

Saint Thomas of the Air Church
Trinity XIII
August 25, 2024
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Love thy Neighbor as Thyself

We resume the Trinity/Summer Survey of Essential Christian Doctrine this week with a challenge.

The Collect recites that God's only gift is that His faithful people give Him true and laudable service; and we pray that we may faithfully accomplish that service.

The Gospel offers the parable of the Good Samaritan.
And the lesson that we are to be that Good Samaritan
And take care of our neighbor.

Thoughts turn to Good Works in the service of God.
Unselfish efforts
With no expectancy of thanks,
Reward
Or favor.

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?

In the Gospel account,
After reciting the summary of the law of Moses;
"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 good works”?
 To: “who shall provide 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 her 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,
 He 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 in 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.

After the war, Ignacy Paderewski was the prime speaker for Polish independence

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 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?

We are not a large body

And cannot support a large staff or institution
devoted to charitable works.

However, you are large in heart.

Over the years I have come to you in appeal for a person or
an organization needing our help.

You have been kind and generous every time.

We recently formed the St Thomas Angels to care for the needs of
our own people.

They have served well.

Well, I think now is the time to bring that spirit forward.

I propose to appoint a small group of you to identify a cause or
group in need of our help

And to propose a means by which we can help.

Our collective time, treasure and talent

Focused in one way and on one cause

Can make a difference.

Can serve as a Good Samaritan

To some one of our neighbors in need.

Will you respond and accept the challenge

For true and laudable service to God and His people?

