

Tension
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While I am not naive enough to think the current moment in time is the tensest time in human history, the current moment feels like the tensest of my life. The combination of political, cultural, and economic unrest, along with tragedy after tragedy after tragedy leaves us standing at a moment in time where we all feel as if we are balancing on a tight rope that happens to be frayed at both ends. Events that seemingly would have united our nation in the past, now seem to only further divide, to further entrench lines drawn in the sand.

What is seemingly missing from the current moment is mercy. And this passage from Scripture couldn't be more timely. A certain lawyer seemingly comes to put Christ to the test. "Teacher, what shall I do to inherit eternal life?" (Luke 10:25) Jesus turns the question around to the lawyer, "What is written in the Law? How do you read it?" (v. 26) And as a true scholar of the Torah, the lawyer goes right to Deuteronomy 6:5 - "You shall love the LORD your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your might."

Jesus affirms the lawyer's answer and follows with "do this, and you will live." (Luke 10:28) Seemingly, the lawyer realizes what you and I realize: we can't do this. And so the lawyer looks to make the task easier by limiting the scope of the Law. "And who is my neighbor?" (v. 29)

Jesus never minimizes, He never limits the scope. He goes on to tell a story. A story which is really about Himself. Christ tells the Parable of the Good Samaritan. You know the story, a guy on a journey gets roughed up on the side of the road, near the point of death. A priest and a Levite both walk by, going as far away on the road as they could so as to avoid helping the man. But the Samaritan walking by saw the bloodied man, and had compassion on him, cleaned him up, took him to an innkeeper, and promised to cover all of the man's costs when He comes back.

And so the conversation concludes with Jesus asking the lawyer who was a neighbor to the man on the side of the road? "The one who showed him mercy." (v. 37) And Jesus responds, "You go, and do likewise."

Rev. Dr. Arthur Just puts it this way at the end of his commentary on this passage: Forever in the church's catechesis, the parable of the Good Samaritan would stand as a reminder of the Christological character of the mercy toward all that marks the true church's life.

I know you get it, this is the story of you and Jesus. You are the one bloodied and beat up on the side of the road and Jesus is the Samaritan. He stops and cleans you and all of your sins up. And when He rose from the dead, He came back and paid all your debts. The comfort here is immense to the Christian.

Jesus moves us from ones trying to justify ourselves to ones who have been justified by Him. We know that we cannot love our neighbors perfectly. But, being justified by Christ, we strive to mimic Him with our lives to show mercy to others, to 'go and do likewise.'

I know that it is not easy, but in our current tension-filled moment, recognize that the Good Samaritan has come and set you free. He touched you with His good gifts, He justified you, and He set you apart to see the world in love. And as you go, noticing the trenches and the tension, show mercy, not motivated by the law, but motivated by Christ's love. For it is always, and ever, for you.