 The labor day message this year
 Is the collect praying for laudable service to God
 Is the Epistle message from St Paul
 mentioning the promise of God to Abraham
 Is the Gospel gift of Jesus' parable of the Good Samaritan.
 And we are focused upon service to others
 Our Good Works
 Our labor,
 our Works of sacrifice

to the fulfillment of God's will in our lives.
 What does it mean to love our neighbor as ourselves?
 What does it mean to do unto others as we would have them to
 unto us?

Or in the British shorthand: "To Do as done by"?
 In the Gospel account a lawyer
 After reciting the summary of the law of Moses

The commandment from Jesus
 Thou shalt love thy neighbor as thy self;
 As any good lawyer, he seeks a more precise definition
 Or interpretation of the term, "neighbor":
 "who is my neighbor?"

who is to be the object of my good works?
 Jesus responds with this marvelous parable of the Good Samaritan
 (perhaps the best known of His @ 30 parables);
 And Jesus cleverly turns the question around;

He shifts the focus from "who shall receive my good works"
 who shall be the object of my
 Christian Love
 To: the person who is he subject of neighborliness
 To the person who shows himself benevolent
 and loving to others.

The parable becomes far more powerful
 And hits home.

The focus shifts from who should be helped? (anyone in need)
 To: who has a duty to help others?
 Who is the laborer of Good Works?

The example Jesus selects as the hero of the parable
 The despised Samaritan
 Is shocking to the devout Jewish lawyer;

Perhaps bringing him shame for his racial bias against people of Samaria.

And cementing the point: we are all laborers in the work of God.

Good Works come in all shapes and sizes.

Some are huge

The anonymous donor who paid the student loans
Of thousands of college graduates.

The neighbor who cashed her life savings
to purchase a neighbor's home
that was being lost in foreclosure.
She succeeded in the purchase
and leased the home back to her neighbor
who would have otherwise been homeless.

Some are seemingly small;

- It was 1992 in South Florida.

Hurricane Andrew had decimated the area
A first aid worker was traveling through the rubble
To see if there were survivors who needed food and water
She came upon a collapsed house

In it a young couple was camping
It was all that was left of their home.

She asked if they needed supplies from her truck
They said they did not but to wait a minute
When they returned they produced two boxes of diapers

And baby food.

They said; give these to people who need it more than we do.

- Grandma lived independently but was frail and feeling her advanced years. She had one warm coat that had served well beyond its lifetime. She tediously had patched it over the years but it was beyond even that now.

She scrimped and saved enough for a new coat
And on the appointed day she was joined by her
granddaughter and they went to the local department store.
They found just the right thing within the budget and came
home with it.

A few weeks later, a single mother down the street had fallen
upon hard times and as Christmas approached, it was clear
that there would be no gifts for the three young girls.

Grandma would have none of it.

She took her new coat, cut it up
And sitting at her ancient sewing machine
Made three new kids' coats, three dolls and some doll
clothes and anonymously put them on the doorstep.

At Christmas Grandma went to church wearing her old
tattered coat.

And they said she was most resplendent person at the
Christmas service.

- Randa Ragland lives in Pinson, Alabama

One day she picked up a note left on her porch
In caustic terms, the note said that her home and yard was an
eyesore and that she owed it to the neighbors to make repairs
immediately.

Randa was heartbroken.

Her husband had lost his job

And their little boy had been diagnosed with stage 4 cancer

She was their sole caregiver and breadwinner.

There was just no money and no time

to care for the home and yard.

She was embarrassed and ashamed.

She could think of nothing else to do but to apologize and promise to make amends when things were better for the family. She wrote a letter to the neighborhood and put in on the local web site hoping some of the people would understand.

Well, a few days later

Dozens of people showed up in her front yard.

In a few days, they had painted the house

Mowed the lawn

Replanted the yard.

And the Ragland home was as pleasant and attractive as any in the neighborhood.

- A baby was born without a left hand.

As her grew up and went to school, tried to keep his arm in his pocket so as not to let anyone know.

Kids can be cruel and despite his efforts Jim became the butt of reticule and taunting.

He worked diligently to be able to do the things with one hand that other did with two.

But the one thing that still stopped him was tying his shoe.

Try as he might, he still needed his mother

Tie his shoes each morning.

She made bulky multiple knots so the shoes would stay tied throughout the day and little Jimmy would not need to draw attention to himself asking for help.

He was in third grade

And one morning his teacher, Donn Clarkson took him

To the corridor, away from the rest of the kids.

Teacher Clarkson had noticed Jimmy's plight

And after weeks of experimentation

Had come up with a technique of one handed shoe tying.
Jimmy learned it and never forgot the kindness of his third grade teacher.

Jimmy grew into a man.

Today you may know him

He received an Olympic Gold Medal for baseball

Spent years on professional baseball as a pitcher

He even pitched a no hitter.

He wrote a best seller about his experience and devoted a chapter to his third grade teacher; Donn Clarkson, whom he never forgot.

- It was 1892 at Stanford University.

A small group of young students were struggling to earn enough money to remain in school.

They came up with an idea.

They could sponsor a concert featuring a renowned musician

Being big thinkers, they approached a famous pianist and composer

Handsome young Ignacy Jan Paderewski of Poland.

They must have been surprised when he agreed to perform

But there was a condition:

The fee would be a minimum of \$2,000.

The boys were undaunted and went forward with the concert.

But when the receipts were counted the gate was only \$1,600.

They went ashamedly to Paderewski and handed him the full \$1600 promising him they would repay the remaining \$400 as soon as they could raise it.

Paderewski would have none of it.

He returned the money and said,

Pay your expenses from the money

Then pay yourselves 10% of the remainder

Any left over give to me.

All obligations were satisfied.

The boys did just that.

Ignacy Paderewski was the prime speaker for Polish independence after the war and was later made the Prime Minister of Poland.

There was a famine in Poland after the war and 1.5 million people were starving. There was no where else to turn.

Paderewski came to these United States and begged for a meeting with the young Director of the US Food and Relief Administration.

He was relieved to get an audience.

As the Prime Minister was ushered into the office,

The Director introduced himself and stopped Paderewski short

He said you may not remember me, but we met at Stanford some years ago

When you gave a benefit concert for some college men who could not honor their contract for your minimum fee.

Paderewski remembered the concert.

The Director said he was one of those young men.

Poland received the generosity of the United States and hundreds of thousands were saved.

But the story does not end there.

That young man who was Director of the US Food and Relief Administration

Worked hard

You may have heard of him.

His name was Herbert Hoover the 31st President of these United States.

So you see sometimes what begins as a small thing

Can effect the lives of millions.

So what small work will we do today, this week or this month

A Good Work

In fulfillment of the obligation Jesus describes today.

In fulfillment of the will of God

In our lives.