

Saint Thomas of the Air Church  
Trinity XIII  
September 3, 2023  
rmcneely+

Love thy Neighbor as Thyself

Our Nation celebrates labor day this weekend.

For some, it will be the conclusion of an 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 others 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 before the virus, the crime

and the ravages of inflation.

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 provide 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

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 do unto us?

In the Gospel account,  
 After reciting the summary of the law of Moses  
     And hearing the commandment from Jesus  
     “Thou shalt love thy neighbor as thy self”;  
 the lawyer 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;  
 And Jesus subtly turns the question around;  
     He shifts the focus  
         From; “who shall receive my good works”?  
         To: “who shall provide my good works?”

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 might 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 he 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.

Jim Abbott 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

If there is anything left over give it 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 encouraged 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 31<sup>st</sup> 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.



