

*Lord, give us your sight to see those who hurt; give us your heart to love them. Amen.*

Jesus was being interrogated by a lawyer;  
no surprise he was looking for a loophole.  
Having established that he knows not only the ten commandments,  
but the higher command to love God with all his heart, soul and mind,  
and his neighbor as himself, he now wants to know: "So who's my neighbor?"  
"How can I narrow this thing down? It can't be everybody in the world, can it?"

And Jesus doesn't give him an easy answer. Jesus doesn't tell him who his neighbor is –  
instead Jesus tells him a story, and then asks,  
"So who in this story WAS a good neighbor?"  
"How good a neighbor are you, buddy?" The onus of being a neighbor is on us.

This parable, like all of them, is very subversive. Because the hero,  
the one held up as righteous, is not either of the religious characters presented.  
No, it's someone Jesus' listeners would have looked down on, reviled.  
Think of some sort of person you tend to loathe or disparage – fill in that blank.  
Jesus listeners must have been troubled. "This is the guy is you think is righteous?  
Maybe we have to rethink what righteous is. Maybe it's not about how  
carefully we observe the commandments... maybe it's how we live the heart  
of those commandments and show mercy to God's people.  
Maybe we have to replace a spirit of legalism with a spirit of mercy."

The priest and the Levite were law-followers, focused on keeping the rules.  
They had religious obligations to keep, and they had to stay ritually pure in order  
to keep them. Touching a dead person would have made them unclean –  
and for all they knew, the guy was dead. Why risk it by stopping to check it out?  
Why risk being attacked by bandits themselves on this dangerous road?  
They operated out of legalism and fear.

The Samaritan man – and let's say, the man whose ethnic identity was Samaritan;  
That wasn't his only attribute, any more than mine is being white or of Jewish  
ancestry or opinionated; we're all much more than the labels we're given –  
this man operated out of a spirit of mercy and hospitality.  
Hospitality involves attention to the other,  
and a willingness to do what it takes to make them comfortable.  
This man had places to be, goods to take to market in Jericho –  
it was his own wine and oil he used to dress the man's wounds.

He had a schedule to keep, a life to preserve – putting the man on his mule and walking slowed him down and put him at risk of being attacked himself. But he stopped, he investigated, he tended wounds, he got the man to safety.

This is the spirit with which we are invited to operate as God's people at Christ Church in Wayside/La Plata. To look around; to notice when someone is in pain even if they don't say it. Which means knowing each other better.

To come alongside, and find out; to bind wounds and carry each other.

The hero in Jesus' story got the man to an inn, paid ahead for his care, promised to check back, cover expenses. He went beyond the immediate, caring for the whole person.

This is the spirit of radical hospitality we're invited to offer in Jesus' name – to welcome and give, no matter how much it costs us.

Not only for those who come in, even for those outside these walls, who are lying by the road emotionally if not physically.

We have plenty of people in Charles County lying by our roads, even working families, because there isn't enough housing they can afford to live in.

Being a good neighbor means going beyond the immediate needs to total hospitality.

The word "hospitality" contains the word "hospital." Radical hospitality means focusing our attention on the people around us and loving them into wholeness.

Good Lord, that's a big job! Overwhelming. Happily, we do it one person at a time, one person as we encounter them, see them, investigate and love into wholeness.

The man in Jesus' story didn't help everyone, just that one. But he restored him.

He operated out of courage and love, not hatred and fear.

Jesus told this story to guide his followers as people in this world.

It is also meant to guide us as a congregation, in how we operate, and as a nation.

Our nation has often been like this Samaritan man, welcoming the stranger, giving out of our plenty, going to places in need, whether Europe after World War II, mosquito nets in Africa, or any of the humanitarian responses we've made.

We are in a time when that generosity and trust is being challenged.

The crisis we face in addressing issues of migration is a crisis of the soul, and how we face it has great implications for our claim and hope to be a great nation, "one nation, under God, with liberty and justice for all."

Will we operate out of love and hospitality, or fear and hatred?

The greatest threat to our nation is not people seeking a better life, as did most of our ancestors... that's how we got here.

The greatest threat to our nation is a culture of fear and hatred.

The Levite and the priest were acting out of fear.

Fear-based decision-making leads to death, not life; to hatred, not love.

There is no place for hatred in the church of Jesus Christ.

There is no place for fear in those who claim to be followers of Jesus Christ. Fear is natural – I feel it a lot – but it's not where Christians are to rest or react from. In fact, Christians are given an antidote in Scripture:

“There is no fear in love, but perfect love casts out fear.”

We worship perfect Love; we come into the presence of perfect Love every Sunday; we enact perfect love at this table this morning – It is God's love we bring in radical hospitality.

This Eucharistic feast we enact each week, this is the story of One who went beyond comfort, who left heaven itself to find us, lost and broken on the road; One Who stepped in and became victim in our stead.

That's what we believe Jesus did on the cross – he let it all hit him, everything we suffer, all the sin and cruelty and hurt and loss and anguish and broken relationships and broken promises of this world – he let it all hit him and took it to the grave for us. He became both the man robbed and beaten and left for dead and the Good Outsider who stopped and put aside his own safety and comfort to help humankind that could not rescue itself, that could not “rule-follow” our way to righteousness. Hear these words of Paul to the church in Collosae as if addressed to us at:

*To the holy and faithful brothers in Christ at Christ Church in La Plata/Wayside:  
**All over the world this gospel is bearing fruit and growing**, just as it has been doing among you since the day you heard it and understood God's grace in all its truth. For this reason, since the day we heard about you, we have not stopped praying for you and asking God to fill you with the knowledge of his will through all spiritual wisdom and understanding. And we pray this in order that you may live a life worthy of the Lord and may please him in every way: **bearing fruit in every good work, growing in the knowledge of God, being strengthened with all power** according to his glorious might so that you may have great endurance and patience, and **joyfully giving thanks to the Father**, who has qualified you to share in the inheritance of the saints in the kingdom of light. For he has rescued us from the dominion of darkness and brought us into the kingdom of the Son he loves, in whom we have redemption, the forgiveness of sins.*

He has rescued us. It is God who qualifies us to share in the inheritance of the saints. That lawyer wanted to justify himself – well, we can't. If we could, we don't need Jesus. If we don't need Jesus, why are we here? Once we really understand God's grace in all its truth, just what Jesus has done for us, we allow him to shape us, to transform us. Good Samaritans are not born; they are formed.

I want us to be about the work of transformation – being transformed into Christ's likeness; working with Him to transform the world into a place where all children are safe, all children are cared for, all children are loved. Amen.

***Prayer for the Safety and Well-Being of Migrants***

*Dear God, your son came to show us a different way to respond to those who are in need. Jesus called us to feed the hungry, give drink to the thirsty, welcome the stranger, clothe the naked, take care of the sick, and visit those in prison. As our country and the world struggle with unprecedented issues of migration, help us to follow Jesus' call to care, welcome, and give out of our abundance so that those who hope may find a better life. Amen.*

### **Luke 10:25-37 (NIV)**

On one occasion an expert in the law stood up to test Jesus.

"Teacher," he asked, "what must I do to inherit eternal life?"

"What is written in the Law?" he replied. "How do you read it?"

He answered: "'Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your strength and with all your mind' ; and, 'Love your neighbor as yourself.'"

"You have answered correctly," Jesus replied. "Do this and you will live."

But he wanted to justify himself, so he asked Jesus, "And who is my neighbor?"

In reply Jesus said: "A man was going down from Jerusalem to Jericho, when he fell into the hands of robbers. They stripped him of his clothes, beat him and went away, leaving him half dead. A priest happened to be going down the same road, and when he saw the man, he passed by on the other side. So too, a Levite, when he came to the place and saw him, passed by on the other side. But a Samaritan, as he traveled, came where the man was; and when he saw him, he took pity on him.

He went to him and bandaged his wounds, pouring on oil and wine.

Then he put the man on his own donkey, took him to an inn and took care of him.

The next day he took out two silver coins and gave them to the innkeeper.

'Look after him,' he said, 'and when I return, I will reimburse you for any extra expense you may have.' "

Which of these three do you think was a neighbor to the man who fell into the hands of robbers?" The expert in the law replied, "The one who had mercy on him."

Jesus told him, "Go and do likewise."

**Colossians 1:1-14**

Paul, an apostle of Christ Jesus by the will of God, and Timothy our brother,  
To the holy and faithful brothers in Christ at Colosse: Grace and peace to you from God our Father. We always thank God, the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, when we pray for you, **because we have heard of your faith in Christ Jesus and of the love you have for all the saints--** the faith and love that spring from the hope that is stored up for you in heaven and that you have already heard about in the word of truth, the gospel that has come to you. **All over the world this gospel is bearing fruit and growing,** just as it has been doing among you since the day you heard it and understood God's grace in all its truth. You learned it from Epaphras, our dear fellow servant, who is a faithful minister of Christ on our behalf, and who also told us of your love in the Spirit. For this reason, since the day we heard about you, we have not stopped praying for you and asking God to fill you with the knowledge of his will through all spiritual wisdom and understanding. And we pray this in order that you may live a life worthy of the Lord and may please him in every way: **bearing fruit in every good work, growing in the knowledge of God,** being **strengthened with all power** according to his glorious might so that you may have great endurance and patience, and **joyfully giving thanks to the Father,** who has qualified you to share in the inheritance of the saints in the kingdom of light. For he has rescued us from the dominion of darkness and brought us into the kingdom of the Son he loves, in whom we have redemption, the forgiveness of sins.