

THE PRODIGAL / Sun. July 11, 2010

Sermon: “The Good Samaritan”

Sermon by: **Fr. Bill Wigmore /**

(Sermons are generally available weekly online at the AR website)

Opening hymn: “Lean on Me, Brother”

by Bill Withers

Sometimes in our lives, we all have pain, we all have sorrow.

But, if we are wise, we know that there’s always tomorrow.

Lean on me, when you’re not strong and I’ll be your friend

I’ll help you carry on; for it won’t be long till I’m gonna need somebody to lean on!

Please swallow your pride, if I have faith you need to borrow

For, no one can fill those of your needs that you won’t let show

*You just call on me, brother, when you need a hand / **We all need somebody to lean on!***

*I just might have a problem that you’ll understand / **We all need somebody to lean on!***

Lean on me when you’re not strong, and I’ll be your friend I’ll help you carry on,

For it won’t be long till I’m gonna need somebody to lean on (**Chorus**)

If, there is a load you have to bear that you can’t carry

I’m right up the road, and I’ll share your load if you’ll just call me

Call me! (If you need me) Call me! (When you want me) Call me! (When you want me)

Big Book: Helping others is the foundation stone of your recovery. A kindly act once in a while isn't enough. You have to act the Good Samaritan every day, if need be. It may mean the loss of many nights' sleep, great interference with your pleasures, interruptions to your business. It may mean sharing your money and your home, counseling frantic wives and relatives, innumerable trips to police courts, sanitariums, hospitals, jails and asylums. Your telephone may jangle at any time of the day or night. Your wife may sometimes say she is neglected. A drunk may smash the furniture in your home, or burn a mattress. You may have to fight with him if he is violent. Sometimes you will have to call a doctor and administer sedatives under his direction. Another time you may have to send for the police or an ambulance. Occasionally you will have to meet such conditions....

Both you and the new man must walk day by day in the path of spiritual progress. If you persist, remarkable things will happen. When we look back, we realize that the things which came to us when we put ourselves in God's hands were better than anything we could have planned. Follow the dictates of a Higher Power and you will presently live in a new and wonderful world, no matter what your present circumstances!

Psalm 103: *Bless the Lord, O my soul and praise him, my inmost heart*

***Bless the Lord, O my soul, and remember his unchanging love**

He forgives you for your wrongdoings and heals your selfishness and fear

***He frees us from the darkest pit and crowns us with compassion**

The Lord gives himself equally to all men and women on the earth

***He shines on the rich and the poor, on the powerful and on the oppressed**

He reveals his love to all those who seek his ways

***The more we open our hearts, the more we feel him near**

The Lord is filled with joy and compassion, patience and unchanging love

***Higher than the heavens above us, vaster than space is his love**

As a father has compassion on his children, so the Lord has compassion on us all

***For he knows what we are made of - he remembers that we are dust**

Our lives are as brief as the grass; we blossom like a flower of the field

***But the Lord's love is eternal, and his mercy is everlasting**

Bless the Lord, O my soul and praise him, my inmost heart

***Bless the Lord, O my soul, and remember his unchanging love**

Meditation hymn: "Waiting for My Child"

by Patti Griffin

I was talking to a lady a few days ago, and these are the words she said...

If you see my child somewhere as you journey here and there

Tell him I'm waiting for my child to come home

I am waiting and waiting for my child to come

I am waiting, waiting for my child to come...

If he can't come home could he please send me a letter

A letter would mean so much to me

O my child may be somewhere on his sick bed, with no one to rub his aching head

O my child may be somewhere in some lonely jail, with no one there to go his bail,

If I only knew what town my child was in I'd be there on that early morning train

And no matter what the crime, Lord, you know this child is mine....

And I'm waiting for my child to come home.

Gospel of Luke: On one occasion, a legal expert stood up to put him to the test with a question, "Teacher, what do I have to do to inherit eternal life?" He said to him, "How do you read what is written in the Law?" And he answered, "You are to love the Lord your God with all your heart, with all your soul, with all your energy, and with all your mind; and your neighbor as yourself." Jesus said to him, "You have given the correct answer; do this and you will have a life." But with a view to justifying himself, he said to Jesus, "But who is my neighbor?"

Jesus replied: "There was a man going from Jerusalem down to Jericho when he fell into the hands of robbers. They stripped him, beat him up and went off, leaving him half dead. Now by coincidence a priest was going down that road when he caught sight of him, he went out of his way to avoid him. In the same way, when a Levite came to the place, he took one look at him and crossed the road to avoid him. But this Samaritan who was traveling that way came to where he was and was moved to pity at the sight of him. He went up to him and bandaged his wounds,

pouring olive oil and wine on them. He hoisted him onto his own animal, brought him to an inn, and looked after him.

“The next day he took out two silver coins, which he gave to the innkeeper, and said, ‘Look after him, and on my way back I’ll reimburse you for any extra expense you have had.’ Which of these three, in your opinion, acted like a neighbor to the man who fell into the hands of the robbers?’ He said, ‘The one who showed him compassion.’ Jesus said to him, ‘Then go and do the same yourself.’”

Sermon:

- Welcome – How’s everyone doing tonight?
- You know, one thing everyone can probably agree on about Jesus is that he was **a wonderful storyteller**
- **Jesus used his stories to teach lessons –**
- Most of his stories were about an alternate view of reality –
- something he called: “**The Kingdom of God**”
 - + *The kingdom wasn’t some place up in heaven –*
but a place right here on earth
 - + *A place inside every human heart*
 - + *A place where God is really God and where we’re living with one another the way God wants us to live – Living in LOVE*
- His stories were almost always a shock to the people hearing them – and if we really hear them right, they still are today
- If they don’t come as a shock – I don’t think we’ve really heard them.
- We’ve lost sight of the great story – the mystery that is God - we’ve gotten too concrete with what’s really mystery -
- There’s a professor named Harvey Cox who teaches up at Harvard (story)

The Big Book says: many of us tried to hold on to our OLD IDEAS – I think our OLD IDEAS about God need to be included in that.

To the Jewish people – above all else, **God was HOLY** –

And Jesus was a Jew –

But to Jesus – **God was something more than HOLY -**

*The God and Father he knew was filled with **compassion***

Compassion means: “To feel with” (explain)

So Jesus told stories: Stories about a shepherd with 100 sheep – One dumb sheep goes astray – what does the shepherd do? (explain)

But Jesus says: “**God is like that!**”

And in another story – a son goes out and blows it all – and *Jesus says*: God's like this Father who gives his son all he wants all and then waits for him to come to his senses and return (explain)

Tonight Jesus continues on his way to Jerusalem

And on the way, he meets a lawyer –

This guy has studied God's law and so he tries to trap Jesus

- *"What Must I do...."*
- Jesus answers: *"What does the law say?"*
He answers *"The law says we must love the Lord*
- Jesus says: *"You're right – Do this and you'll know what the Kingdom of God is like..."*

But the lawyer says: *"Yes, that's all OK about loving God – but just who is my neighbor? Where does this love thing of yours end?"*

So now, rather than an answer – Jesus tells another story:

And its story told to Jewish audience so we need to explain a few points – cause it's easy to lose the SHOCK VALUE that Jesus intends.

Jesus says:

- There's a Jew coming down from Jerusalem –
- This is a dangerous road – people usually travel in caravans –
- It winds its way down to Jericho – 3,000 feet down – lots of rocks and curves
A good places for an ambush
- So robbers attack himthe guy winds up in a ditch –
- *Now remember, the audience is a Jewish audience –*
and so they **identify** somewhat with the guy in the ditch
- He's a dumb Jew – *but that's OK* – they got brothers-in-law who are dumb Jews! –
it happens – they feel a bit sorry for him -

But then 2 men come along – the first one's a priest and the second's a Levite – that's like an asst's. to the priest.

One passes him by – pretends he doesn't see him / The other – crosses the road (CROWDS REACTION – they snicker – yeah those priests & Levites have it easy -)

- Now part of what we may not understand is: **they were doing right**
- In their belief: God is Holy, Holy, Holy
And this guy in the ditch was bleeding and he might even be dead – if they touched him they could be made UNCLEAN – even their law told them that – so they were doing right to pass him by
- But for Jesus: God is Compassionate, Compassionate, Compassionate
And this is really another story about what God is like

So, just then a Samaritan happens along

We call 'em "**the Good Samaritan**" – but we've lost the point-
He's really scum – he's filth to the Jews hearing this story
Jews would by-pass Samaria –

They'd take the long way to Jerusalem just to avoid contact
This was a really old Family feud – It's like a Jew in a ditch today – meeting a member of Al Quaida!

BUT this Samaritan, **HE HAS COMPASSION – the Greek word is “he feels his pain in his own gut!”** and so he goes over to him, treats his wounds.....

He pours wine and olive oil on him –
(THAT'S EASY TO MISS THE IRONY HERE)

You see the priest and the Levite did the same at the Temple – they poured wine and olive oil on God's Holy Altar -

- **But now Jesus moves where HOLY resides –**
- God's not found in the temple –
- God's **experienced** in how we respond to one another – or he isn't found at all!
- Someone once said: God's more like a verb than a NOUN.
- God is experienced – not explained.

Now here are 3 Quick Lessons we can learn about God's Kingdom:

In God's kingdom:

*** Help sometimes comes from where we least expect it**

* From our addictions – who'd have thought!

From our resentments –

From all the cracks inside us

The part of us that are helpless and laying in a ditch

In God's kingdom:

- **Help sometimes comes from people I least expect it to come from**
- From people I've looked down on – from people we would not ordinarily mix with -

In God's kingdom:

- Help is just another name for grace – it's all a gift
- It's God doing for us what we could never do for ourselves

As alcoholics and addicts – **we need to find God's kingdom –**

Like the first reading says: Our role is not to play the Good Samaritan once in a while –
but to change – to become compassionate because our own lives depend on it!

- The Good Samaritan story reminds me of another story that sometimes makes the rounds in recovery.
- It's kind of funny, but it makes the same spiritual point that Jesus makes.
- The story's called The Man in the Pit and it goes something like this:

A man fell into a pit and he couldn't get out.

Several people passed by and each, in turn, looked down into the pit where the poor man was trapped.

- The first to come was a wise old sage, and he said to the man, **“I always try to avoid pits!”**

- Then a realist came and said, ***“That’s a pit you’re in all right!”***
- Then a materialist came, ... and he wanted to charge the guy rent for being in that pit!
- The fatalist comes and he says to the guy: ***“Bad karma! What will be, will be!”***
- Then the optimist shows up and he said, ***“Things could be worse!”***
- The pessimist comes and says, ***“Things will get worse!”***
- The city inspector comes and asks, ***“Do you have a permit to be down in that pit?”***
- Then the new-age mystic comes and said, ***“That pit – it’s all in your mind!”***
- The televangelist said, ***“Only bad people fall into pits!”***
- The enabler said, ***“Stay there and do nothing; I’ll dig you out!”***
- The rigid sponsor said, ***“Go to a meeting!”***
- The person returning from a meeting said to him, ***“I can sure identify with your pain down there!”***
- The person full of self-pity said, ***“Just wait till you see the size of my pit!”***

Finally, an AA member who was a Good Samaritan came by and reaching out his hand he said,

“I was in a pit like that once; take hold of my hand and let me show you how I got out!”

And Jesus asked the lawyer, ***“Which of these do you think proved neighbor to the man?”***

He said, ***“the one who showed mercy on him.”***

And Jesus said to him - and to us, ***“Go and do likewise.”*** **AMEN.**

Communion hymn: “Help Your Lord” **by Dale Watson**

Your Lord is hungry! Feed him! Your Lord is thirsty! Offer him drink!

Your Lord’s a stranger! Invite him in! Help your Lord!

Your Lord is naked! Clothe him! Your Lord is sickly! Nurse him!

Your Lord’s in prison! See him! Help your Lord!

The king in his kingdom separates the goats and sheep

The Lord’s the least of your brothers, which one will you be?