



Sunday, November 13, 2011

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Luke 10: 25-37

In the Name of the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. Amen.

Well, now, brothers and sisters, this morning we have the incomparable Gospel parable of the Good Samaritan. Here is what the late Archbishop Dimitri of blessed memory had to say about this wonderful parable:

"The parable of the Good Samaritan...is considered by many people to be the greatest of all. We owe it to an encounter between our Lord and a certain lawyer (an expert in the Old Testament Law) who asks what he must do to inherit eternal life.

"Jesus asks him what he reads in the Law, and the lawyer answers correctly: 'Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart and with all thy soul, and with all thy strength, and with all thy mind; *and thy neighbor as thyself*'..."

Now, "it is generally known that the designation 'neighbor' in the Hebrew tradition was applied only to those among the covenanted people, the Jews, who were of the same race and faith. It was also extended to include those who were becoming Jews. But some among the Jews felt that the term should be extended to all who were created in God's image, to all mankind..."

"We should also point out that our Lord demonstrated His adherence to the Law in His answer [to the lawyer]...In other words, if he did indeed keep the two greatest commandments, he could inherit eternal life. But there remained the question of the neighbor, and the Lord told [this] parable precisely in order to define this controversial term. He made it clear that 'neighbor' had no such formal restricted meaning as 'one's own people,' in racial, ethnic, or religious terms. There is *no one* to whom the obligation to minister out of love does not apply.



"The story of the parable is well-known: a man going down to Jericho from Jerusalem was beaten and robbed and left half dead. Three people passed by that way—a priest, a Levite, and a Samaritan. Only the Samaritan stopped." And we know the rest of that famous story. But "Jesus' question at the end of the parable deserves special mention: 'Which now of these three, thinkest thou, was neighbor unto him that fell among the thieves? And he said, He that showed mercy on him. Then said Jesus unto him, Go, and do thou likewise.' [So] the Lord defines 'neighbor' not only as the human object of one's loving care, but also as the person who out of love deals compassionately with someone in need.

"When the Lord says, 'Go, and thou likewise,' He is telling the lawyer to be a 'neighbor' to anyone he encounters, especially anyone who needs his mercy and compassion, *without regard for who he is, without judging whether he deserves such*. The emphasis is as much on the attitude and the act of *being* a neighbor as it is on seeing others as neighbors. If we love God with all our being, every human being becomes our neighbor, and we are to neighbors to all."

This, you see, is the deeper meaning of this parable, one that is often overlooked, and it is with this thought, this main point, that I leave us today, adding, however, that in the Great Canon of Repentance, chanted by the Church during the First Week of Great Lent, we are called upon to also identify ourselves with the unfortunate traveler:

"I am the man who fell among thieves, even my own thoughts; they have covered all my body with wounds, and I lie beaten and bruised. But come to me, O Christ my Savior, and heal me."

And this is why, in icons of this parable, the Good Samaritan is himself our Lord Jesus Christ!

In the Name of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit. Amen.